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Effect of Governance Considerations on The Performance of Companies in South Sudan's Oil and Gas Sector

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Abstract

The oil and gas sector in South Sudan face significant governance challenges, including, lack of transparency from IOCs, and unethical practices in the operating companies, which hinder its performance and sustainability. The study addresses the critical gap in understanding the impact of governance considerations on organizational performance in this vital sector. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of governance practices, such as transparency, accountability, and ethical management, on the performance of oil companies in South Sudan. Anchored in Institutional Theory, the study examined how external pressures and governance frameworks influence organizational outcomes. The study employed a descriptive correlational research design, targeting oil companies operating under three main consortiums, with senior managers as the respondents. A census sampling technique resulted in a sample size of 71 participants, and data were collected using structured questionnaires and secondary financial performance records. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis using SPSS version 27. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between governance considerations and organizational performance, with governance practices explaining 55.2% of the variation in performance. The study concluded that robust governance frameworks are crucial for enhancing operational efficiency, financial performance, and stakeholder trust in the oil and gas sector. It is recommended that policymakers enforce mandatory governance standards, including transparency and accountability measures, to ensure long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

Keywords: *Governance, Performance, Companies, South Sudan, Oil, Gas*

1.0 Introduction

Governance considerations in the oil and gas sector of South Sudan play a vital role in enhancing organizational performance by fostering investor confidence, ensuring compliance with international standards, and promoting ethical management practices (Almaqtari et al., 2024). Governance practices focus on transparent reporting, accountability, and adherence to ethical guidelines, which are essential for building trust among stakeholders and improving access to capital (Haleem et al., 2022). In the context of South Sudan, these practices are critical for navigating challenges such as political instability, regulatory changes, and environmental degradation (Roach, 2020). The integration of governance considerations into sustainable management practices involves establishing a robust framework for transparency and accountability, which helps mitigate risks associated with corruption and inefficiencies. Such practices align with the global shift towards Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards, as highlighted by Halid et al. (2023), where investors increasingly demand robust governance structures for evaluating organizational performance. These structures enable companies to maintain legitimacy and compliance, especially in sectors like oil and gas, where operational impacts have significant economic and social implications (Lykkesfeldt & Kjaergaard, 2022).

Moreover, effective governance practices contribute to operational efficiency by ensuring that management decisions are based on ethical and accountable principles. For example, governance measures such as board diversity and transparent decision-making processes have been linked to improved financial performance and stakeholder satisfaction (Jejenywa et al., 2024). Additionally, adherence to governance standards can enhance an organization's reputation, thereby attracting international partnerships and investments crucial for South Sudan's oil and gas sector (Elnourani et al., 2024). Given the sector's importance to South Sudan's economy, adopting strong governance practices is essential for addressing the challenges of resource management, political instability, and stakeholder dissatisfaction. Governance considerations directly impact financial outcomes, operational efficiency, and social license to operate, all of which are critical for the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of companies in the oil and gas sector (Saturlino, 2023; Kibe et al., 2023).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Governance considerations in the oil and gas sector face significant challenges in South Sudan, where the industry is critical to the country's economy but is also plagued by governance-related issues such as corruption, lack of transparency, and unethical practices. Furthermore, substantial oil revenues are often misallocated, funding infrastructure projects that undermine peace, security, and stability rather than improving South Sudan economy. This undermines the sector's potential for sustainable performance and erodes stakeholder confidence.

The global pressure to implement Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategies adds further challenges for the oil and gas industry in South Sudan. Companies are increasingly expected to adopt governance practices such as transparent reporting, accountability, and adherence to ethical standards to access international capital and remain competitive (Ibrahim et al., 2019a). However, a lack of clarity and standardization in measuring the performance of governance initiatives complicates their implementation and raises questions about their tangible benefits (Fitzpatrick, 2024). These challenges are compounded by the sector's historical issues of ineffective disclosures and inadequate efforts to address systemic malpractices in the oil sector.

While governance considerations are recognized as a critical component of ESG practices, their specific impact on organizational performance in the oil and gas sector in South Sudan remains underexplored. There is a fundamental gap in understanding whether implementing robust governance measures leads to improved performance outcomes, particularly in a sector that is both economically vital and environmentally contentious. Addressing this gap is crucial to determine the role of governance considerations in enhancing the performance and sustainability of oil and gas companies in South Sudan.

