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Sequence of Manuscript

I. Title page
II. Abstract (150-250 words)
III. Keywords (3-5)
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IX. References (APA 7th Edition)
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EFFECT OF PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCIAL REFORMS ON ACCOUNTABILITY OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of public sector financial reforms on accountability in federal universities in North-Central Nigeria, focusing on financial planning and reporting reforms. In response to concerns over transparency and financial management, the study evaluates how budget management, budget procedures, budget control, and International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) compliance impact financial accountability. The objectives are to determine the role of these reforms in enhancing stakeholder engagement, internal controls, and transparent governance within these institutions. Using a survey design, structured questionnaires were administered to bursary department staff across eight federal universities, and analysis was conducted using Ordered Logistic Regression. Results show that budgetary planning and IPSAS compliance significantly improve stakeholder engagement, with coefficients of 0.571 ($p < 0.001$) and 0.495 ($p = 0.013$), respectively. Budgetary management also positively affects internal control and audit functions, with a coefficient of 0.933 ($p = 0.015$), while IPSAS compliance further contributes with a coefficient of 0.281 ($p = 0.009$). Ordinary Least Squares regression reveals that 75.15% of the variation in accountability is explained by these financial reforms, with budgetary management (coefficient = 0.161, $p = 0.022$) and IPSAS (coefficient = 0.065, $p = 0.012$) making significant impacts. The study concludes that effective financial planning and reporting reforms are essential for fostering accountability, improving internal controls, and building stakeholder trust. It recommends that universities adopt participatory budgeting, implement automated tracking, and strictly adhere to IPSAS standards to enhance transparency and strengthen governance.

Keywords: Public Sector, Financial Reforms, Stakeholder Engagement, Internal Control, Accountability

1.0 Introduction

Financial management reforms in public institutions have garnered significant global attention for their essential role in promoting transparency, accountability, and the efficient use of resources. In countries like the United Kingdom and Australia, the implementation of rigorous budget management practices and adherence to international accounting standards, such as the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), has been crucial in driving accountability and good governance in public institutions (McKinney, 2018; Parker, 2020). Similarly, in South Africa and Uganda, budget reforms and IPSAS compliance have contributed to improved financial reporting, although challenges related to inconsistent adherence and regulatory enforcement remain (Fourie & Poggenpoel, 2017; Mugume et al., 2021).

In Nigeria, federal universities, are faced with significant challenges in financial management, including inadequate budget planning, inconsistent budget procedures, weak budget control, and partial compliance with IPSAS. These issues have led to financial inefficiencies, misallocation of funds, and corruption (Akinola et al., 2022; Emecheta & Oluwatosin, 2023). Studies indicate that budgetary allocations frequently do not align with actual needs, leaving universities unable to meet their financial requirements (Oseni, 2021). Additionally, the partial adoption of IPSAS has hindered the full realization of the reform's potential to enhance financial transparency (Adepoju & Nweke, 2021; Ijeoma & Oghogho, 2020).

The Nigerian government has attempted to address these challenges through policy reforms, including the introduction of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) to centralize public funds and improve financial discipline. While these initiatives have led to some progress, challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption have hindered their full implementation (Agbo & Egwu, 2021).

This study aims to investigate the impact of public sector financial reforms on the accountability of federal universities in Nigeria's North-Central region. Specifically, it seeks to assess the effects of financial planning reforms, including budget management, budget procedures, and budget control. Additionally, the study will examine the influence of financial reporting reforms, with a focus on IPSAS (International Public Sector Accounting Standards) compliance, on the accountability of these universities. Previous studies suggest that financial reforms are contingent on factors such as institutional capacity, regulatory oversight, and stakeholder involvement, with debates surrounding the role of strong enforcement mechanisms in achieving successful reforms (Onuoha & Mbah, 2019; Egbide & Fasanya, 2022).

The significance of this study lies in its potential to fill a gap in the literature by exploring the challenges and outcomes of public sector financial reforms in the north-central region of Nigeria. By providing insights into the impact of public sector financial reforms on accountability, the study aims to inform policy and institutional improvements that can lead to better governance and financial oversight.

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses were stated as follows;

H_{01}: Financial planning reforms have no significant effect on accountability of federal universities in north-central geo-political zone of Nigeria.

