Concrescence: Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Research

Vol. 3, No. 3, 2026, E-ISSN: 1595-9287

Corporate Governance Practices (Transparency, Accountability, Integrity and Responsibility) as Predictors of Academic Staff Morale in Private Universities in the Niger Delta Region

[1]Imasuen K & [2]Aibinuomo, M.P

[1,2]Institute of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria
Email: [1]kennedy.imasuen@uniben.edu

Abstract

This study investigated corporate governance practices, (transparency, accountability, integrity, and responsibility) as predictors of academic staff morale in private universities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational research design, with a sample of 360 academic staff drawn from selected private universities using the multistage sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure corporate governance practices and academic staff morale. The instrument was validated by experts, and its reliability was established using Cronbach's reliability coefficients. Data collected were analysed using simple and multiple regression analysis to determine the extent to which each governance variable predicts academic staff morale, both individually and jointly. The findings revealed that transparency, accountability, integrity, and responsibility significantly influence academic staff morale when considered independently. However, responsibility emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by accountability and integrity, while transparency had the least influence. In the combined model, responsibility, accountability, and integrity remained significant predictors, whereas transparency did not make a significant unique contribution. It was recommended that university management should strengthen responsible leadership, enforce accountability mechanisms, and uphold ethical standards to improve staff motivation and institutional effectiveness.

Keywords: transparency, accountability, integrity, responsibility, academic staff morale

1. Introduction

Corporate governance has become a central concept in contemporary organisational management, extending beyond the corporate and financial sectors into higher education institutions. It refers to the systems, principles, and processes by which organisations are directed and controlled to ensure accountability, transparency, fairness, and ethical decision-making (Kim, 2023). The four key dimensions under consideration in this study, transparency, accountability, integrity and responsibility, are widely recognised as foundational principles of good governance.

Transparency involves the open dissemination of information and clarity in decision-making processes. It allows stakeholders to access relevant institutional data, thereby building trust and reducing uncertainty. According to Siwendu and Ambe (2024), transparency enhances stakeholder confidence and improves organisational legitimacy. In Nigerian organisations, transparency has been linked to improved trust and reduced workplace conflict (Afolabi et al., 2024). On the other hand, accountability refers to the obligation of organisational leaders to justify their decisions and actions to stakeholders. It ensures that authority is exercised responsibly and that performance is evaluated based on

established standards (Karsono, 2023). Accountability mechanisms are essential in preventing abuse of power and promoting fairness in institutional governance.

Integrity is concerned with ethical behaviour, honesty, and adherence to moral and professional standards. In academic institutions, integrity ensures that decisions are made without favouritism or corruption, thereby promoting fairness and trust among staff members. Integrity reflects adherence to ethical standards, and responsibility emphasises commitment to institutional goals and staff welfare (Karsono, 2023). Responsibility involves the commitment of institutional leaders to fulfil their duties and ensure that organisational objectives are achieved efficiently. It also includes responsiveness to staff needs and institutional challenges.

Academic staff morale refers to the overall level of satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and enthusiasm that lecturers and academic personnel exhibit toward their work. In private universities, particularly in developing regions such as the Niger Delta, staff morale is influenced by factors such as leadership style, remuneration, workload, job security, and governance quality. When governance practices are weak or poorly implemented, staff morale tends to decline, leading to reduced productivity, absenteeism, and high turnover intention.

Empirical studies consistently show that corporate governance influences employee outcomes. Koeswayo et al. (2024) found that transparent and accountable governance enhances employee motivation, trust, and commitment. Similarly, Prencipe (2025) reported that strong accountability systems improve job satisfaction, performance, and workplace morale by reducing role ambiguity. Aguilera and Ruiz-Castillo (2025) and Kim (2023) further emphasized that transparency, ethical responsibility, and stakeholder inclusion are critical for sustaining employee morale, while governance failures lead to reduced productivity and inefficiency.

In Nigeria and across Africa, similar patterns emerge. Dauda and Bradford (2023) found that organizational ethics and effective communication significantly influence employee morale in tertiary institutions. Ozili (2021), in a broader review of governance reforms in Nigeria, concluded that although regulatory changes have improved governance codes, enforcement remains inconsistent, limiting their developmental impact. Similarly, Afolabi et al. (2024) highlighted the role of governance mechanisms such as audit committees and accountability structures in promoting ethical behaviour. Ajibade et al. (2025) also showed that governance practices strongly affect staff engagement and productivity in Nigerian universities, with poor governance linked to low morale. At a broader level, Gwala and Mashau (2022) confirmed that transparency and accountability consistently enhance employee motivation and engagement across African organizations.

