

# **BUDGET CONTROLS AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN ADEKUNLE AJASIN UNIVERSITY**

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## **Abstract**

The impact of budget controls on organizational performance has been extensively discussed in the literature. However, the specific effects of budget controls on the performance of public universities have been underexplored, leaving a gap that this study aims to address. This paper investigates the influence of budget control on the performance of Adekunle Ajasin University. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the University's bursary department and analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that, despite the presence of mechanisms such as a budget committee to ensure budget control, the effectiveness of these strategies was limited due to inadequate funding. Consequently, this underfunding diminished overall performance. The study concludes that for budget controls to significantly enhance organizational performance, adequate funding is crucial.

**Keywords:** Budget Controls, Performance, Public University, Higher Education.

## **Introduction**

Around the world, various political, social, and economic factors impact the performance of organizations in both the private and public sectors (Odongo et al., 2019; Jayalakshmi et al., 2023). While organizations have some influence over certain factors, others remain beyond their control. Consequently, managers must develop strategic processes to enable efficient planning and organizational performance (Okumu, 2021). Among these strategic processes, budgeting and budget control are paramount, as highlighted by Egbonike & Unamma (2017) and Ojomolade et al. (2022). The budgeting tool provides direction for an organization's actions, ensuring the attainment of organizational goals (Okumu, 2021).

A budget outlines an organization's expected expenses and income over a specific period (Ojomolade et al., 2022). It serves as a comprehensive summary of planned financial operations, encompassing cash flows, income sources, anticipated income, expenses, assets, liabilities, and the utilization of capital, human, and natural resources (Mazikana, 2019; Ojomolade et al., 2022). Budget control allows a company to align its strategic initiatives and resources based on historical outcomes and future predictions. As such, budgeting is a vital tool for assessing overall organizational performance, making budget control essential for administrators and managers in both private and public organizations (Romenska et al., 2020).

Despite the effectiveness of budgets, efficient budget control is crucial to maximize organizational efficiency (Hernandez et al., 2017). Alade et al. (2020) and Felicio et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of implementing a stringent budget oversight system. According to Mazikana (2019), budget oversight identifies discrepancies between planned and actual budget results, enabling corrective actions to align them. If executed well, this process provides a blueprint for financial

success. It is no surprise that both private businesses and universities in the public and commercial sectors use budgets and budget oversight to maintain smooth operations and strengthen planning and control procedures (Olaniyan & Efuntade, 2020).

The public sector benefits from budgeting and budget control when the government can deliver services aligned with its priorities and financial plans (Menifield, 2020). While budget control has a well-established track record in the private sector, its success in the public sector remains debatable (Menifield, 2020; Ojomolade et al., 2022). Factors such as lack of political will, corrupt practices, insufficient skilled personnel, and declining revenue have been identified as significant causes. Nevertheless, most organizations continue to view and use budgets and budget management as tools for improving results.

The steadily declining revenues required to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population have made it increasingly challenging for developing nations to manage public spending (Nyasha & Odhiambo, 2019). In many African countries, including Nigeria, poor management of public spending is particularly evident due to limited resources, growing populations, extreme inequality, and corruption. For instance, Nigeria's financial stability has suffered due to increased security risks, terrorist attacks, and a global drop in oil prices exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Djiofack et al., 2020). The consequent decline in government revenue has led to a heavy reliance on external financing for the nation's budget. In 2022, debt is expected to cover 65% of Nigeria's budget, negatively affecting the public sector (Aladejare, 2022). To address these challenges, managers and administrators must develop strategies, including proper financial planning and oversight, to utilize available resources wisely.

Despite reduced funding from the Nigerian government, public and private entities frequently establish new universities. This persistent decrease in funding allocated to education has significantly weakened the financial capacity of institutions (Olaniyan & Efuntade, 2020). The numerous strikes by academic and non-academic staff highlight this dire situation (Pratolo et al., 2020). For example, Adekunle Ajasin University Akoko (AAUA) experienced ten-month and three-month strikes in 2016 and 2018, respectively, due to reduced monthly subventions from the Ondo State government, leading to financial difficulties (Ayeerun, 2022). This underscores the need for organizations to find ways to increase funding and ensure proper budget creation and management to maintain efficient operations.

