



CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to determine the influence of corporate governance on Administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the influence of human resource management, accountability, risk management and financial management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria. four research questions were answered in the study and four null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all 23,096 staff from federal universities in South-South Nigeria. A questionnaire designed by the researcher was used for data. The questionnaire was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Business Education, Faculty of Vocational Education, Library and Information Science University of Uyo and one from the Department of Psychological Foundations of Education all from University of Uyo, Nigeria. Cronbach's Alpha was used to compute internal consistency reliability. This yielded reliability coefficient values of 0.87. Simple linear regression was used to answer research questions and to test the null hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that application of human resource management, accountability, risk management and financial management have influence on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria and there is significant influence of corporate governance on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that corporate governance is increasingly influencing administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria. It was therefore recommended among others that management of federal universities should adopt corporate governance in their system to ensure they have proper administration and competitive advantage over their counterparts.

Keywords: Corporate Governance, Administration, Federal Universities.

Introduction

Federal universities in Nigeria are institutions funded and managed by the federal government of Nigeria. They are ranked among the top universities in Nigeria and are expected to serve as instruments for national development. These universities are meant to be well-funded, guided by a clear mission that aligns with the nation's socio-economic and political goals, and accessible to all Nigerians regardless of ethnic background, social class, religion or political affiliation. Federal universities are to operate under federal laws and regulations and requires adequate physical



infrastructure, including sufficient land, laboratories, accommodation facilities and other services necessary for effective teaching, learning, research and administration.

Despite these expectations, federal universities continue to face numerous challenges, including inadequate funding, poor facilities, shortage of academic staff and brain drain, frequent strike action as a result of poor condition of service, insecurity and campus cultism. In relation to funding, universities need substantial funds for teaching and research. Funding is a major challenge of many Nigerian universities. Other challenges that federal universities face according to Okeke and Orie (2018) include poor leadership, ineffective teaching and learning, poor research output, political interference, weak and obnoxious regulatory laws. With these overbearing administrative issues in federal universities, the researcher intends to find out if corporate governance can influence administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Corporate governance refers to the system and processes by which universities and colleges are directed and controlled. It involves establishing structures and mechanisms to ensure accountability, transparency, and ethical decision-making within academic institutions. Fabian (2017) saw corporate governance as the way in which federal universities are governed and to what purpose. It identifies who has power and accountability, and who makes decisions. Fabian further asserted that a corporate governance system has the main aim of entrenching the principles of fairness, transparency, objectivity, decency, judgment and integrity among those charged with the governance of federal universities. Governance specialists sum up corporate governance in four words: people, purpose, process, and performance (four Ps). These four Ps serve as the foundational principles for both the existence and operation of governance. It also lean on three pillars of transparency, accountability, and security. Federal universities cannot flourish without adherence to principles of good governance. Bakare (2021) postulated that corporate governance is important because it creates a system of rules and practices that determine how an institution operates and how it aligns with the interest of all its stakeholders (government, faculty, staff and the public) are protected while maximising the quality of education and upholding the institution's reputation. Bakare further highlighted some key benefits of corporate governance in federal universities to include financial responsibility, decision-making transparency, stakeholder engagement, academic integrity, risk mitigation, improved reputation among others. The aspects of corporate governance covered in this study include human resource management, accountability and internal control, risk management and financial management. Human resource management being one of the dimensions of corporate governance, is first discussed below:

Human Resource Management (HRM) according to Ukoima and Udukeke (2015) referred to the department or function responsible for managing all aspects of the university's workforce, including recruitment, hiring, employee development, performance evaluation, compensation, benefits, disciplinary actions, and overall staff wellbeing, all within the framework of government regulations and policies applicable to federal institutions. The main objectives of Human Resource Management (HRM) according to Adeniyi and Ogunyemi (2017) are to ensure an organisation's workforce is competent, motivated, and engaged to achieve its goals. This includes tasks like recruiting and training, managing performance, and fostering a positive work culture. HRM as asserted by Ukoima and Udukeke (2015) aims to effectively manage employees to contribute to the success of the organisation.

Accountability is concerned with the management and other stakeholders, keeping records of school activities and using such record to assess or appraise institutional performance in



relation to the achievement of predetermined objectives. Accountability in federal universities as stated by Sunday and Philip (2020) is achieved through a combination of policies and oversight. The goal is to improve the quality of education, ensure resources are used wisely, and hold people responsible for their actions. Other types of accountability systems in federal universities as opined by Nnamdi (2023) include compliance with regulations, adherence to professional norms, and results driven. The identification of weaknesses through accountability mechanism underscores the need for risk management in federal universities.