Although these studies provide valuable insights, most of them are conducted in corporate or non-academic settings, leaving a gap in the context of private universities in developing regions such as the Niger Delta. This study, therefore, extends existing literature by focusing specifically on academic staff morale within higher education institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the expansion of private universities in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta region, concerns persist regarding the declining morale of academic staff. Many lecturers report dissatisfaction with institutional governance structures, especially in areas relating to transparency in decision-making, accountability in administrative processes, and fairness in staff welfare policies. In several private universities, decisions regarding promotion,

workload distribution, and remuneration are often made without adequate consultation with academic staff. This lack of transparency creates mistrust between management and staff, thereby reducing morale. Similarly, weak accountability systems have been reported in which administrative decisions are not properly justified or consistently implemented.

Empirical evidence in Nigerian tertiary institutions shows that poor governance practices, such as weak organisational ethics and inadequate communication, significantly reduce employee morale (Dauda & Bradford, 2023). In addition, studies in African corporate governance systems reveal that poor governance structures often lead to low employee engagement and reduced organisational commitment (Gwala & Mashau, 2022). However, there is still limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on how corporate governance dimensions, transparency, accountability, integrity, and responsibility, predict academic staff morale in private universities in the Niger Delta region. This gap creates uncertainty for policymakers and university administrators on how best to strengthen governance systems to improve staff motivation and institutional effectiveness.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following research questions were raised

1. To what extent does transparency influence academic staff morale in private universities in the Niger Delta region?
2. To what extent does accountability influence academic staff morale in private universities in the Niger Delta region?
3. To what extent does integrity influence academic staff morale in private universities in the Niger Delta region?
4. To what extent does responsibility influence academic staff morale in private universities in the Niger Delta region?
5. To what extent do transparency, accountability, integrity, and responsibility jointly predict academic staff morale in private universities in the Niger Delta region?

Methodology

This study is a survey that employed a correlational research design, as it sought to examine the extent to which corporate governance practices predict academic staff morale without manipulating any variables. The study population comprised all academic staff in private universities within the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. A sample of 360 was selected using the multistage sampling technique. Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument consisted of two main sections, A and B. Section A was used to measure corporate governance practices (transparency, accountability, integrity, and responsibility) and comprised 20 items, five for each component. Section B was used to measure academic staff morale and consisted of 20 items. The items were structured on a four-point Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree to capture the respondents' perceptions.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, it was subjected to expert review in the field of educational management, measurement and evaluation. Reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha reliability statistics, and reliability indices of 0.88 and 0.83 were obtained for Sections A and B. The data collected were analysed using simple and multiple regression analysis. Simple regression analysis was used to determine the individual predictive influence of each independent variable on academic staff morale, while multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the joint influence of transparency, accountability, integrity, and responsibility. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

Results

Table 1: Regression Coefficients of Transparency on Academic Staff Morale

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	p-value
Constant	30.654	3.377	–	9.076	0.000
Transparency	1.434	0.208	0.345	6.901	0.000

R = 0.345; Adjusted R^2 = 0.116; F (1,353) = 47.621; p = 0.000

The results in Table 1 indicate that transparency exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on academic staff morale. The standardised beta coefficient (β = 0.345) suggests that transparency contributes moderately to variations in morale. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.116 shows that transparency alone explains 11.6% of the total variance in academic staff morale.

Table 2: Regression Coefficients of Accountability on Academic Staff Morale

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	p-value
Constant	30.003	2.289	–	13.106	0.000
Accountability	1.602	0.151	0.493	10.583	0.000

R = 0.493; Adjusted R^2 = 0.241; F (1,349) = 111.989; p = 0.000

Table 2 shows that accountability has a strong and statistically significant influence on academic staff morale. The beta coefficient (β = 0.493) indicates a substantial positive effect, suggesting that as accountability mechanisms improve, staff morale increases considerably. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.241 indicates that accountability explains 24.1% of the variance in academic staff morale, a relatively large contribution compared to transparency.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients of Integrity on Academic Staff Morale

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	p-value
Constant	30.384	2.476	–	12.270	0.000
Integrity	1.582	0.165	0.456	9.608	0.000

R = 0.456; Adjusted R^2 = 0.206; F (1,352) = 92.313; p = 0.000

Table 3 reveals that integrity has a significant and meaningful positive influence on academic staff morale. The standardised beta value (β = 0.456) indicates a strong contribution, suggesting that ethical conduct, honesty, and consistency in administrative actions play a crucial role in shaping staff morale. The adjusted R^2 of 0.206 shows that integrity explains 20.6% of the variation in morale.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients of Responsibility on Academic Staff Morale