Studies such as Onho & Zayol (2017), Bracci & Tallaki (2021), and Felicio et al. (2021) have evaluated the impact of an organization's budget on its success. Onho & Zayol (2017) concluded that adequate planning and strict adherence to budget control aim to reduce expenses, improve earnings, and boost overall organizational performance. Similarly, Nordin & Hussain (2023) examined the relationship between budget control and the performance of the Nigerian civil service, finding that issues such as fraud, bypassing budgetary control mechanisms, and delays in fund release affect performance. While studies have explored the association between budget control and organizational performance, few have specifically examined its effect on public sector performance, particularly in higher education. Therefore, this research aims to investigate how budget control and supervision processes impact the performance of Adekunle Ajasin University Akoko (AAUA) in Nigeria.

This study is significant for three primary reasons. First, it provides administrators with valuable insights into how budget control enhances organizational outcomes. Second, university management and administration can utilize the empirical data from this study to adopt strategies for improving their performance. Lastly, this study fills a knowledge gap regarding the use of budgetary control as a tool for enhancing performance in public institutions in developing countries.

## **Conceptual Review**

### **The Concept of Budget Control**

Budget control, according to Nwosu et al. (2020), involves the procedures and methods by which an organization manages its expenses and financial assets to ensure that proposed activities align with

established goals and achieve the intended results. It is a tool that helps managers track and evaluate progress towards predicted goals on a regular basis. Simply creating a budget is insufficient; an efficient system of budget control must be established to ensure the budget serves its intended purpose (Olaniyan & Efuntade, 2020). Without budget control, a firm's performance may suffer. In other words, budget control is essential as it enables cost control, appropriate planning, and performance review (Zonatto, 2020).

The process of budgetary control involves a cyclical planning and oversight cycle. Management gathers pertinent data on achieved results, compares it to predetermined targets, and establishes necessary frameworks to ensure improved outcomes in the future (Dakurah, 2020). Lack of sufficient budget control can lead to a lack of focus, disregard for established protocols, and ineffective coordination of activities, all detrimental to the organization. Adequate budget planning, execution, and control lead to improved organizational outcomes (Dakurah, 2020).

### **Organizational Performance**

Organizational performance is the ability of a firm to meet objectives using methodical tactics (Nani & Safitri, 2021). An organization is considered to be operating well when it accomplishes its stated goals. Therefore, organizational performance can only be compared when the goals of different organizations are similar or comparable. Metrics used by private firms to measure success include Returns on Equity (ROE), Profit Margin (PM), Returns on Investment (ROI), and Returns on Assets (ROA) (Chatterjee et al., 2024). While profit is typically the main outcome indicator for private firms, in the public sector, the basis for evaluating outcomes is the number of benefits from specified objectives (Ojomolade et al., 2022). A university's budget is deemed adequate when it effectively carries out programs resulting in continuous teaching and learning, scientific advancement, and community improvement (Oladele & Longlong, 2019).

### **Empirical Review**

Numerous studies have examined the impact of budget control on organizational performance in public administration and management (Mazikana, 2019; Bracci & Tallaki, 2021; Felicio et al., 2021). In a study of public sectors in Kenya, Okumu (2021) found a limited correlation between budget control and organizational performance, attributed to inadequate budget control skills. The study recommends more thorough and intense training for staff to increase their understanding of budget control mechanisms and improve their performance. Conversely, Bracci & Tallaki (2021) discovered a significant and favorable correlation between organizational performance and budget control mechanisms in selected South African firms, despite obstacles like financial constraints and misappropriation.

In Nigeria, Isaac et al. (2015) found that the budget and budget control structure of public-owned enterprises impact service delivery. Effective budget oversight promotes cost management and efficiency. Similarly, Nyongesa et al. (2016) found that budget oversight significantly impacts the performance of public universities in Ghana. Odunko (2022) discovered that staff commitment, satisfaction, and motivation, alongside budget and oversight, affect organizational outcomes in South African public sectors.

Odigwe & Owan (2019) found that Nigeria's education system receives less support than the UNESCO-recommended 26%, necessitating proper attention and funding. Oladele & Longlong (2019) investigated the relationship between budget control and staff performance at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, revealing that budget control significantly impacts performance despite other influencing factors.