Risk management in federal universities as postulated by Yusriza and Salman (2024) refers to a systematic process of identifying, assessing, and taking steps to mitigate potential threats or hazards. This could disrupt the university's operations, financial stability, reputation, or compliance with regulations. Others include risks related to academics, facilities, finances, legal issues, student safety, and more; essentially, proactively planning to minimise negative impacts from potential risks across the institution. Effective risk management helps safeguard institutional resources and minimise financial losses, thereby highlighting the importance of financial management.

Financial management in federal universities is the process of planning, organising, and controlling the university's finances. Offor (2023) stated that financial management involves managing the university's funds and ensuring that they are used efficiently. Emmanuel and Clement (2024) stated that financial management has to do with the coordination of a company's finances, including all money coming into the business, all money going out, and any cash or assets includes long-term financial plan, cost control, working capital management, diversification of investments, and adherence to regulatory compliance. When the finances of an organisation is properly managed, it helps not only to meet organisational goals but also to reduce unnecessary conflicts within the system.

Compliance according to Peter and Giuseppe means that an institution adheres to the applicable rules and laws. This includes both country specific laws and requirements from the regulatory authorities as well as internal laws and guidelines of the institution. Compliance to these standards can be done by implementing written policies and procedures, designating a compliance officer and compliance committee, conducting effective training and education, developing effective lines of communication, conducting internal monitoring and auditing, enforcement and disciplinary guidelines and prompt response among others. On the whole, the variables that will be used in this study which include: human resource management, accountability, risk management and financial management are all elements that influence proper administration in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. The application of elements such as human resource management, accountability, risk management and financial management are essential because they promote transparency, efficiency, stability, and good governance in the administration of federal universities. It is believed to positively impact the administration of federal universities, thereby justifying their use as variables in this study.

Statement of the Problem

The quality of education in federal universities in Nigeria depends on sufficient funding and the availability of adequate facilities. These universities aim to provide accessible and affordable education, promoting equity and access to higher education for a larger segment of the population. Federal universities are crucial for national development as they serve as centres for knowledge creation, human capital development and economic growth. Federal universities play a vital role in



preparing skilled professionals, fostering innovation, and contributing to the overall advancement of a nation. By promoting research, teaching, and community engagement, federal universities help shape a nation's future.

However, from the researcher's observation, there seems to be inadequate academic staff, brain drain, insecurity, institutional corruption, political interference, poor remuneration, insufficient research and development, weak regulatory laws, poor technological advancement, inadequate funding have been the major challenges. Others include inadequate staff development, political interference, inadequate research and innovation, quality of education as a result of poor conditions of service and a poor working environment, the inadequacy of teaching staff, classrooms, and laboratories, and the poor quality of teachers, security challenges among others.

Observation seems to show that some of the federal universities are not properly directed or controlled in terms of accountability and internal controls, financial management, research and innovation management, funding and resource management, human resource management among other practices. These inadequacies have led to lack of transparency, political interference, weak internal control, conflict of interest, lack of stakeholders' engagement, inadequate board oversight, inadequate training and inadequate capacity building. In spite of the strategic importance of corporate governance in ensuring effective university administration, many federal universities in South-South Nigeria continue to face persistent challenges in areas such as accountability, financial management, and human resource administration. The inability to manage these problems effectively has resulted in several adverse consequences, including erosion of public trust, legal and regulatory breaches, decline in academic quality, and difficulty in attracting and retaining competent staff. Moreover, corporate governance lapses often lead to wastage of government resources, inefficient decision-making, reduced donor confidence, and reputational damage. These deficiencies hinder the agility and innovativeness required for sustainable institutional development. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the influence of corporate governance on the administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which corporate governance influence the administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the influence of human resource management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.
2. determine the influence of accountability on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.
3. determine the influence of risk management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.
4. determine the influence of financial management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the Study:

What is the influence of human resource management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria?



What is the influence of accountability on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria?

What is the influence of risk management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria?

What is the influence of financial management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant influence of human resource management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Ho2: There is no significant influence of accountability on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Ho3: There is no significant influence of risk management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Ho4: There is no significant influence of financial management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey design and was conducted in South-South Nigeria. The population of the study was made up of 23,096 from 13 federal universities (federal university of technology, Ikot Abasi, federal university Otuoko, Bayelsa, University of Benin, University of Calabar, University of Port Harcourt, University of Uyo, Nigerian Maritime University Okere Nkoko, Delta, Federal University of Technology, Bassam, Federal University of Health Sciences, Kwale, Delta State, university of Maritime studies, Oron, Federal University of Environment and Technology, Tai Town, Ogoniland). This comprised 130 governing council members (administrative cadre – Administrative Officers, Principal administrative officers, chief administrative officers), 13,950 lecturers (senior lecturers, associate professors, professors) and 9016 heads of departments (heads of departments, unit heads, branch managers, and other managerial positions). These were randomly selected using random sampling technique Directorate of Human Resources (2025). The reason why the governing council, departmental heads and lecturers are used is that they are responsible for policy formulation, efficient and effective administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria respectively which help them in building a strong internal control in the system. Proportional sampling technique was adopted for the study.