H_{02}: Financial reporting reforms have no significant effect on accountability of federal universities in north-central geo-political zone of Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

The literature review analyzes the link between accountability, financial reporting and planning reforms, examining how factors like budget management, procedure and control and international public sector accounting standards compliance enhances stakeholders' engagement as well as internal control and audit functions.

Stakeholder Engagement

This is critical for promoting transparency, trust, and effective governance in Nigeria's public sector, ensuring that financial accountability aligns with democratic values (Ojo et al., 2014). Stakeholders include government, citizens, civil society, private entities, and international partners, all contributing to a system of checks and balances (Almquist, 2012). Engaging these stakeholders, public institutions will promote citizen participation in budgeting and expenditure tracking, enhancing public financial management (Allen et al., 2007). Furthermore, empowering stakeholders through financial literacy training supports their active role in scrutinizing financial practices (Nife & Lawal, 2018).

Internal Control and Audit Functions

Internal control and audit guidelines are essential for ensuring financial integrity, accountability, and operational efficiency in universities. They provide a structured approach to managing risks, safeguarding assets, and verifying the accuracy of financial information (Unegbu & Kida, 2011). Elements include the segregation of duties to prevent fraud, stringent authorization processes for financial transactions (Mammada, 2010), and measures to protect physical assets and ensure timely financial reporting (Okweli, 2004). Also, establishing internal audit functions promotes independent assessments of financial processes, enhancing compliance with policies and regulations (Johnson, 2020). These guidelines foster transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in financial management practices within the university system (Unegbu & Kida, 2011).

Financial Planning Reforms in Nigeria Public Sector

Financial planning reforms in Nigeria have driven growth and productivity but have often fallen short of anticipated macroeconomic impacts (Trivedi & Rajmal, 2011). While governments aim to ensure citizens' welfare, the challenges persist, with many reform efforts yielding limited results (Jerome, 1999). In Nigeria, nearly all public sector organizations have undergone reforms, including deregulation, commercialization, privatization, monetization, and budget process changes. These reforms seek to curb corruption, enforce fiscal discipline, and foster transparency in public finance management, ultimately aiming to accelerate Nigeria's economic alignment with developed nations (Adegbie et al., 2019).

Budgetary Management Practices

In Nigeria's public sector, public enterprises operate as corporate entities established by statute to promote social and economic development through the provision of goods and services (Jerome, 1999). These entities, which include government-owned corporations, authorities, and boards, are funded through tax revenues and internally generated income. Due to limited resources and significant societal needs, the government must create a guiding document (the budget) to allocate resources effectively toward specific goals (Olajorin, 2012).

Budgetary Procedure

In Nigeria's public sector, budget preparation begins before each financial year with budget proposals presented by heads of departments, developed in collaboration with budget holders. These proposals, formatted by finance directors, consider business plans, cost targets, board guidelines, and inflation indicators, and provide details such as budget sums, pay adjustments, development allocations, and staffing needs (Meig & Meig, 2014; Nwankwo, 2014). The finance director reviews proposals with department heads and summarizes them to meet board objectives, followed by the Chief Executive's approval. Budget holders then sequence expenditures for financial control, supported by finance teams. Management emphasizes proactive expenditure control, with budgets divided into phases for monthly, quarterly, or lump-sum allocations (Okunrounmu, 2016).

Budgetary Control

Budgetary control in Nigeria's public sector is crucial for achieving organizational objectives by preventing deviations and ensuring efficient governance (Ezzamel, 1992). It employs structured techniques and transparent procedures accessible to both government and the public (Nwankwo, 2014). Strong checks and balances enhance performance while maintaining alignment with budget goals (Braide, 2002). Public enterprises, especially those with commercial operations, require more robust policy adherence (Eneh & Awara, 2016). Effective systems formalize budgeting through clear role definitions, promoting accountability and operational success (Ojo, 2012).

International Public Sector Accounting Standards Compliance (IPSAS)

Compliance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) is crucial for public sector entities, including Nigerian universities, as it enhances transparency, accountability, and consistency in financial reporting (Folarin, 2019). Issued by the International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board (IPSASB), these standards provide a framework for preparing financial statements and managing financial transactions (Farajimakin & Anichebe, 2017). For Nigerian universities, aligning their financial practices with IPSAS not only promotes international recognition but also improves overall accountability, despite the challenges of transitioning to these standards (Folarin, 2019). To succeed, universities must strategically integrate IPSAS compliance into their financial management frameworks (Farajimakin & Anichebe, 2017).