Despite the recognition of budget control as crucial for enhancing organizational efficiency, Odunko (2022) could not find a compelling rationale that budget control alone can enhance performance, citing obstacles like erratic public policy, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and inflation. Akinyemi et al. (2020) argue that budget systems function effectively only with careful execution and

other budgeting techniques. Demera (2017) identified factors affecting budget control in public institutions, including management support, budget monitoring, internal audit personnel, and internal communication efficiency, concluding that organizational efficiency is closely related to internal control management systems. Esther et al. (2020) identified 13 key components of good budget control, such as proficient forecasting, staff involvement, management support, efficient coordination, adaptability, and regular review. Nani & Safitri (2021) added that proper application of budgeting and strategic management together results in long-term performance improvement. Ogunode et al. (2022) emphasized considering ecological realities when comparing planned and actual results to resolve planning and control crises.

Flowing from these studies, two conclusions about budget control and organizational performance are possible. One, as revealed by Odunko (2022), is that there is not always a strong correlation between budget control and organizational performance. On the other hand, Manoharan & Singal (2017) revealed a favorable relationship between budget control and organizational results. For Nigerian higher institutions, issues like marginalization and budgetary inadequacies persist (Oladele & Longlong, 2019; Odigwe & Owan, 2019). While studies have examined budget control in some public institutions in other countries, information on budgeting and budget oversight in the Nigerian higher education system is grossly inadequate. This study aims to assess the budgeting system of AAUA and establish how budget control influences the university's performance.

### **Goal Setting Theory**

Goal-setting theory involves the purpose, end, aims, objectives, and deadlines set to control behaviors for individuals, organizations, and groups (Oladele & Longlong, 2019). Organizations use their resources to achieve predefined goals, helping employees work towards a common objective, providing a competitive edge, and advancing intended results. Setting numerical result goals improves outcomes like higher revenues and motivated employees (Swann et al., 2021).

This theory is pertinent to the research at hand since budgeting involves creating a plan with suggested goals and allocating resources to achieve those goals. AAUA's management must draw out a plan with specified goals, identify associated expenditures, and allocate resources effectively to motivate staff and achieve institutional objectives. This goal-setting framework requires the commitment of all staff members. Goals for AAUA might include increased study capacity, continuous instruction, and community development.

### **Methodology**

A qualitative method was adopted here because the qualitative approach enables the gathering and analysis of non-numerical data by drawing on the specifics and interpretations that respondents offer regarding the occurrence under observation (Mohajan, 2018). As originally intended, it allows the researcher to analyse the significance of and accurately interpret Adekunle Ajasin University's budget control mechanisms and their effect on performance.

### **Population and Sampling Technique**

This study population includes the staff of Adekunle Ajasin University Akoko. It is noteworthy that not all university staff members are able to supply pertinent information on the study's topic matter; for this reason, the purposive sampling technique was used. With the use of purposeful sampling, pertinent data were gathered from a select group of respondents who were positioned to give the necessary information. Only senior staff in the bursary department who have a thorough understanding of the study were interviewed. Therefore, twelve employees of the bursary department who are directly involved with the development, implementation, and control of the University's budget were selected.

## **Data Collection Techniques**

An in-depth interview was utilised to collect the data for this study. Senior employees in the bursary department were interviewed to obtain the primary data on the budget and budget control system of the University.

## **Data Analysis**

The data that was gathered was analysed using content analysis. In order to understand and extract themes from qualitative data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). To do this, the data was first transcribed and then coded, which involved giving the data labels. This helps the researcher to find trends within the dataset.

## **Results and Findings**

### **Budget System in Adekunle Ajasin University**

The first objective of this study is to evaluate the budget system and budget control method of Adekunle Ajasin University. The data revealed that Adekunle Ajasin University uses a committee system, otherwise known as a budget committee, which is headed by the Vice Chancellor of the institution. Other members of the committee include heads of departments, Deans of Faculties, Directors and the University Bursar. In the words of participants: "we have a budget committee headed by the VC and comprises all HODs, Dean of Faculties and Directors, and the committee is responsible for the planning and implementation of the institution's budget".

The roles of the budget committee include the following:

- It coordinates the budget formulation process
- It releases timelines for budget preparation
- It provides vital information that will help in the preparation of the budget
- It compares the actual performance with the budget and investigates any variances if it exists.

