



Detective Internal Controls and Financial Planning in Public Sector in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between detective internal controls and public Sector financial management in terms of financial Planning with a focus on selected ministries in rivers state. Interpretive Philosophy and descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was the twenty-Six (26) ministries in Rivers State, Nigeria as at year end 2019. The unit population was the staff of the ministries from departments as Finance and Accounts, Procurements, Internal audit, Monitoring and evaluation, and office of the Commissioner for each of the ministries selected. Simple random sampling technique was used to determine the sample for the study. A sample of 26 ministries and 130 respondents were selected for the study. Copies of questionnaire were used for data gathering. Descriptive statistics and Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient statistics was used for data analysis. This was done with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The result of the study showed that internal control dimension of detective internal controls has a very strong, positive and significant relationship with the measures of public sector financial management (financial planning). The study concludes that detective internal controls have a significant relationship with financial planning in public sector in Nigeria. The study recommended that the ministries should ensure that there are adequate controls in the system, so that effective and efficient financial management can be achieved. Government should focus more on the establishment of detective, controls in the ministries as these controls have significant effect on proper and prudent management of funds allocated to the ministries for budget execution among others.

Keywords: Detective Internal control, Financial Planning, Internal controls, Nigeria, Public sector financial management.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times there have been reports of high level of financial impropriety among office holders and political class across the globe that has led to development of research interest towards that area among scholars. The rate of corruption and decadence that pervade many countries especially Africa nations has rekindled interest on the need for financial accountability and account for stewardship, so that proper resources utilisation and service delivery to the public could be achieved. Today emphasis is placed on financial accountability and efficient use of public fund across the globe (Adeyemi & Olarewaju, 2019). Yet efficient public sector financial management has become an elusive task especially within the Nigerian setting.

Appah and Appiah (2010) opined that cases of fraud is prevalent in the Nigerian public sector and that every segment of the public service, could seem to be involved in one way or the other in some of these nasty acts. The bane of public sector financial mismanagement in Nigeria since the oil boom years, a period under which there existed structurally weak

control mechanism, which create a variety of loopholes that have tended to facilitate and sustain, corrupt practices. This is coupled with the fact that there is a near total absence of the notion and ethics of accountability in the conduct of public affairs in the country, hence the need for strengthening the controls mechanisms and development of political will to ensure that public sector financial accountability, evaluation and monitoring are in place. Odoir and Alenegholena (2014) stated that public sector financial management is concerned with the economic behaviour of government with regards to the methodologies, rules, regulations and policies that shape the planning, budgeting, forecasting, coordinating, directing, influencing and governing the inflow and outflow of funds in order to maximize the objective of the institution. In other words, public sector financial management (PSFM) deals with management of government spending, taxation borrowing, public debts, foreign reserves, foreign exchange system, level of liquidity in the economy and public finance auditing in order to achieve some stated objectives (Nwezeaku, 2010). Financial Planning is a sub set of public sector financial management is key in ensuring adequate resources utilization. Detective Internal Controls are mechanisms, rules and procedures designed to find errors after they have occurred, also serve as part of a checks-and-balances system and to determine how efficient policies are. In other words, these are controls designed to detect and report the occurrence of an omission, an error or a malicious act. Examples of detective controls includes: duplicate checking of calculations, periodic performance reporting with variance error message over tape labels and hash totals counter cheques post-due account reports (Kenton, 2019). Globally, there have been several instances in which financial resources have been mismanaged or misappropriated through fraudulent practices leading to collapse of several onetime flamboyant businesses (Joseph, 2018), specifically, instances of massive failure of internal controls especially in public sectors, suggesting the degree to which major institutions across the globe are mismanaged have been documented and as such proprietary trading was involved and speculative profits created a permissive environment in which executives ignored elementary principles of internal controls (Schroy, 2010), with this precarious situation prudent management is often neglected.

In Nigeria, evidences from past studies showed an overwhelming documentation of instances of financial mismanagement in the public sector orchestrated by weak internal controls (Okwach & Inanga, 2000; Adeyemi et al., 2014) and found that firms are faced with internal control weaknesses such as unacquainted payments, poor debt management, presented payment vouchers and misappropriation of revenues and other receipts, thus the need to examine and/or strengthen the internal control systems of the public sector organizations (Joseph, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

The variables here are internal control which serves as the independent variable with detective internal control as its dimension and Public Sector Financial Management serving as the dependent variable with financial planning as its measure. The researcher used the diagramme in figure 1.1 to illustrate the interaction of independent variables and the dependent variables.

