

A Study of Internal Control Systems at the Ghana Prisons Service

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Abstract

The study examined internal control systems and practices at the Ghana Prisons Service. The Headquarters of the Service was used as a case study. Questionnaires and in-depth interview guide were used as research instruments. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were adopted by the study for data collection. The study found out that personnel of the Ghana Prisons Service had adequate knowledge of internal control systems and practices. It was further revealed that internal control systems were fully operationalized and effective at the Ghana Prisons Service with the view to assuring the attainment of set organizational objectives and also enhancing optimal performance. More so, respondents indicated that there were few challenges associated with internal control systems, including noncompliance to rules and procedures of the service, ignorance of most officers on the existence of the policies, poorly designed guidelines, financial and logistical constraints, unavailability of skilled personnel to perform the required task, officers unwillingness to comply with control measures, and lack of understanding of control measures. The study thus recommended that Management of the Ghana Prisons Service should streamline financial and procurement policies and also strengthen internal audit and monitoring and evaluation units in enforcing internal controls. Additionally, management should endeavour to organize more capacity building workshops and seminars on internal control systems at the Ghana Prisons Service where information would be given to personnel, showing how each area of work relates to each other and to the overall success of the organization.

Key words: Internal Control, Control environment, Control activities, Monitoring Activities, Organization.

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1.0 Introduction

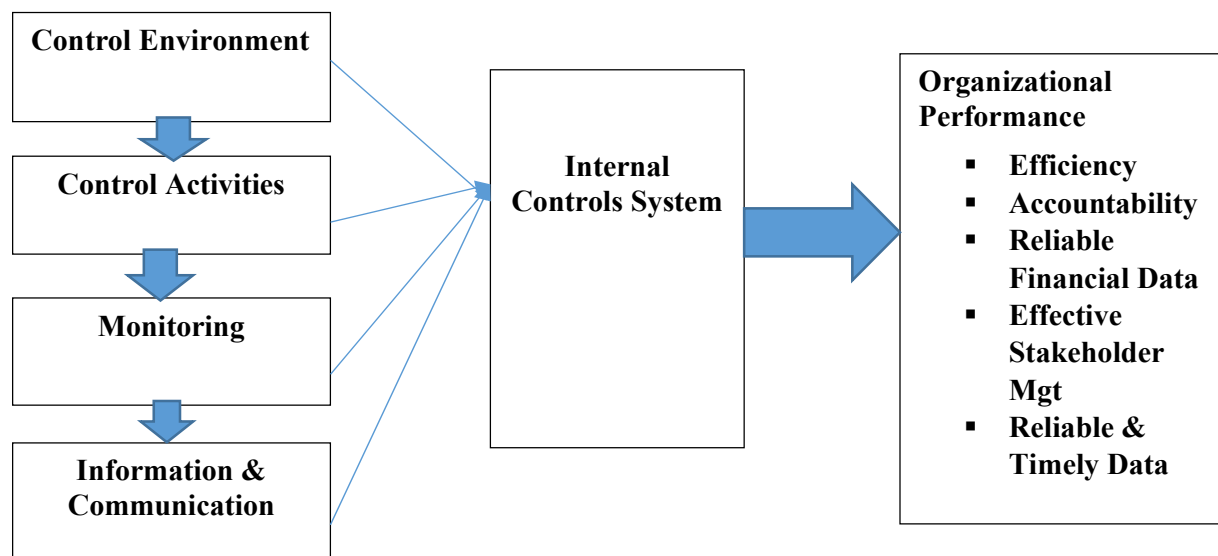
High profile corporate scandals and implosions in the early 2000s brought to fore, the significance of internal control systems as part of the overarching architecture of corporate governance practices. Scandals such as WorldCom, Enron, Arthur Anderson, Tyco, Parmalat, and many others plunged several corporate entities and the investor communities into the crisis of debt overhang (Meintjes, 2013). It is therefore important to note that internal controls constitute a critical element of the system of governance in organizations. Internal controls are critical in managing risk of an organization. It is also critical in assuring the attainment of organizational objectives. The controls framework comprise “control environment, risk assessment, control procedures, information and communication, and monitoring” (Graham, 2015, p. 2). These components are critical and must therefore work effectively as a precondition for the proper functioning of internal controls system in its quest to providing reasonable assurance for the achievement of set organizational objectives. Organizations put in place internal control measures with the view to ensuring that there is reliable financial reporting and management and strict compliance to all laid down governance structures so that they can achieve set targets (Ejoh & Ejom, 2014). It is also imperative to note that achieving excellent organizational performance is a daunting task (Nwachukwu & Emoh, 2011). Anderson (2014) indicated that many organizations have planned with clear objectives, yet failed miserably to perform. According to Amponsah and Darmoe (2014), a lot of organizations have performed abysmally to the disappointment of their stakeholders. Given these developments, Bruce (2014) argues that organizations have become extremely busy putting in place measures that will ensure that they maximize performance. It is the case that public organizations are funded with taxpayers’ money and in this era of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, national economic resources have even become scarcer to meet some pressing national needs, hence the need for more prudent measures to be put in place to ensure that there is value for money. Notwithstanding considerable effort being made by government to promote prudent public financial management, the Auditor General continues to lament that the state loses chunk of funds appropriated for development purposes to financial and other forms of irregularities perpetrated by some public officials which