Theoretical Underpinning

Institutional theory, introduced by John Meyer and Brian Rowan in the 1970s, posits that an organization's formal structures are shaped more by institutional pressures than by market forces (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Scott (2004) identifies three pillars (regulative, normative, and cognitive) that encourage institutional alignment and establish operational norms, which Clemens and Cook (1999) and Dacin et al., (2002) suggest drive organizations toward similar structures, a process known as isomorphism. In the context of Nigerian federal universities, institutional theory is relevant as it highlights how regulations and institutional actors shape organizational behavior, particularly through financial reforms aimed at accountability and sustainability (Oliver, 1991). These reforms align financial planning practices with both national and international standards, thereby promoting transparency. However, some critics argue that institutional theory may overlook the potential for strategic behavior within organizations, which can sometimes lead to inefficiencies (Clemens & Cook, 1999). For this study, institutional logics demonstrate how universities adopt financial reforms that meet institutional expectations, reinforcing responsible financial management and improving stakeholder trust.

Empirical Studies

The following empirical studies where reviewed from different countries authors' perspectives.

Yussuf and Abdul (2022) examined public financial management practices and the financial performance of Mandera County Government in Kenya. Despite substantial funding, the county faced challenges in meeting recurrent expenditures. The study analyzed the impacts of budgeting processes and resource management, revealing positive influences on revenue collection. However, the findings are constrained by the study's specific focus on Mandera County, limiting generalizability to other contexts.

Olowolaju and Adepoju (2022) evaluated the role of International Public Sector Accounting Standards

(IPSAS) in enhancing the quality of financial reporting within public sector institutions in Nigeria. Through a cross-sectional survey and regression analysis of data from accounting professionals in government agencies, the study found that IPSAS adoption improved the comparability and reliability of financial statements, thus promoting transparency. However, the study identified challenges such as inadequate expertise and a lack of comprehensive training as obstacles to the full realization of IPSAS benefits. The authors suggested increased investment in training programs and capacity building for financial officers.

Adegbite and Fapohunda (2021) examined the impact of public financial management reforms on the performance of government parastatals in Lagos State, Nigeria. Using survey data and multiple linear regression analysis, the study found that reforms such as the adoption of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and the implementation of Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) significantly improved financial transparency and operational efficiency. However, the study's scope was limited to Lagos State, suggesting further research is needed for broader national applicability.

Agwu and Ugwuanyi (2022) examined the effect of public sector financial management reforms on the accountability of government agencies in Nigeria. Using a combination of qualitative interviews and quantitative data from secondary sources, the study found that the implementation of Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) and the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) 2007 improved accountability and reduced cases of financial mismanagement. However, the research pointed out challenges such as bureaucratic delays and limited technological infrastructure as constraints to full implementation. The study recommends continuous training and improved infrastructure to maximize the benefits of these reforms.

Mwambere and Kosimbei's (2022) study on financial management practices in Taita Taveta County, Kenya, highlighted the critical role of public financial management in economic development. Using a multivariate regression model, they found that effective revenue generation and transparent budget execution contributed significantly to government performance. The county had implemented a working capital management system to enhance internal controls. However, the research's limitation to Taita Taveta County restricts broader applicability.
Nwosu and Chikwendu (2021) investigated the influence of budgetary control mechanisms on the financial performance of state-owned enterprises in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study employed a survey research design, collecting data from financial officers and using regression analysis to assess the impact of budget planning, monitoring, and control. The results indicated that effective budgetary controls significantly enhanced financial performance and resource allocation. However, limitations included inadequate training of budget personnel and resistance to adopting new budgeting technologies, suggesting areas for further improvement.

Eze and Chukwuemeka (2021) studied the impact of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) policy on financial accountability in federal ministries in Nigeria. Using a case study approach combined with survey data analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics, their findings indicated that the TSA significantly improved revenue tracking and reduced financial mismanagement. However, the study pointed out implementation challenges such as resistance from stakeholders and insufficient digital infrastructure. The authors recommended enhanced training and advocacy to bolster TSA adoption and effectiveness.

Saputra (2021) investigated the role of effective governance and public finance management on local government performance in Bali, Indonesia, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Utilizing survey questionnaires analyzed through multiple linear regression, the study found that sound governance significantly improved local government performance. It advocated for the integration of governance and finance to mitigate economic challenges. Nonetheless, the study's focus on local governments limited its applicability to central government contexts.