1.2 Objective of the Study

To investigate the effect of governance considerations on the performance of companies in South Sudan's oil and gas sector.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory, as postulated by Meyer and Rowan (1977), argues that organizations are deeply influenced by the institutional environments in which they operate, including societal norms, values, and regulations. The theory suggests that organizations adopt formal structures, policies, and practices not solely for efficiency but to gain legitimacy by conforming to external expectations. Meyer and Rowan posit that organizations often mimic the behavior of other successful organizations within their environment, a process known as "isomorphism," to appear legitimate and trustworthy (Risi et al., 2023). As per Peters (2022), in essence, Institutional Theory explains how external pressures shape organizational behavior, encouraging companies to adopt practices that align with accepted social norms and regulatory frameworks to maintain their legitimacy and competitiveness. Institutional Theory has faced criticisms for its overemphasis on conformity and legitimacy at the expense of innovation and efficiency. Critics argue that the theory tends to downplay the role of organizational agency, assuming that firms passively adopt institutional norms without considering how they can strategically shape or resist those norms to gain competitive advantages (Glynn & D'anno, 2023). Additionally, the theory's focus on legitimacy can sometimes encourage superficial changes, where organizations comply with external pressures only symbolically, without implementing meaningful changes in practice. This critique, known as "decoupling," highlights the potential gap between what organizations present externally and their actual internal practices (Sahin & Mert, 2023). Furthermore, Institutional Theory has been criticized for offering limited insight into how organizations balance institutional pressures with the need for operational efficiency and profitability (Robertson et al., 2021).

Institutional Theory was particularly relevant to this study, as it provides a lens through which to examine how ESG considerations influence organizational performance in South Sudan's oil and gas sector. The theory supports the study's objective of investigating how companies in this sector respond to external pressures from regulatory bodies, international standards, and societal expectations regarding sustainable management practices. By adopting ESG practices, oil and gas companies can enhance their legitimacy and compliance with global sustainability norms, which in turn can positively impact their performance. Institutional Theory is also useful for understanding the role of governance considerations, as companies must align with regulatory frameworks and ethical standards to maintain trust and accountability in the eyes of their stakeholders. The theory helps explain how institutional pressures drive companies to integrate sustainable management practices, thus supporting the study's investigation of these practices' impact on organizational success.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Governance Considerations and Organizational Performance

Barbosa et al. (2024) examined the impact of governance structures on revenue collection efficiency in major Brazil. The study analyzed the effectiveness of governance mechanisms such as legal frameworks, administrative capacities, and public participation in enhancing revenue collection. Data were collected through structured surveys and financial performance records from city administrations. Results indicated a significant positive relationship between strong governance structures and improved revenue collection. Despite these findings, the study highlighted a conceptual gap in understanding how governance structures impact company performance in sectors like oil and gas, which this study will address.

Mumuni and Njong (2023) explored the relationship between governance structures and public financial management in selected Sub-Saharan African countries. The study focused on how governance mechanisms, such as fiscal decentralization and institutional transparency, impact the efficiency of public financial management. Using a longitudinal research design, the study analyzed secondary data from World Bank governance indicators and national financial reports over a ten-year period. Findings revealed that countries with stronger governance structures showed marked improvements in public financial management and revenue collection. However, the study identified a contextual gap, as the governance challenges in these countries may differ significantly from those in South Sudan, which this study seeks to explore.

Sinha et al. (2023) investigated how governance frameworks affect revenue generation across EU countries. The study analyzed the role of regulatory quality, government effectiveness, and anti-corruption measures in enhancing revenue collection efficiency. Using a comparative case study approach, data were gathered from EU governance reports and interviews with government officials. The results showed a positive correlation between robust governance frameworks and higher revenue generation, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive governance structures. However, the study faced a methodological gap due to its reliance on qualitative data, suggesting the need for quantitative validation in sectors like oil and gas, which this study addresses.

Singh et al. (2021) examined the impact of governance structures on fiscal performance across Canadian municipalities. The study focused on the integration of fiscal policies, administrative practices, and citizen engagement mechanisms. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through surveys administered to municipal officials and financial performance reports from municipal databases. Findings indicated that municipalities with well-defined governance structures, incorporating transparency, accountability, and fiscal autonomy, demonstrated superior fiscal performance. However, the study noted a conceptual gap in understanding how these governance structures influence specific sectors like oil and gas, which the current study in South Sudan addresses.