largely stems from poor internal control systems (Auditor General Report, 2020). It is further argued that internal controls system is significant in promoting good corporate governance in both public and private sectors. To this end, Njui (2012) concluded in a study that internal controls system is the key driver of corporate governance practices in the public sector of Kenya. Similarly, Raletta and Alimehmeti (2016) evaluated internal controls impact on organizational performance using 1593 companies which involved a population of 15,606 executives for a period spanning 2002-2010. The study revealed that internal controls system was highly related to executive remuneration. Their study further established that weaker internal control systems result in higher executive remuneration. Furthermore, Gupta, Sami, and Zhou (2016) indicated that the quality of financial reporting of public companies is significantly enhanced by internal controls. Within the Ghanaian context, several studies have examined internal controls in the public and private sectors of the economy (See Amakye, 2021; Badoo, Hammond, & Oppong, 2020; Ofei & Mensah, 2021; Ofei, Andoh-Owusu, & Asante, 2020; Osei, Yusheng, Tawiah, & Angelina, 2020; Tetteh, Kwarteng, Dadzie, & Asante-Darko, 2020; Adom-Frimpong, 2019; Jianghuo, 2019). However, internal control systems within the Ghana Prisons Service as a public sector Agency haven't been thoroughly examined, leading to a gap in the extant literature. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine internal control systems and practices at Ghana Prisons Service. This study is significant as its outcomes and recommendations would be used to shape and guide the process of decision making by the Management of the Ghana Prisons Service in terms of streamlining and strengthening internal operations and governance frameworks. Secondly, the outcomes and recommendations of the study would provide useful lessons for public sector organizations in particular, and all other organizations in relation to setting up controls and managing them effectively to achieve organizational performance objectives. Furthermore, the outcomes and recommendations of this study may help Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to establish robust internal control measures that can be enforced to ensure that organizational performance objectives are realized and reduce to a larger extent, incidence of errors and fraud on public financial management processes. The study is aimed to examine the kind of controls system put in place at the Ghana Prisons Service to enhance organizational performance; assess the effectiveness of internal controls in achieving set performance objectives, and to identify the challenges encountered in the implementation of internal controls in the Ghana Prison Service. The rest of the paper is organized as follows:

Section two reviewed literature relevant to the study. Section three described methodology used to collect and analyze data for the study. Section four presented and discussed results of the study, while section five drew relevant conclusion based on the findings of the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Framework



(Adopted and Modified from Monday, Inneh, & Ojo, 2014).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework seeks to amplify research path and further situate the research in proper theoretical context. According to Maroy and Pons (2019), theoretical review or framework provides lifeline support to any research work that is being conducted. It thus follows that ultimately, theoretical review gives meaning to the findings of a study so that it becomes acceptable, and therefore lend itself to the principle of generalization. Given this imperative, the study will be situated within two main theories, i.e., agency and institutional theories.