Ofoegbu and Akanbi (2020) analyzed the relationship between fiscal accountability and public sector performance in Nigeria. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews from financial managers in federal ministries. Findings showed that fiscal accountability measures, including budget transparency and compliance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), significantly enhanced public sector efficiency. However, the study highlighted issues of political interference and insufficient capacity-building efforts as key limitations.

Okoye and Umeh (2020) investigated budgeting practices and their effect on the financial performance of local government councils in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study employed a descriptive survey design and regression analysis, revealing that budgetary coordination and adherence positively impacted revenue generation and service delivery. Nonetheless, challenges such as delayed budget approval and inadequate stakeholder involvement were identified as barriers. The study's findings are limited by its focus on local governments, which may not fully represent broader public sector dynamics.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopts a survey research design and focuses on the North Central region of Nigeria, comprising eight federal universities: Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi, Federal University of Health Sciences Oturkpo, Federal University Lokoja, University of Ilorin, Federal University Lafia, Federal University of Technology Minna, University of Jos, and University of Abuja (Ogunmodede et al., 2021). The target population includes staff members from the bursary departments of these universities. A two-stage sampling procedure is employed. In the first stage, stratified sampling is used to divide bursary departments across the selected universities into strata to ensure administrative efficiency. In the second stage, random sampling is conducted to select staff members, particularly those in financial and audit roles, using probability proportional to the number of units within each bursary department. The Taro Yamane model was applied to calculate a final sample size of 278 for the study.

n = N/(1+912(e)²………………………………………………………………. (1)

n= sample size N= Population

e= the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (0.05)

$n = 912/(1+912(0.05))^2$

n= 278

Proportionate stratified random sampling was selected to ensure that all identified strata the bursary departments of each university are represented in the sample, enhancing the accuracy of population representation. The sample size allocation for each university was determined by applying the proportion of its bursary staff to the total bursary population, ensuring that larger departments receive proportionately greater representation in the sample size. The breakdown is shown in Table 1.

Bursary Departments	Population	Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling	Sample Size
1. Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi	119	119/912*278	36
2. Federal University of Health Sciences Oturkpo	107	107/912*278	33
3. Federal University Lokoja	131	131/912*278	40
4. University of Ilorin	125	125/912*278	38
5. Federal University Lafia	94	94/912*278	29
6. Federal University of Technology Minna	113	113/912*278	34
7. University of Jos	87	87/912*278	27
8. University of Abuja	136	136/912*278	41
Total	**912**		**278**

Table 1: Sample Size Apportionment of Bursary Department and Selection Approach
Source: Author's Computation, 2023

The model developed by Nnamani et al., (2016) was adapted and refined to align with the specific objectives of this study. Accountability, the dependent variable, is represented by Stakeholder Engagement. The modified model is formulated as follows:

$STEN = \beta 0 + \beta_1 BM + \beta_2 BP + \beta_3 BC + \beta_4 IPSAS + \mathcal{E}$ …………………………………….… (2)

$ICAF = \beta 0 + \beta_1 BM + \beta_2 BP + \beta_3 BC + \beta_4 IPSAS + \mathcal{E}$ …………………………………….… (3)

$FACC = \beta 0 + \beta_1 BM + \beta_2 BP + \beta_3 BC + \beta_{11} IPSAS + \mathcal{E}$ ……………………………….… (4)

Where:

STEN = Stakeholder Engagement of Federal universities

ICAF = Internal Control and Audit Function

FACC = Financial Accountability of Federal universities (Constructed composite parameter index of Stakeholder Engagement)

β0 = Constant

BM = Budgetary Management

BP = Budgetary Procedure

BC = Budgetary Control

IPSAS = IPSAS's compliance

β_1- β_3 = The coefficient of the independent variables

Ɛ = Error Term

Model Estimation Techniques

The study utilized Ordered Logistic Regression, suitable for dependent variables with more than two ordered response categories based on the survey instrument applied (Greene, 2012). Also, the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimator was introduced to accommodate the transformation of the dependent variable into a continuous measure, achieved by aggregating the index of its two sub-components of the dependent variable used in this study (Wooldridge, 2016).

4.0 Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Descriptive Result

Figure 1 presents the descriptive analysis of socio-demographic indicators, illustrating the distribution of university staff who participated in the study.