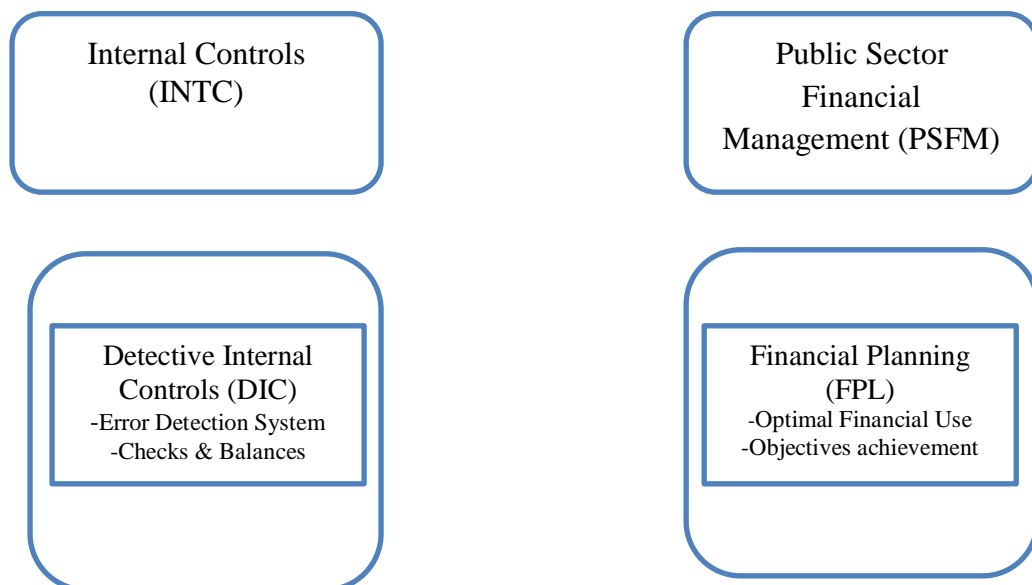


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework
Source (Avery & Obah 2018; Boake, 2016; Perry, 2013)

Aim and Objective of the Study

The main aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between internal controls and Public sector financial management in Ministries in Rivers State. Other specific objective includes to:

- Investigate the relationship between detective internal controls and financial Planning in ministries in Rivers State, Nigeria

Research Question

Based on the specific objective, the following Research question is raised to include:

- What is the effect of internal controls on financial Planning in ministries in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

Based on the specific objectives and research question, the following hypothesis in the null form guided the study.

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between detective internal controls and Financial Planning in ministries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Detective internal controls

These controls are designed to detect and report the occurrence of an omission, an error or a malicious act. Examples of detective controls includes: duplicate checking of calculations, periodic performance reporting with variance error message over tape labels and hash totals counter cheques post-due account reports (Kenton, 2019). In other words, detective controls are designed to find errors after they have occurred. They serve as part of a checks-and-balances system and to determine how efficient policies are. Other examples include surprise cash counts, taking inventory, review and approval of accounting work, internal audits, peer reviews, and enforcement of job descriptions and expectations. Detective internal controls also help protect assets. For instance, if a cashier does not know when her cash drawer will be counted, she may be more likely to be honest. Bazzoli (2000) opined that detective control give evidence that a loss has actually taken place but do not prevent a loss from occurring. In the study reviews, analyses, reconciliations, physical inventories and audits were given as an example of detective controls. Chen (2004) argued that the two types of controls are important for an effective internal control system but from a quality point of view, preventive controls are vital because they are proactive and emphasize quality. Meanwhile, Wales (2005) emphasized that for an organization to provide evidence that preventive controls are functioning and preventing losses, detective controls are important. In the public sector management while fraud, corruption and funds mismanagement cannot be prevented, emphasis is usually how to reduce or minimise it, as such detective control is particularly important since huge public funds are available to managers and omission and errors that would have been very material in the private sector could be termed immaterial and the public institutions as such mismanagement could occur. Consequently, regular and effective review of internal controls systems would help to reduce these incidences of funds mismanagement. Detective internal control can help to achieve this.