2.2.1 Agency Theory

Agency theory (Berle & Means, 1932; Alchain & Demsetz, 1972; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Eisenhardt, 1989) examines the contractual relationship between principals and agents, in which the principals, acting as owners of businesses hire the service of agents, who act as directors and managers, and then charge them with the primary responsibility of managing their businesses according to the interest of the principals. The critical problem as argued by Smith (1776) and further corroborated by Berle and Means (1932), which arises in the agency relationship is the agency dilemma. This agency dilemma, it is further argued, makes the agent want to serve his/her interest against maximizing the value of shareholders. The point here is that the agent gets into the business with the true unadulterated intent of maximizing shareholders wealth. However, exposure to the realities of the business environment tends to distract and thus diverts the attention of the agent, who by virtue of self-interest, opportunism, and active rational economic actor status, begins to abuse the relationship by pursuing their self-interest against the pursuit of the interest of the shareholder. It is further argued that due to separation of ownership (shareholders) of business from control (directors and managers) of business, the agent is equipped with information asymmetry (total inside-out knowledge of the business) and also has total control of the resources of the business. As a result, they determine the strategic direction by way of strategy and policy in line with their mandate and pattern of strategic framework. Jensen and Meckling (1976) supported by Alchain and Demsetz (1972) therefore argued that this is most likely to lead to abuse of the trust between them and shareholders (owners of business). The information asymmetry completely places the principal in a position of uncertainty relative to the actions, inactions, commissions, and omissions of the agent in line with managing the affairs of the business. To the extent that the principal cannot be sure of the action and behaviour of the agent in relation to how the business will be effectively managed, the principal, it is argued, will be required to incur additional agency cost with the view to realigning the interest of the agent with the interest of the principal. These added measures/costs include audit fees by the use of external auditors, use of independent non-executive directors, highly rewarding executive compensation, good performance bonuses, executive based stock option, etc. In sum, the agency theory gives rise to the need for the establishment of proper and well-functioning internal controls to guide and constrain executive action and to ensure optimal use of scarce organizational resources to achieve stated objectives.

2.2.2 Institutional Theory

According to Forgarty et al. (1997), public organizations function properly by meeting social expectations that are placed on them by society, since their main mandate is to serve the public by providing the public good. Consequently, it is imperative to note that organizations utmost priority should be to gain external legitimacy and then look at the more complex and sophisticated internal operations. It is thus argued that organizations do well when their internal processes and procedures are properly organized and up to speed in terms of the task (Forgarty et al. 1997). This stresses the point that organizational structures that are designed to meet outsiders' expectations usually don't add up to the productive numbers. In stretching this argument further, Forgarty (1996) observes that when internal structures are properly organized and working effectively, it gives no room for any further need for scrutiny by external parties. So the critical need here is for organizations to see the most compelling need to institute functional internal mechanisms, regardless of the cost implications of doing so as to ensure that set organizational targets are achieved. For example, management of organizations, particularly in public sector organizations should be able to equip their internal audit departments to give proper meaning to controls so that they are strengthened and enhanced to assure the realization of set objectives. It is for this reason that the choice of the institutional theory for this study is justified as it brings clarity to bear on the reasons for which internal controls are established in organizations.

2.3 Conceptual and Empirical Review

The conceptual and empirical review of the study will be organized on the following basis:

2.3.1 Review of the Control Environment

The Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors (CIIA, 2020) defines controls as measures that are put in place by an organization's management and the board intended to check against risk and thus assure the attainment of set objectives. Therefore, the control environment, according to the CIIA (2020) deals with the establishment of the organizational tone, including the culture and leadership philosophy, risk profile, control consciousness of the staff, and the competence and skillset of employees the organization. As argued by Appiah (2012), the control environment comprises the level of reception and attention given to the imperative of controls by an organization. It implies that the control environment provides the foundation upon which properly functioning internal controls system is built to facilitate the achievement of organizational goals. This will mean that a sound control environment is critical for the proper functioning of internal controls in any organizations. For this reason, Mihaelia and Lulian (2012) concluded that well-functioning internal controls enhance the overall performance of organizations. According to Katnic (2011), management and the board should be decisive in their attitude, conduct, and approach towards internal controls so as to send strong signals to every employee that they mean serious business with internal control mechanism. Leadership in the boardroom thus matters in terms of ensuring that internal controls work effectively. In order to give meaning to this, it is argued that all employees of the organization should be given proper orientation about issues of ethical behaviour, dos and don'ts, conflict of interest, the dangers of engaging in fraud and fraudulent activities, and reporting abuse of power and authority etc. In support of this, Koranteng (2011) indicates that the board and management of organizations should lead by example by demonstrating strong ethical leadership in the boardroom and making sure that it permeates every facet and department of the organization. He argues further that they should have in place a properly functioning code of conduct that should be backed by proper orientation and education for employees to understand what is contained in the code of conduct and its net benefit when adhered to. He further observes that when management exemplifies good conduct in relation to financial management, it strengthens internal controls within the organization by sending strong signals to all and sundry that wrong behaviour will not be condoned. To do this effectively, Katnic (2011) contends that the executive leadership of organizations should set the tone in no uncertain terms which will frown therefore and constrain excessive use of "control overrides". Appiah (2012) therefore supports this by observing that when management of organizations exemplifies strong ethical conduct towards financial management, it establishes strong organization foundation, reinvigorate consciousness towards controls, and above all, maximize the efficacy of internal controls relative to organizational performance.