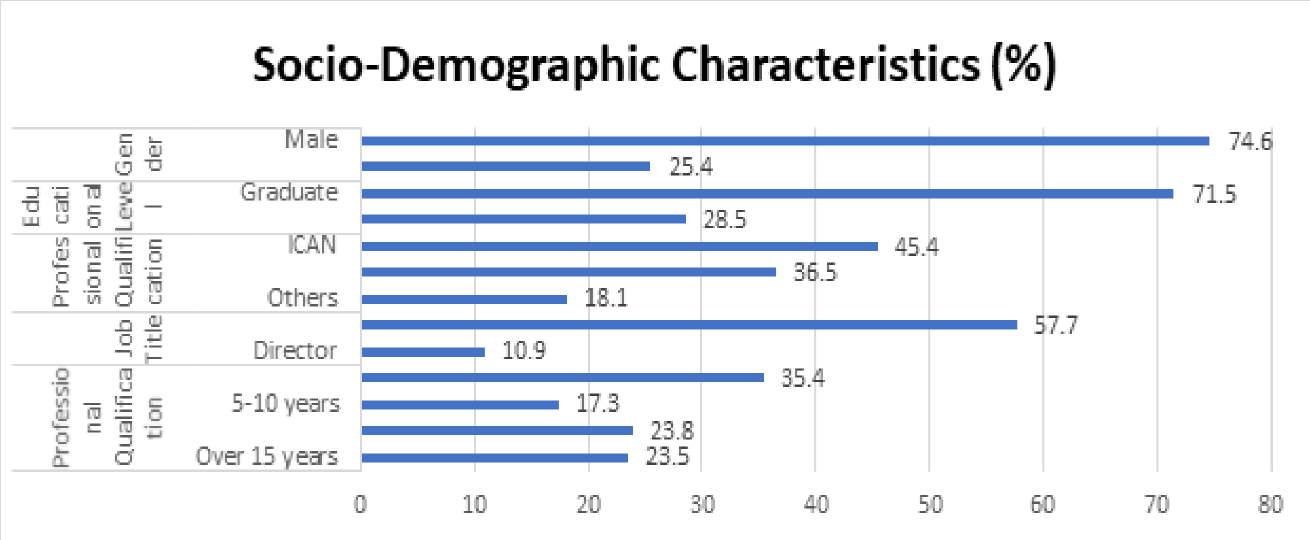

Figure 1 presents an overview of the qualifications and experience of Bursary department staff. The majority of respondents (71.5%) hold graduate degrees, while 28.5% have postgraduate qualifications. Professionally, 45.4% are affiliated with ICAN, and 36.5% with ANAN. Most participants (87.3%) occupy senior or middle management roles. Experience levels vary, with 35.4% having less than 5 years and 23.5% having over 15 years of service, reflecting a balanced tenure within the department.

Preliminary Estimation Techniques

Table 2 and 3 shows the preliminary estimation techniques such as Skewness, Kurtosis, and correlation matrix with correlation coefficients and their respective p-values which is utilized in scrutinizing the distribution of individual variables.

Table 2: Skewness and Kurtosis Joint Normality Test

Normality Test	Skewness	Kurtosis
Variables	Statistic	Statistic
Stakeholder's Engagement	0.0128	0.6099
Internal Control and Audit Function	0.0003	0.1571
Budgetary Management	0.0371	0.9413
Budgetary Planning	0.0008	0.1746
Budgetary Control	0.0654	0.5109
IPSAS	0.0137	0.1384

Source: Author's Computation (2024)

Table 2 presents the skewness and kurtosis joint normality test for various financial accountability and public sector reforms variables. Most variables exhibit minimal skewness, suggesting that their distributions are nearly symmetric.

Table 3: Pairwise Correlation Matrix

Variables	FACC	STEN	ICAF	BM	BP	BC	IPSAS
FACC	1.000						
STEN	0.5456	1.000					
ICAF	0.5418	0.6125	1.000				
BM	0.4596	0.6034	0.6532	1.000			
BP	0.4518	0.6192	0.6243	0.8111	1.000		
BC	0.4463	0.5732	0.6457	0.7653	0.7941	1.000	
IPSAS	0.6997	0.5739	0.5339	0.7154	0.6661	0.7109	1.000

Source: Author's Computation, (2024); Notes: FACC is financial accountability; STEN is stakeholder's engagement, BM is budgetary management, BP is budgetary planning, BC is budgetary control

Table 3 presents a pairwise correlation matrix for the variables associated with financial reforms in federal universities in Nigeria. All correlation coefficients remain below 0.8, suggesting that there are no significant multicollinearity concerns in the regression analysis (Kennedy, 2008).