Financial Planning

Financial planning is the task of determining how a business will afford to achieve its strategic goals and objectives (Stess & Nwagwu, 1998). Usually, a company creates a Financial Plan immediately after the vision and objectives have been set. The Financial Plan describes each of the activities, resources, equipment and materials that are needed to achieve these objectives, as well as the timeframes involved. The Financial Planning activity involves the following tasks (Jordan et al., 2010):

- i. Assess the business environment
- ii. Confirm the business vision and objectives
- iii. Identify the types of resources needed to achieve these objectives
- iv. Quantify the amount of resource (labor, equipment, materials)
- v. Calculate the total cost of each type of resource
- vi. Summarize the costs to create a budget
- vii. Identify any risks and issues with the budget set.

Performing Financial Planning is critical to the success of any organization. It provides the Business Plan with rigor, by confirming that the objectives set are achievable from a financial point of view. It also helps the CEO to set financial targets for the organization, and reward staff for meeting objectives within the budget set.

The role of financial planning includes three categories:

1. Strategic role of financial management
2. Objectives of financial management
3. The planning cycle

When drafting a financial plan, the company should establish the planning horizon which is the time period of the plan, whether it is on a short-term (usually 12 months) or long-term (2–5 years) basis. Also, the individual projects and investment proposals of each operational unit within the company should be totaled and treated as one large project. This process is called aggregation (Jordan et al., 2010). Steiss and Nwagwu (1998) looking at financial planning and management in the public sector argued that in theory, the objectives of financial planning and management are quite simple—they are difficult only in practice. In theory, one merely has to decide what is wanted (specify goals and objectives), measure these wants (quantify the benefits sought), and then apply the means available to achieve the greatest possible value of the identified wants (maximize benefits). The means are the resources of complex organizations. Therefore, the primary objective of financial planning and management is to maximize benefits for any given set of resource inputs (Steiss & Nwagwu, 1998). Furthermore, the common denominator among the various resources of any organization is the cost involved in their utilization. The production of public and quasi-public goods and services requires the acquisition and allocation of relatively scarce resources, the values of which are measured and compared in the common unit of currency. Consequently, the focus of management most often is on financial resources.

Basic Components of Financial Planning and Management

The essential tools for managing financial resources include techniques for assessing the long-term fiscal needs of the organization and for acquiring these resources, rational procedures for allocating resources and managing costs, and appropriate mechanisms for recording and disseminating relevant financial information. Given the increasing role that government and other not-for-profit organizations play in the economy, the public's stake in effective performance of these organizations and institutions is mounting. In the absence of the verdict of the marketplace, the role and responsibilities of financial management in the public sector are even greater than those in profit-oriented organizations.

Financial management involves the acquisition and allocation of organizational resources and the tracking of performance resulting from such allocations. In a profit-oriented enterprise, financial statements form the basis for the stockholders' assessment of performance of management. In not-for-profit organizations, management seeks to satisfy the needs and desires of its constituents within a set of financial (budgetary) constraints. In either case, financial resources are the focal point for managerial decision making, action, and accountability. Methods and techniques utilized in the performance of these financial functions are relevant to managers in all types of organizations. Financial management in the public sector borrows liberally from the tools and concepts of business management. The transfer of techniques cannot be complete, however, because of the basic features of government services which include the need to provide for the common welfare and safety of the community and to allocate basic public services on other than the criterion of the ability to pay. These same features limit the extent to which business management techniques can be applied in the management of public resources. Several functions are common to financial management, however, whether in the private or public sector (Steiss & Nwagwu, 1998).

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Financial Control

According to John et al, (2014) in Avery and Obah (2018), the present and future personal functions of human beings are asserted to constitute the fundamental point of reference in a theory of financial controls. This theory stipulates that existing and possible functions of financial tools for organizations are most essential. In the same light, it is stated that, payments, financial instruments, accounting, control models, economic calculations, and related considerations, both within and outside of the organization, ought to be discussed in regard to inner characteristics but also possible effects. It is noted that establishing the relationships between various activities and financial processes, from a financial control point of view, is a general and basic issue (Avery & Obah, 2018). The theory of financial controls for organizations places a natural focus on the organisation such that they are viewed from several latitudinal areas.