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	p-value
Constant	24.616	1.976	–	12.458	0.000
Responsibility	2.062	0.137	0.627	15.095	0.000

R = 0.627; Adjusted R^2 = 0.392; F (1,351) = 227.854; p = 0.000

Table 4 shows that responsibility significantly predicts academic staff morale. The beta coefficient (β = 0.627) indicates a very strong positive effect. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.392 indicates that responsibility alone explains 39.2% of the variance in academic staff morale, a remarkably high proportion in social science research. This suggests that nearly two-fifths of staff morale can be attributed to how well responsibilities are defined, delegated, and executed within the institution.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Coefficients of Corporate Governance Practices on Academic Staff Morale

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	p-value
Constant	11.323	3.097	–	3.656	0.000
Transparency	0.280	0.184	0.067	1.522	0.129
Accountability	0.688	0.153	0.208	4.487	0.000
Integrity	0.548	0.161	0.157	3.401	0.001
Responsibility	1.387	0.168	0.422	8.264	0.000

$R = 0.683$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.460$; $F(4,344) = 75.095$; $p = 0.000$

Table 5 shows that transparency, accountability, integrity and responsibility collectively have a strong and statistically significant influence on academic staff morale. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.460 indicates that these variables together explain 46.0% of the total variance in morale. However, a closer examination of the individual contributions within the model reveals important distinctions. Responsibility (β = 0.422) remains the strongest predictor, followed by accountability (β = 0.208) and integrity (β = 0.157), all of which are statistically significant. Transparency (β = 0.067), however, is not statistically significant when the other variables are included.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the extent to which corporate governance practices, transparency, accountability, integrity, and responsibility predict academic staff morale in private universities in the Niger Delta region. The findings revealed that transparency has a positive and statistically significant influence on academic staff morale, although the magnitude of this influence is moderate. This suggests that openness in communication, access to institutional information, and clarity in decision-making processes contribute to improved morale among academic staff. This finding supports Kim's (2023) assertion that transparency is a core component of corporate governance, fostering trust and reducing uncertainty within organisations. Similarly, Siwendu and Ambe (2024) posited that transparency enhances stakeholder confidence and organisational legitimacy, which are essential for maintaining a positive work environment. In the Nigerian context, Afolabi et al. (2024) also found that transparency is associated with increased trust and reduced workplace conflict, which are critical elements of staff morale.

However, the relatively modest explanatory power of transparency in this study suggests that while transparency is important, it may not be sufficient on its own to drive high levels of morale. This aligns with the view of Aguilera and Ruiz-Castillo (2025), who argued that transparency is most effective when integrated with other governance mechanisms such as accountability and ethical responsibility.

The study also found that accountability has a strong and statistically significant influence on academic staff morale. This indicates that when university management is answerable for its decisions and actions, staff morale improves substantially. This finding is consistent with Karsono (2023), who emphasised that accountability ensures that authority is

exercised responsibly and that organisational actions are subject to evaluation. It also aligns with Prencipe (2025), who reported that organisations with strong accountability systems experience higher levels of employee satisfaction and performance due to reduced ambiguity and increased fairness.

Furthermore, Koeswayo et al. (2024) found that accountability enhances employee engagement and organisational commitment by fostering trust in leadership. In line with this, the present study suggests that academic staff in private universities are more motivated when they perceive that management decisions are transparent, justified, and subject to scrutiny. This reinforces the idea that accountability is a critical governance mechanism that directly influences staff perceptions of fairness, thereby enhancing morale.
The findings further showed that integrity significantly influences academic staff morale. This implies that ethical behaviour, honesty, and adherence to professional standards are crucial determinants of how academic staff perceive their work environment. This result corroborates the findings of Kim (2023), who highlighted that ethical standards and integrity are essential for building trust among organisational members. Similarly, Dauda and Bradford (2023) found that organisational ethics significantly influence employee morale in Nigerian tertiary institutions, noting that poor ethical standards lead to dissatisfaction and reduced morale.

In addition, Karsono (2023) emphasized that integrity ensures fairness in institutional governance by preventing favouritism and corruption. In the academic context, where merit and fairness are highly valued, integrity becomes particularly important in shaping morale. Thus, the present finding suggests that when university management demonstrates ethical consistency and fairness, academic staff are more likely to develop trust in the system, which enhances their motivation and commitment.