A researcher-developed instruments titled "Corporate Governance on Administration of Federal Universities Questionnaire" (CGAFUQ) was used in collecting data for the study. These instruments was developed by the researcher based on the research questions guiding the study. The instruments was divided into three sections. Section A dealt with the demographic variables of the study. Section B elicited information from independent variables. These are elements of corporate governance which are crucial for federal universities to ensure transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct in their operations. Section C was based on dependent variable. These include human resource management, accountability, risk management and internal audit, financial management and administration of federal universities. The instrument were structured



on a 4-points rating scale consisting of Very Great Extent (VGE) – 4 points, Great Extent (GE) – 3 points, Little Extent (LE) – 2 points and Very Little Extent (VLE) – 1 point.

In order to answer research questions and test the null hypotheses, the following decision rule was used as a guide. R^2 was used to report answers to research questions. Thereafter, the R^2 was converted to (%) to help determine the extent to which the independent variable predict the dependent variable. Specifically, when it is 1% - 20%, it is regarded that the extent of influence is very little extent (VLE), 21% - 40% means that the extent of influence is moderate extent (ME). Moreover, when it is 41% - 80%, this implies that the extent of influence is great extent (GE). While 81% - 100% means that the extent of influence is very great extent (VGE). Reject H_0 when $p < \alpha = .05$; otherwise fail to reject H_0 . The result simply means that the independent variable significantly influences or contributes to the variability in the construct dependent variable.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the extent of influence of human resource management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 1: Summary of the extent of influence of human resource management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria **n=394**

Source of Variation	R	R Square	Remarks
Human Resource Management			
	.825	.681	Great Extent
Administration			

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which human resource management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. Table 1 revealed the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.681. This implies that 68% is the overall contribution of all items on human resource management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. In line with the decision rule, this therefore means that the extent to which human resource management influence administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria is great.

Research Question 2

What is the extent of influence of accountability on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 2: Summary of the extent of influence of accountability on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria **n=394**

Source of Variation	R	R Square	Remarks
Accountability			
	.813	.661	Great Extent
Administration			

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which accountability on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. Table 2 revealed the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.661. This implies that 66% is the overall contribution of all items on accountability on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. In line with the decision rule, this therefore means that the extent to which accountability influence administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria is great.



Research Question 3

What is the extent of influence of risk management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 3: Summary of the extent of influence of risk management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria **n=394**

Source of Variation	R	R Square	Remarks
Risk management			
	.797	.636	Great Extent
Administration			

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which risk management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. Table 3 revealed the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.636. This implies that 63% is the overall contribution of all items on risk management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. In line with the decision rule, this therefore means that the extent to which risk management influence administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria is great.

Research Question 4

What is the extent of influence of financial management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 4: Summary of the extent of influence of financial management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria **n=394**

Source of Variation	R	R Square	Remarks
Financial Management			
	.837	.701	Great Extent
Administration			

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which financial management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. Table 4 revealed the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.701. This implies that 70% is the overall contribution of all items on financial management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. In line with the decision rule, this therefore means that the extent to which financial management influence administration of federal universities in South-South, Niger.

Research Hypothesis 1

There is no significant influence of human resource management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Table 5: Summary of Regression Analysis of human resource management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
Regression	225.304	1	225.304	837.795	.000	Significant
Residual	105.419	392	.269			
Total	330.723	393				

Significant at 0.05 level

The computed F-value of (837.795) has the probability value of 0.00 which is less than the probability level of 0.05. This is interpreted to be statistically significant at the degree of freedom



of 1 and 392. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of human resource management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria is rejected. This means that human resource management significantly influence administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis 2

There is no significant influence of accountability on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 6: Summary of Regression Analysis of Accountability on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
Regression	218.457	1	218.457	762.782	.000b	Significant
Residual	112.267	392	.286			
Total	330.723	393				

Significant at 0.05 level

The computed F-value of (762.782) has the probability value of 0.00 which is less than the probability level of 0.05. This is interpreted to be statistically significant at the degree of freedom of 1 and 392. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of accountability on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria is rejected. This means that accountability significantly influence administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis 3

There is no significant influence of risk management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Table 7: Summary of Regression Analysis of risk management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
Regression	210.323	1	210.323	684.768	.000b	Significant
Residual	120.401	392	.307			
Total	330.723	393				

Significant at 0.05 level

The computed F-value of (684.768) has the probability value of 0.00 which is less than the probability level of 0.05. This is interpreted to be statistically significant at the degree of freedom of 1 and 392. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of risk management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria is rejected. This means that risk management significantly influence administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis 4

There is no significant influence of financial management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria.