The first regards the human beings' functions of what is accomplished through organizations, their activities and output. The second is about the structure of the organization and activities, and of transactions that various parties have with each other. The third area covers the control systems in the sense of recurring procedures and methods that are employed to relate present and future functions to resources both externally and internally. The aforementioned financial control tools are argued to be crucial from an individual organisation's perspective and also for larger economic systems. The fourth and last area illustrates the specific processes of individual organizations for certain issues. The theory further states that structure and financial control system works together. The financial control theory is very relevant to the current study given that it assists in better understanding of the intricacies surrounding accountability in an organization.

Review of Empirical literature

Ogunmakin (2020) in his study within the Nigerian context investigated the effect of internal control system on the accountability of public parastatals in Ekiti State. The study focused on the effect of the internal control system on public parastatals in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study used a purposive sampling method, and a total of 100 questionnaires was administered to staffs in the seven selected public parastatals in the state. The questionnaire was used for data collection

analysed using ANOVA and Regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The ANOVA in the regression analysis showed that all the components of the internal control system had combined significant effect on accountability in the public parastatals. Also, the results of the study revealed that each of the components of internal control system on accountability which was measured by effective and efficient financial operations, showed that Information flow and control activities have an insignificant effect on accountability of public parastatals, while monitoring and evaluation and risk assessment have a significant effect on the accountability of public parastatals in Ekiti state. It was recommended that internal control system should be encouraged to maintain their independent position to ensure more assurances of the effectiveness of the control system and also government should ensure that the internal control system is periodically monitored and evaluated.

Owolabi and Amosun (2020) study investigated internal control systems and quality of financial reporting in insurance industry in Nigeria. The study investigated the impact of internal control systems and the quality of financial reporting in insurance industry in Nigeria. The research employed a survey research design. The study administered 100 questionnaires randomly to respondents, 98 questionnaires were returned and analysed. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research hypothesis were analysed using regression analysis using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS 26). The results of the findings revealed that control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication and monitoring has a statistical significant positive effect on quality of financial reporting of insurance industry in Nigeria. The study concluded that effective and efficient internal control system can affect the quality of financial reports of insurance industry in Nigeria.

Adeyemi and Oloranwanju (2019), investigated internal control system and financial accountability in Nigeria public sector. The study adopted the survey and explanatory design, while the population of the study was 4431 and a sample of 354 participants (354 Heads of Units in the Account and Audit Departments), in 65 Ministries of the Southwestern Nigeria. The study examined the effect of internal control system on financial accountability, in terms of effective and efficient financial operation, compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Reliable financial reporting, transparency and flow of information were obtained primarily from a random sample. Data were analysed through codification, descriptively and regression analysis. The results of the study showed that internal control system had a positive effect on financial accountability, in terms of effective and efficient financial operation, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, reliable financial reporting, transparency and flow of information. The regression results also showed that control environment, control activities, risk assessment, information and communication and monitoring and evaluation significantly impact on financial accountability in public sector. The study conclude that internal control system put in place in the public sector is well established and adequate for effective and efficient financial accountability with adequate use of all channels of communication and information flow for proper financial accountability. The study recommended that the internal control unit should be encouraged to maintain their independent role, such that the internal auditor should be adequately independent from those responsible for the financial operation, as well as to be able to provide additional assurance on cost efficiency and effectiveness of the internal control system.

Kazeem et al. (2019) study investigated the constraints to budget implementation in Nigeria.

The main objective the paper was to examine the constraints to budget implementation. Data were collected through questionnaires and other secondary data source. Chi-square was used in testing the hypotheses. Three hypotheses were set forth and tested using two ministries namely: education and finance in Bauchi State of Nigeria. Thirty (30) high ranking staff involved in budget preparation and implementation out of thirty-five administered with questionnaires responded to time. Using the students t-test, the first hypothesis (There is no significant relationship between corruption and budget implementation) it was discovered with t-cal. (3.41) greater than t-tab (1.679) corruption always hinder budget implementation. The second hypothesis (ministries have no adequate measures to address budget variances), with t-cal. (3.497) greater than t-tab (1.699), the two ministries do not adequately monitor budget so as to achieve the expected goal. The study concluded that reasons for budget implementation constraints can be explained outside those factors.