Islam et al. (2020) explored the role of governance structures in enhancing tax compliance and revenue collection in developing Asian economies. The study focused on the integration of governance elements such as regulatory enforcement, transparency, and accountability. Using a cross-sectional research design, data were gathered from government tax agencies and international financial databases. The study applied econometric modeling to analyze the data and found that robust governance structures significantly improve tax compliance and revenue collection. However, the study identified a contextual gap, as the governance challenges in these countries may differ significantly from those in South Sudan, and the current study seeks to provide localized insights within the oil and gas sector.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

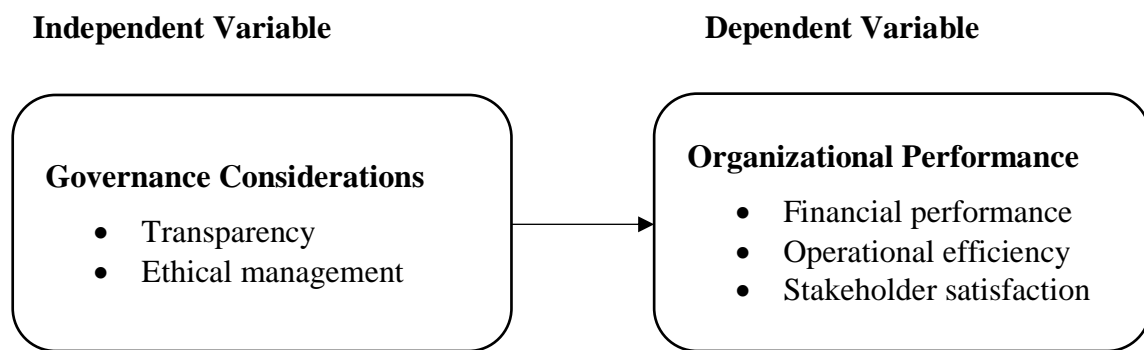


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design to examine the influence of sustainable management practices on the performance of South Sudan's oil and gas sector. The target population comprised all 71 oil companies within the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC), Dar Petroleum Operating Company (DPOC), and Sudd Petroleum Operating Company (SPOC), with the unit of analysis being the oil companies and the unit of observation being senior managers, resulting in a sample size of 71 respondents. Using a census sampling technique, all companies were included to ensure comprehensive insights from key decision-makers. Data collection utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining primary data through structured questionnaires distributed electronically and secondary data on financial performance metrics spanning 2019–2023. Data analysis involved descriptive analysis to summarize variables, correlation analysis to examine relationships, and regression analysis to assess the impact of environmental, social, and governance considerations on organizational performance, with SPSS version 27 facilitating the statistical analysis. Reliability and validity of the questionnaire were ensured through pilot testing, Cronbach's alpha, and expert reviews, while diagnostic tests for normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity ensured the robustness of the regression models. The analytical model used regression equations to estimate the effect of sustainable practices, with p-values and t-tests applied to assess the significance of relationships at a 0.05 significance level.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

4.1.1 Governance Considerations

The descriptive statistics for governance considerations provide valuable insights into the governance practices adopted by oil companies in South Sudan. The regular review and improvement of governance policies by board members recorded the highest mean of 3.648, paired with a relatively low standard deviation of 1.1351. This reflects a consistent emphasis on policy evaluation and improvement across most companies, highlighting governance as a critical focus area for ensuring organizational effectiveness.

Transparency in business operations scored a mean of 3.268, with a standard deviation of 1.2066, indicating moderate implementation of transparent practices but with some variation across companies. Ethical practices followed by management achieved a slightly higher mean

of 3.408 and a standard deviation of 1.1536, suggesting that ethics are fairly emphasized, although not uniformly enforced.

Accountability across all organizational levels had a mean score of 3.197, the lowest among the governance components, and the highest standard deviation of 1.3376. This suggests relatively inconsistent commitment to accountability, which may indicate varying levels of operational discipline or oversight within the sector. Similarly, internal control systems showed a mean of

3.296 and a standard deviation of 1.2806, indicating moderate functionality but with notable variability in the robustness of these systems.