In addition to the budget committee, which is headed by the Vice Chancellor, there is the Bursary Unit of the University, which has Budget Officers who are responsible for controlling and administering the budget. Their other responsibilities include:

- It liaises between the budget committee and the directors responsible for the preparation of the budget
- It deals with any challenge that may arise from budget control
- It ensures that set deadlines are met
- It educates the key stakeholders of the University on budget control.
- Budget preparation and formulation are done by the two structures mentioned above: the budget committee and the budget officers.

On the budget type that the University is using, all the participants stated that the University is using zero-based budgeting. This type of budgeting assumes that all departments' and units' budgets are zero and should be built from scratch (Ibrahim, 2019). The choice of zero-based budgeting, according to one of the participants, is that: "we are using the zero-based budgeting system because it is the most cost-effective type of budgeting, especially in the face of dwindling revenue. So zero-based budgeting is tight and helps in avoiding expenses that are not important to the institution". In truth, the financial strength of the University is deteriorating. This is due to the dwindling oil revenue, which has resulted in a shortfall in allocation to the University. Thus, the institution has to embrace the zero-based budgeting system. In addition, a participant stated that "Since 2018, the university has been using a deficit budget because the operational expenses exceed the revenue". There is a general consensus among budgeting scholars that in the face of financial uncertainty, a zero-based budget can be used because it helps to reduce the budget drastically (Lauth, 2014; Singh, 2016)

However, the major disadvantage of this type of budget is that it makes the organisation attend to only discretionary expenses and not essential ones. This point was further corroborated by a participant: "due to the zero-based budget system that we are using because of paucity of funds, we find it

difficult to fund the essential operating costs of the University. For example, some departments are yet to receive the 2022 budget allocation, and we are now in 2024; this situation is very bad".

Empirical support for these findings was provided by the study of Beredugo, Azubike, & Okon (2019), who argue that zero-based budgeting is more useful when there is a need to reduce spending and should not be an optimal choice for any organisation. The study of Ibrahim et al. (2017) argues that organisations occasionally use zero-based budgeting because it is time-consuming. However, despite the criticisms levied on zero-based budget system, managers with limited financial resources consider it as the best option (see Singh, 2016; Al-attara, Mashkourb, & Hassanc, 2020).

## **6.2. Budget Control System in Adekunle Ajasin University**

The study further revealed that the institution has a budget control system, which is to ensure that the budget achieves the purpose of its formulation by comparing actual results with the proposed budgets. In the words of a participant: "we have a budget control system that is being handled by the University Bursar's office. The purpose of the budget control is to ensure that the objectives of the budget are being achieved and ensure frequent comparing of the actual results with the budget benchmark".

In the words of another participant, the core objectives of our budget control system include the following:

- To determine the objectives that must be achieved for the fiscal year
- To monitor the activities that will be carried out towards the actualisation of the objectives
- To design an operation plan for each activity with monetary allocation for the fiscal year
- Design a system to compare the performance of each department unit with the proposed plans and determine the reason for differences, if any.
- This is to ensure that corrective steps are taken in case the plan is not achieved.

This indicates that Adekunle Ajasin University is using budget control strategies effectively. On the benefits of the budget control to the institution, it was stated that: "the benefits of a budget control system, despite the huge financial challenge of our institution, are enormous; it allows for the efficient and effective performance of our budget. It allows us to control our expenditure by using it as an instrument to measure and evaluate performance".

This result is in tandem with earlier studies that argue that budget control provides the opportunity for maximum utilisation of resources, control of expenditure and efficiency of budget performance (Isaac, Lawal, & Okoli, 2015; Foster, 2017). The next section presents data on the relationship between a budget control system and the performance of Adekunle Ajasin University.

## **Budget Control System and Performance of Adekunle Ajasin University**

The second objective of this study is to examine the effect of budget control on the performance of Adekunle Ajasin University. The participants affirmed that the budget control system has led to improvements in the efficiency of the institution despite the inadequate financial strength of the University. As one participant noted, "budget control has helped us to coordinate our limited resources, define the benchmark for each department and unit, create an unambiguous and clear guideline about the expectations and resources of the institution, and facilitate the performance of the budget."