Table 4: Variance Inflator Factor

Variables	N	VIF	Tolerance Value
BM	260	4.10	0.244
BP	260	4.88	0.205
BC	260	4.07	0.245
IPSAS	260	1.189	0.841

Source: Author's Computation (2024) Notes: BM is budgetary management, BP is budgetary planning, BC is budgetary control

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values presented in Table 4 indicate that all VIFs are below 5, consistent with the findings from the correlation analysis. This suggests that none of the variables exhibit high VIFs, confirming the absence of multicollinearity among the independent variables used in this study.

Effect of Public Sector Reforms on Transparency in Financial Reporting

This sub-section presents the ordered logistic regression results of the effect of public sector reforms on transparency in financial reporting of federal universities in Nigeria. This is presented in Table 4.

Table 5: Ordered Logistic Regression Result for Stakeholder's Engagement

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Err.	T	P-value
Financial Planning Reforms				
BM	0.246	0.319	0.77	0.442
BP	0.571	0.16	3.57	0.000
BC	-0.016	0.318	-0.05	0.960
Financial Reporting Reforms				
IPSAS	0.495	0.204	2.43	0.013

LR chi2(5) = 191.77
Prob > chi2 = 0.0000
Pseudo R2 = 0.1520

Source: Author's Analysis, (2024). Notes: BM is budgetary management, BP is budgetary planning, BC is budgetary control, IPSAS is international public sector accounting standard

The results indicate Table 5 that budgetary control negatively impacts stakeholder engagement, while budgetary management, budgetary planning, and international public sector accounting standards (IPSAS) positively influence it in federal universities in North-Central Nigeria. Among these, only budgetary planning and IPSAS are statistically significant, with budgetary planning showing a strong positive effect (coefficient of 0.571, p-value of 0.000), suggesting a 0.571 percent increase in stakeholder engagement for every increase in budgetary planning. Similarly, IPSAS has a positive coefficient of 0.495 and a significant p-value of 0.013, indicating a corresponding increase in stakeholder engagement. The overall model is significant, as reflected by a LR chi-squared statistic of 191.77 with a p-value of 0.0000, confirming that all variables collectively predict stakeholder engagement effectively.

Table 6: Ordered Logistic Regression Result for Internal Control and Audit Function

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Err.	T	p-value
Financial Planning Reforms				
BM	0.933	0.383	2.44	0.015
BP	-0.026	0.360	-0.07	0.942
BC	0.338	0.352	0.96	0.337
Financial Reporting Reforms				
IPSAS	0.281	0.098	2.85	0.009

LR chi2(5) = 227.24
Prob > chi2 = 0.0000
Pseudo R2 = 0.1853

Source: Author's Analysis, (2024). BM is budgetary management, BP is budgetary planning, BC is budgetary control, IPSAS is international public sector accounting standard

The result in Table 6 reveals that budgetary planning (BP) negatively impacts internal control and audit functions, while budgetary management (BM), budgetary control (BC), and international public sector accounting standards (IPSAS) positively influence them in federal universities in North-Central Nigeria. Among these, BM and IPSAS are significant, with BM showing a coefficient of 0.933 (p-value of 0.015), indicating that increases in BM lead to a 0.933 percent rise in the log odds of improving internal controls. IPSAS also significantly contributes, with a coefficient of 0.281 (p-value of 0.009), suggesting a 0.281 percent increase for each rise in IPSAS. The overall model is significant, as indicated by a LR chi-squared statistic of 227.24 (p-value of 0.0000), confirming the joint predictive power of all variables on internal control and audit functions.

Table 7: OLS Regression Result with Robust Standard Error for Accountability

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Err.	T	p-value
Financial Planning Reforms				
BM	0.161	0.07	2.30	0.022
BP	0.070	0.067	1.06	0.292
BC	0.076	0.059	1.30	0.196
Financial Reporting Reforms				
IPSAS	0.065	0.027	2.43	0.012
Constants	0.238	0.134	1.78	0.077

$F(12, 246) = 84.44$
Prob > F = 0.0000
$R^2 = 0.7515$

Source: Author's Analysis, (2024).