Finally, the timely and accurate reporting of financial and non-financial information had a mean of 3.338 and a standard deviation of 1.2182, reflecting moderate adherence to reporting standards, albeit with room for improvement in consistency. The overall average mean of 3.359 indicates that governance considerations are moderately emphasized, with a need for greater uniformity in practices like accountability and internal controls to strengthen overall governance in the sector.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Governance Considerations

Governance Component	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Our company ensures transparency in all its business operations (GC1)	71	3.268	1.2066
2. Ethical practices are consistently followed by the management team (GC2)	71	3.408	1.1536
3. Board members regularly review and improve governance policies (GC3)	71	3.648	1.1351
4. There is a strong commitment to accountability across all organizational levels (GC4)	71	3.197	1.3376
5. Our company has a well-functioning internal control system (GC5)	71	3.296	1.2806
6. We provide timely and accurate reporting of financial and non-financial information (GC6)	71	3.338	1.2182
Average Mean	71	3.359	

4.1.2 Organizational Performance

The descriptive statistics for organizational performance offer an overview of how oil companies in South Sudan perceive their performance over the past five years. Operational efficiency improvement, attributed to sustainable management practices, recorded the highest mean of 3.380, with a standard deviation of 1.2348. This suggests that many companies see tangible benefits from sustainability initiatives, although the level of improvement varies significantly across firms. Maintaining a competitive market position also scored relatively high, with a mean of 3.352 and a standard deviation of 1.1964, indicating moderate consistency in market competitiveness.

Customer satisfaction levels followed closely, with a mean of 3.338 and a standard deviation of 1.1825. While this reflects relatively positive outcomes in meeting customer expectations, the variability suggests differences in the quality of service delivery and customer engagement strategies among companies. Conversely, profitability targets had one of the lowest means, at

2.901, and a standard deviation of 1.0711, indicating challenges in achieving financial goals, though with slightly less variability compared to other components.

Efficient project completion recorded the lowest mean score of 2.803 and a standard deviation of 1.2144, pointing to significant challenges in adhering to timelines and budgets, with substantial variation in performance among companies. Consistent sales growth had a mean of 2.986 and a standard deviation of 1.0487, reflecting moderate success in revenue generation but highlighting that some companies may struggle with maintaining steady growth. The overall average mean of 3.127 indicates that organizational performance across the sector is moderate, with operational efficiency and market competitiveness standing out as stronger areas, while profitability and project execution remain areas requiring improvement.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Performance

ORGANIZATION PERFORMANCE	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Our company has experienced consistent sales growth over the past five years(OP1)	71	2.986	1.0487
2. Profitability targets have been consistently met within the last five years (OP2)	71	2.901	1.0711
3. The company efficiently completes projects on time and within budget (OP3)	71	2.803	1.2144
4. Our organization has maintained a competitive position in the market (OP4)	71	3.352	1.1964
5. Customer satisfaction levels are consistently high (OP5)	71	3.338	1.1825
6. Operational efficiency has improved as a result of sustainable management practices (OP6)	71	3.380	1.2348
Average	71	3.127	

The analysis of secondary data on sales growth and profitability provided key insights into the financial performance of oil companies in South Sudan over the past five years. Sales growth data revealed that, on average, companies experienced a modest annual growth rate of 3.5%. However, the growth trends were inconsistent across firms, with some showing steady increases year-on-year, while others faced declines in specific periods due to market volatility and operational challenges. These fluctuations were attributed to factors such as fluctuating global oil prices, political instability, and infrastructure limitations in the region. Profitability, measured through net income margins, showed an average of 7.8% across the companies. While this indicates that most firms were able to sustain operations with positive returns, the margins were relatively low for the sector, reflecting high operational costs and significant investment requirements. Variability in profitability was also observed, with some companies achieving double-digit margins while others reported near-breakeven levels. This highlights the disparity in operational efficiency and cost management practices within the sector.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

This section presents the correlation results to examine the strength and direction of the relationships between governance considerations (GCV) and organizational performance (PF).

Table 3: Correlation Results

Variable	PF (Organizational Performance)
GCV	0.705**
Sig.	0.000

The analysis of governance considerations reveals their significant impact on organizational performance in South Sudan’s oil and gas sector. Correlation analysis shows a strong positive relationship between governance considerations and organizational performance, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.705 and a significance level of 0.000, indicating that transparency, accountability, and ethical management practices are crucial drivers of performance. Table 4.10 demonstrates this strong association, highlighting the critical role of governance in enhancing organizational outcomes.