Table 8: Summary of Regression Analysis of financial management on administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
Regression	231.790	1	231.790	918.420	.000b	Significant
Residual	98.933	392	.252			
Total	330.723	393				

Significant at 0.05 level

The computed F-value of (918.420) has the probability value of 0.00 which is less than the probability level of 0.05. This is interpreted to be statistically significant at the degree of freedom of 1 and 392. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of financial management on administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria is rejected. This means that financial management significantly influence administration of federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Human Resource Management and Administration of Federal Universities

The finding of this study shows that the extent to which human resource management influences administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria is great. The corresponding null hypothesis tested revealed that human resource management significantly influences administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria. This implies that effective human resource management practices, including recruitment, compensation, training and development, and promotion policies, are fundamental to achieving efficient and effective university administration. The finding of this study corroborates with that of Ukoima and Udukeke (2015) who found that decision making significantly influences recruitment and compensation of staff to a high extent in public universities in South-South Nigeria. Similarly, the finding aligns with that of Bakere (2021) who revealed that there is a positive correlation between human resource expenditure and productivity of universities, indicating that as universities invest more in salaries, wages, training, and development, productivity improves.

Accountability and Administration of Federal Universities

The finding of this study shows that the extent to which accountability influences administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria is great. The corresponding null hypothesis tested revealed that accountability significantly influences administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria. This implies that establishing and maintaining robust accountability mechanisms, including transparent financial reporting, performance monitoring systems, audit procedures, and stakeholder engagement, is essential for effective university administration. The finding of this study is in line with that of Fabian (2017) who found that poor accountability mechanisms and weak transparency practices undermine administrative efficiency in federal universities, thereby confirming that strengthening accountability enhances administrative effectiveness. Similarly, the finding corroborates with that of Adeniyi and Ogunyemi (2017) who revealed that lack of fiscal accountability, mismanagement of funds, and political interference are major accountability challenges that negatively impact university administration in Nigeria.



Risk Management and Administration of Federal Universities

The finding of this study shows that the extent to which risk management influences administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria is great. The corresponding null hypothesis tested revealed that risk management significantly influences administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria. This implies that systematic identification, assessment, mitigation, and monitoring of various risks, including financial risks, operational risks, reputational risks, legal risks, and strategic risks, is fundamental to effective university administration. The findings of this study aligns with that of Sunday and Philip (2020) who found that predominant risk factors significantly influence operational building project performance in federal universities in South East Nigeria, demonstrating that attention to risk assessment and mitigation directly impacts institutional project outcomes.

Financial Management and Administration of Federal Universities

The finding of this study shows that the extent to which financial management influences administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria is great. The corresponding null hypothesis tested revealed that financial management significantly influences administration of federal universities in South-South Nigeria. This implies that sound financial planning, budgeting, resource allocation, expenditure control, financial reporting, and audit systems are critical determinants of effective university administration. The finding of this study corroborates with that of Nnamdi (2023) who found that lack of fiscal accountability and mismanagement of funds constitute major challenges in public university administration in Nigeria, confirming that improved financial management enhances administrative effectiveness. Similarly, the finding aligns with Yusriz and Salman (2024) who demonstrated that internal control activities, control environment, and risk assessment positively impact financial accountability in universities, with control environment showing particularly strong positive effects.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of corporate governance on the administration of Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. The findings revealed that corporate governance significantly influences university administration through effective human resource management, accountability, risk management and financial management. The study established that the proper application of corporate governance principles enhances administrative efficiency, promotes transparency, strengthens institutional stability, and contributes to the achievement of university goals and objectives.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. University management should strengthen merit-based recruitment, staff development programmes, and performance evaluation systems to enhance the effectiveness of human resource management in Federal Universities.
- ii. Governing Councils and principal officers of universities should establish and enforce transparent reporting and monitoring mechanisms to promote accountability in administrative and financial operations.
- iii. University management should develop comprehensive risk assessment and risk management frameworks to enable institutions proactively identify, monitor, and mitigate operational, financial, and strategic risks.



iv. The Federal Government, through relevant regulatory agencies and university management, should ensure strict compliance with financial management procedures, budgeting practices, and internal control systems to enhance prudent utilization of institutional resources.

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