Responsibility emerged as the strongest predictor of academic staff morale in this study. This indicates that the extent to which university management fulfils its obligations, responds to staff needs, and effectively manages institutional affairs plays a dominant role in shaping morale. This finding is consistent with Karsono (2023), who described responsibility as a commitment to organisational goals and stakeholder welfare. It also aligns with the broader governance perspective of Aguilera and Ruiz-Castillo (2025), who emphasised that modern governance systems increasingly prioritise responsibility and stakeholder responsiveness as key drivers of organisational success.

Similarly, Gwala and Mashau (2022) reported that governance structures, especially those that emphasise responsibility and accountability, positively affect employee motivation and engagement across African organisations. The strong predictive power of responsibility in this study suggests that academic staff place high value on leadership effectiveness, responsiveness, and commitment to their welfare. This underscores the importance of responsible governance in fostering a supportive and motivating academic environment.

The combined analysis revealed that transparency, accountability, integrity, and responsibility jointly predict academic staff morale to a substantial extent. However, only accountability, integrity, and responsibility made significant unique contributions, while transparency did not remain significant when the other variables were controlled. This finding suggests that transparency, although important, may operate indirectly through other governance mechanisms. This is consistent with the argument of Aguilera and Ruiz-Castillo (2025) that governance dimensions are interrelated and often reinforce one

another. Transparency may enhance accountability and integrity, which in turn directly influence staff morale.

The dominance of responsibility, followed by accountability and integrity, aligns with empirical findings by Koeswayo et al. (2024) and Prencipe (2025), who emphasised that governance practices that directly affect decision-making outcomes and leadership behaviour have stronger effects on employee morale than procedural mechanisms alone. Furthermore, the finding supports Gwala and Mashau (2022), who concluded that governance structures collectively influence employee-related outcomes such as motivation and engagement. The implication is that effective corporate governance requires an integrated approach where multiple dimensions work together to influence staff attitudes.

Conclusion

This study examined corporate governance practices (transparency, accountability, integrity, and responsibility) as predictors of academic staff morale in private universities in the Niger Delta region. The findings showed that all four variables significantly influence academic staff morale when considered individually. However, responsibility emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by accountability and integrity, while transparency had the least influence. In the combined model, responsibility, accountability, and integrity remained significant predictors, whereas transparency did not make a significant unique contribution.

Recommendations

1. University management should demonstrate commitment, responsiveness, and effective leadership in addressing staff needs.
2. Clear structures should be established to ensure that decisions are justified, consistent, and subject to evaluation.
3. Institutions should enforce ethical standards to ensure fairness and eliminate favouritism and unethical practices.
4. Management should ensure open communication and clarity in decision-making, especially in staff-related matters.
5. Universities should implement transparency, accountability, integrity, and responsibility collectively to enhance staff morale.

References

Afolabi, A. J., Adeleye, G. O., Ajewole, I. R., Araga, A. S., Ume, E., & Okhiria, V. O. (2024). Corporate governance and ethical practice in the Nigerian financial sector. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 8*(2). https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.802034

Aguilera, R.V., & Ruiz Castillo, M. (2025). Toward an updated corporate governance framework: Fundamentals, disruptions, and future research. *Business Research Quarterly, 28*, 336 - 348.

Ajibade, M. J. A., Akindele, K. I., & Ogbogu, F. O. (2025). Managing employee engagement, retention and productivity in public universities in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*. https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.907000413

Dauda, O. G., & Bradford, O. A. (2023). Perceived organisational politics, organisational ethics and employees' morale in tertiary institutions in Southwest Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 7*(6), 1539–1551. https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.70618

Gwala, R. S., & Mashau, P. (2022). Corporate governance and organisational performance in Africa: A systematic literature review. *African Journal of Business Management, 16* (10), 210–223.

Karsono, B. (2023). Good corporate governance: Transparency, accountability, responsibility, independence, and fairness. *Dinasti International Journal of Management Science, 4* (5), 811–821. https://doi.org/10.31933/dijms.v4i5.1860

Kim, W. (2023). Corporate governance: Upholding transparency, accountability, and ethical standards. *Business Studies Journal, 15* (4), 1-3.

Koeswayo, P. S., Haryanto, H., & Handoyo, S. (2024). The impact of corporate governance, internal control and corporate reputation on employee engagement. *Cogent Business and Management, 11*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2296698

Ozili, P. K. (2021). Corporate governance research in Nigeria: A review. *SN Business and Economics, 1*, Article 17. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43546-020-00015-8

Prencipe, A. (2025). Accountability between compliance and legitimacy: Rethinking governance for corporate sustainability. *Sustainability, 17*(20), 9305. https://doi.org/10.3390/su17209305

Siwendu, T. O., & Ambe, C. M. (2024). A systematic literature review on transparency in executive remuneration disclosures. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management, 17* (10), 466. https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm17100466