4.3 Regression Analysis

The regression results provide insights into the relationship between the independent variable governance considerations and the dependent variable, organizational performance.

Table 4: Coefficients

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Governance (GCV)	0.449	0.113	0.466	3.971	0.000

Regression analysis further confirms the importance of governance considerations. As shown in Table 4, governance considerations have the strongest influence on organizational performance, with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.466 and a p-value of 0.000. This highlights governance practices as the most significant predictor among the sustainable management practices studied. The model summary (Table 4.11) indicates that governance, alongside other variables, explains 55.2% of the variation in organizational performance ($R^2 = 0.552$).

The regression equation derived from the results is:

$$Y = 0.363 + 0.449X_1$$

Where:

Y = Organizational performance

X₁ = Governance considerations

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study regarding the third objective, which sought to investigate the effect of governance considerations on organizational performance, revealed a strong and significant positive relationship between governance practices and company performance. Governance considerations, including transparency, accountability, and ethical management, showed a standardized beta coefficient of 0.466 and a p-value of 0.000 in the regression analysis. This suggests that companies with stronger governance frameworks tend to exhibit higher levels of operational efficiency, financial performance, and stakeholder satisfaction. Descriptive statistics supported this, with governance practices receiving the highest average mean of 3.359, reflecting the significant attention placed on governance within the South Sudan oil and

gas sector. These findings are consistent with Stakeholder Theory, which posits that a company's long-term success is dependent on effectively managing the interests of all its stakeholders, including employees, investors, and the broader community. Strong governance practices, such as ensuring accountability and transparency, align with stakeholder expectations and contribute to improved organizational outcomes. This result supports the findings of Barbosa et al. (2024), who found a positive relationship between robust governance structures and improved revenue collection efficiency in Brazil. While Barbosa's study focused on public sector revenue management, the current study extends this by demonstrating that similar governance principles positively affect performance in the oil and gas sector, highlighting the broader applicability of good governance to organizational success.

The results also align with the conclusions of Mumuni and Njong (2023), which indicated that stronger governance mechanisms, such as fiscal decentralization and institutional transparency, led to improved public financial management in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, the current study provides additional insights into the specific challenges faced by oil companies in South Sudan, where governance structures may be weaker due to political instability or limited regulatory frameworks. In comparison with Sinha et al. (2023), who found that effective governance frameworks in the EU positively impacted revenue generation, the South Sudan context suggests that while the governance structures can improve performance, the challenges in developing economies require tailored solutions to address unique operational and regulatory hurdles. Furthermore, the findings are in line with Singh et al. (2021), who identified the positive effects of clear governance structures, including transparency and accountability, on fiscal performance in Canadian municipalities. However, the current study provides localized insights by focusing on the oil and gas sector in South Sudan, a region with unique governance challenges. Additionally, Islam et al. (2020) highlighted that strong governance structures enhance tax compliance and revenue collection in developing Asian economies, yet they also noted that governance challenges in different regions, including South Sudan, could vary significantly. The current study's findings contribute to the understanding of how governance considerations in such a context can positively influence organizational performance, further underscoring the importance of robust governance frameworks for driving success in challenging environments like South Sudan's oil and gas industry.

5.0 Conclusion of the Study

Governance considerations emerged as the most significant driver of organizational performance in South Sudan's oil and gas sector. Practices such as transparency, accountability, and ethical management were shown to have a substantial positive impact, enhancing operational efficiency, financial performance, and stakeholder satisfaction. These findings highlight the importance of implementing robust governance frameworks tailored to the unique challenges of the oil and gas sector, emphasizing their centrality to achieving long-term organizational success and sustainability.

6.0 Recommendations of the Study

To strengthen governance and enhance performance in the oil and gas sector, policymakers and industry regulators should prioritize the establishment and enforcement of governance standards. Mandatory disclosures, regular audits, and tailored governance codes should be introduced to promote transparency, accountability, and ethical management. Companies are advised to adopt these governance practices to bolster investor confidence, improve operational efficiency and build stakeholder trust, positioning themselves for sustained success in a competitive global environment.

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