The results in Table 7 indicate that 75.15% of the variation in accountability in federal universities in North-Central Nigeria is explained by budgetary management (BM), budgetary planning (BP), budgetary control (BC), and international public sector accounting standards (IPSAS), as reflected by an R-squared value of 0.7515. The F-statistic of 84.44, with a p-value of 0.0000, confirms the joint significance of these variables in predicting accountability. Individually, BM and IPSAS have significant positive coefficients, with BM at 0.161 (p-value of 0.022) indicating that a one percent increase in BM leads to a 0.161 percent increase in financial accountability, while IPSAS has a coefficient of 0.065 (p-value of 0.012), suggesting a 0.065 percent increase for each percent point rise in IPSAS. In contrast, budgetary planning and budgetary control do not significantly affect accountability, as their p-values exceed the 0.05 threshold.

Joint Coefficient Wald Test (Composite Model Estimation)

Table 8: Joint Coefficient Wald Test

Variables (Factors)	**Chi-Square statistics**	**Probability**
Financial Planning Reforms: C(BM) = C(BP) = C(BC) = 0	24.810	0.000

Source: Author's Computation, (2024)

Table 8 revealed that the joint coefficient Wald test for the public sector reforms (financial planning reform) are statistically significant, implying that all public sector reforms indicators with joint coefficients of 24.810 contributed positively and significantly with probability values of 0.000 to the accountability of federal universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The study finds that financial planning reforms, especially budgetary planning, improve stakeholder engagement in federal universities in North-Central Nigeria by enhancing transparency and accountability. This supports Golab and Bazzazan's (2020) findings that participatory budgeting strengthens oversight. Additionally, IPSAS adoption significantly boosts stakeholder engagement by ensuring clarity and consistency in financial reporting, enabling stakeholders to monitor finances more effectively. This aligns with Folarin (2019) and Farajimakin and Anichebe (2017), who highlight IPSAS's role in promoting accountability in public institutions. The study's findings align with Institutional Theory by emphasizing the role of formal financial practices, such as budgetary planning and IPSAS adoption, in promoting transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement in federal universities.

The significant impact of budgetary management and

IPSAS on internal control and audit functions in federal universities in North-Central Nigeria highlights the importance of these reforms in strengthening financial oversight. Effective budgetary management ensures that resources are properly allocated and monitored, reducing risks and supporting compliance. IPSAS compliance, meanwhile, promotes standardized, transparent reporting, enabling thorough audits and robust internal controls. This aligns with findings by Folarin (2019) and Johnson (2020), who emphasize that strong budgetary practices and IPSAS adherence enhance accountability by establishing clear frameworks for risk management and financial accuracy. The findings align with Institutional Theory by emphasizing how budgetary management and IPSAS compliance institutionalize financial practices, creating structured frameworks that ensure accountability and reduce risk. These reforms align with the theory's focus on how organizations adopt formal structures to gain legitimacy and improve internal control mechanisms.

The significant influence of budgetary management and International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) on accountability implies that these financial practices are critical for transparent and responsible management of public funds. Effective budgetary management ensures that funds are allocated, tracked, and utilized in alignment with institutional goals, reducing financial inefficiencies and misuse. IPSAS compliance, on the other hand, provides a standardized framework that improves the consistency and clarity of financial reporting, making it easier for stakeholders to assess financial integrity. This aligns with studies by Folarin (2019) and Almquist et al., (2022), which emphasize that both budgetary controls and adherence to international standards promotes trust, as they make financial processes more transparent and accountable.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that effective budgetary management is essential for enhancing financial accountability in federal universities in North-Central Nigeria. The positive and statistically significant impact of budgetary management emphasizes its role as a determinant of accountability, highlighting the necessity of robust financial planning reforms. Implementing sound budgetary practices and adopting International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), these institutions will not only improve the efficiency and transparency of resource allocation but also promote stakeholder confidence and mitigate financial mismanagement risks.

Based on the findings from this study the following recommendations are made:

i. Universities should adopt a more participatory budgeting process that involves key stakeholders, including department heads, financial officers, and external auditors, to ensure that financial resources are allocated efficiently and aligned with institutional priorities. Also, universities should also establish automated budget tracking systems that allow real-time monitoring of budget performance against financial goals.

ii. Based on the positive significant influence of financial reporting reforms, universities in Nigeria should fully adopt and consistently implement IPSAS (International Public Sector Accounting Standards) to ensure standardized, transparent, and reliable financial reports.

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