Oche et al. (2018) in their study within the Nigerian context investigated the effect of internal controls on financial accountability in the public sector, with focus on government ministries/departments in Benue State, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross sectional survey design. The study drew a sample of 283 out of 973 staff of five (5) ministries/departments of Finance, Auditor General Office, Accountant General Office, Local Government Audit and Board of Internal Revenue, which were chosen using the purposive sampling technique. The data for the study were collected through the use of the questionnaire instrument. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The research hypotheses were tested using the p-value statistics. The study revealed that control environment; risk assessment and control activity has a positive significant effect on financial accountability in public sector. The study concluded that an effective and efficient internal control system can influence financial accountability in public sector. The study recommended that the internal control in Nigerian Public sector be constantly reviewed by management so as to be in line with national and international best practices in order to reduce irregularities and inaccuracies. This can be achieved when control activities are categorized in terms of the objective they pertain to as well as the nature of the control activity itself. Also, all employees and those in charge of managing financial resources should

constantly be schooled –workshops, seminars, as well as in service trainings be organized for them to be conversant with matters.

METHODOLOGY

Interpretive Philosophy and descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was the twenty Six (26) ministries in Rivers State, Nigeria as at year end 2018. The unit population was the staff of the ministries from departments as Finance and Accounts, Procurements, Internal audit, Monitoring and evaluation, and office of the Commissioner for each of the ministries selected. Simple random sampling technique was used to determine the sample for the study. A sample of 26 ministries and 130 respondents were selected for the study. Copies of questionnaire were used for data gathering. Descriptive statistics and Spearman’s Rank Order Correlation Coefficient statistics was used for data analysis.

Model Specifications

The following models are developed for this study:

$$\text{PSFM} = f(\text{INC}) \text{ ----- (1)}$$

$$\text{FPL} = f(\text{DIC}) \text{ ----- (2)}$$

Using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), the study analysed the results from the data gathered based on the models.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of All Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
FPL	117	2.25	4.00	3.4957	.43299
DIC	117	2.25	4.00	3.5470	.47107
Valid N (listwise)	117				

Source: Survey Data, 2022

From the descriptive result analysis for all variables as shown on the table 4.1, detective internal control has the highest variation amongst the variables indicating its importance in encouraging efficient resources management in public sector in terms of financial planning. Again with the variables scoring a mean score of greater than 3 also indicates that they are evenly distributed.

Testing of Hypothesis

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between detective internal controls and Financial Planning in ministries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 4.2: Spearman’s Correlations result for Hypothesis one

		DIC	FPL
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.912**
	DIC		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	117	117
	Correlation Coefficient	.912**	1.000
	FPL		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	117	117

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: (SPSS output of Data, 2022)

From the table above, the positive and very large value of rho (0.912**) indicates that there is a very strong rank correlation between detective internal controls and financial planning in selected ministries in Rivers State, Nigeria, and correlation is significant at 0.01 level. Since the p – value (= 0.000) is less than the level of significance (alpha) (0.05), we therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that: there is a significant relationship between detective internal controls and financial planning of selected ministries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

From the result of the study it can be seen that dimension of detective internal controls showed that respondents considered them important for prudent public sector financial management in the ministry. Financial Planning (FPL) as a measure of public sector financial management has the highest variation with a standard deviation value of 0.43299. In addition, the result also showed that detective internal controls has a very strong, positive and significant relationship with financial planning in selected ministries in Rivers state. The result shows that 91.2% of the changes in public sector financial management in terms of financial planning is accounted for by detective control aspect internal controls in the ministries. This result imply when the mechanisms, rules and procedures designed to find errors after they have occurred, also serve as part of a checks-and-balances system and to determine how efficient policies are in place in the studied ministries, it can ensure that the process of evaluating and managing the utilization of financial resources optimally for the achievement of the ministries (government) goals and objectives are achieved.

The findings here are in consonance with earlier studies of (Abianga et al., 2017; Adeyemi & Olanranwanju, 2019; Hodula & Melecký, 2020) whose study results indicated that public sector financial management that could achieve efficient planning, revenue and debt management as well as budget execution can be affected by the implementation of effective internal controls at different levels.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the finding of the study the study concludes that detective internal control has a very strong, positive and significant relationship with financial planning. Based on the findings and conclusion, it is recommended that: Internal control is essential in the smooth and efficient actualization of objectives of government thus the ministries should ensure that there are adequate controls in the system, so that effective and efficient financial management can be achieved. Where there are existing controls, they should ensure that they are efficient and effective and engage in regular review so that lapses can be identified and corrected. Government should focus more on the establishment of detective and other corrective controls in the ministries as these controls have significant effect on proper and prudent management of funds allocated to the ministries for budget execution and efficiency in resources utilization.

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