The results further revealed that budget control has helped the institution to build a strong base for making prompt and effective decisions, exercising utmost control of resource allocation, measuring performance, and establishing a basis for sound planning. However, the performance of the institution is still being limited by the low revenue that is accruing to the University, which is a consequence of poor funding from the state government, the proprietor, and the owner of the University. According to Oladele & Longlong (2019), the performance of a university can be measured through the following indicators:

**Stable Academic Calendar:** This refers to uninterrupted teaching and learning activities (Oladele & Longlong, 2019). A university is considered to have good performance if it can effectively impart

knowledge to its students as planned. Contributing factors include the quality and skill of academic staff employed, the absence of internal and external unrest such as riots and strikes, and the availability of needed infrastructures and amenities, all of which are heavily dependent on the availability of funds (Oladele & Longlong, 2019). While Adekunle Ajasin University has a stable academic calendar, it is often disrupted by national strikes of all universities in Nigeria. Despite these disruptions, the University can be said to be performing well in this aspect.

**Staff Welfare:** The performance of an educational institution is tied to the performance of its staff (Oladele & Longlong, 2019). Staff performance is largely influenced by staff welfare. If salaries and allowances are delayed, the staff may not give their all and may go on strike action, affecting the planned yearly activities. This is the current situation in Nigerian universities, which have experienced about three strike actions lasting three months or more within four years (Ibrahim, 2021). In terms of staff welfare, Adekunle Ajasin University is not performing well, as stated by one of the respondents: "Currently, the university is not owing salaries, but cooperative deductions are being owed to the tune of 50 million." This is due to poor funding for the University.

**Student Welfare:** The provision of good hostel accommodation, conducive lecture rooms, and other infrastructures contributes to student welfare. In terms of student welfare, Adekunle Ajasin University has done creditably well in this regard. According to a participant, "The University is doing great in terms of student welfare; there are conducive lecture theatres and hostel accommodations for students, among others." The rationale for this statement is the fact that most lecture theatres and hostel accommodations are funded by the Tertiary Education Fund of the federal government of Nigeria (see Ibrahim, 2019).

**Increased Research Output:** The performance of a higher institution is also measured by how much it has achieved in the area of research. Staff must be conscious of research advancement and continually work towards producing innovations that contribute to community development. In this aspect, the University is also performing well, ranking among the best state universities in Nigeria by the Nigerian University Commission in 2017 and 2018, respectively (see Ajidahun, 2019).

The implication of these results is that Adekunle Ajasin University is performing well in the areas of research outputs, student welfare, and maintaining a stable academic calendar. This suggests that with adequate funding, the University would perform even better.

### **Implication of Findings**

The findings of the study imply that an effective budget control system is critical to the performance of an organization. The data revealed a positive and firm relationship between budget control systems and organizational performance because it is an instrument for the effective and efficient allocation of control and resources. It provides operational support to performance, enables performance measurement, aids sound and robust planning, and allows for prompt and effective decision-making. This finding aligns with earlier studies such as Balogun, Mamidu, & Owuze (2020) and Lambe et al. (2021), which assert that budgetary control is essential for effective performance and achieving organizational goals and objectives. This further implies that while factors such as size, industry type, available resources, and financial strength (as enunciated by Menifield, 2020) are important, the absence of an effective budget control system can negatively impact organizational performance. Without an effective budget control system, available resources may be allocated to unprofitable areas, affecting the organization's performance level.

### **Conclusion**

According to this study, budget management is crucial to the effectiveness of an organization. Budgets and budget oversight are essential instruments for controlling spending and assessing outcomes in any firm. The study emphasizes that although financial control is essential, insufficient funding can seriously impair its efficacy. While Adekunle Ajasin University has budget oversight mechanisms overseen by budget officers, they are challenging to implement due to inadequate

financing, leading to poor budget execution. The report indicates that the institution has been operating on a deficit budget for the last five years (from 2018 to the present), complicating its ability to execute ambitious plans. For a budget oversight system to be effective, sufficient funding is essential.

The study highlights that without efficient administration and adequate funding, budgets and budget restrictions should not be seen as a magic bullet. The study finds that organizations can improve their outcomes and maximize profits by lowering expenses and raising revenue through the implementation of strong budget and budget oversight systems. The study recommends that firms use budgets and budget oversight as core systems for allocating and managing resources. This strategy will increase accountability, transparency, and efficacy by ensuring that all resources required for any given task are approved by the budget. It will eliminate inefficient and indiscriminate expenditure, enabling the organization to concentrate its resources on high-priority areas essential to its success.

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