It is also argued that well established and properly communicated mission statements provide crucial support to internal controls within an organization. It is the contention of the study that mission gives purpose and identity to an organization and its workforce. Consequently, there should be deliberate effort by management of every organization to educate its employees about the fundamental importance of the mission and the role that their jobs play in attaining the mission of the organization. Similarly, Di Napoli (2010) argues that management should endeavour to create identity and sense of ownership of the mission by employees. It is his contention that when employees truly identify with the mission, they work assiduously towards its realization. In an empirical study, Sotunde (2013) found that vision and mission statements were critical to organizational performance. Katnic (2011) contends that it goes without saying that when internal controls are rooted deep in the mission of the organization and properly communicated to employees, it makes it easy for effective implementation, since the control consciousness permeates every facet of the organization.

Another critical area of the control environment worthy of examining is the flow of authority. In this regard, it is important to note management has the responsibility to organize and delineate the charter of authority and accountability along the command hierarchy to ensure total alignment between activities and organizational objectives. This implies that increased span of control calls for vigorous supervision to ensure that employees are doing the right things. According to Appenteng (2012), enhanced supervision constrains action and align activities and tasks with set objectives. In line with this, HKSA (2013) argues that sound internal controls thrive in an environment, where remedial actions can be stepped up as quickly as possible to attend to deviations from laid down control processes and procedures. To this end, findings of a study by Akimbusale and Jinabhai (2013) indicate that performance appraisal enhance the performance levels of employees within the organization. This implies that effective supervision, provision of feedback, and employee motivation play a significant role in improving employee performance and also ensuring that they work in line with sound laid down controls within an organization.

The CIIA (2020, p. 2) categorized control process within the control environment into preventive, detective, directive, and corrective. According to CIIA (Ibid, p. 2), preventive control processes include duty separation, accessibility of controls, and levels of authorization amongst officers. Also, the IAA observes that detective

controls comprise reports of exception, reconciliations, reports pertaining to errors, and control totals. It has also noted that directive controls consist of manuals of accounting, procedures of documentation, effective supervision, and training and development. Lastly, the IAA has classified corrective procedures into errors of material value, handling of incidents and complaints, and isolation of virus.

2.3.2 Review of Monitoring

Benaroch et al. (2012) observe that monitoring is responsible for performance evaluation of internal control procedures with the view to identifying means of deviations and inefficiencies and putting in place further measures to address the deviations thereof. In support of this, Katushabe (2016) argues that monitoring should bring about tremendous improvement in the levels of efficiency and efficacy of the control system within an organization. Dowdell et al. (2013) add that effective monitoring should check how controls are being applied by personnel and also see to it that real issues are being addressed properly. For their part, Chtioui and Thiery-Dubuisson (2011) emphasized the role of the board in ensuring that monitoring enhances sound and proper controls in the organization. In their disagreement, Ma and Ma (2011) argue that the board can only play a critical role in monitoring, if it's well versed in the use of technology. In highlighting the essence of monitoring in the control process, Saleem and Abideen (2011) discovered that monitoring was statistically significantly correlated with organizational performance. Katushabe (2016) argues further that monitoring should be continuous in order to yield the desired results. Jianguo et al. (2019) identified with this by observing that monitoring, like other control components requires consistency, persistency, and repetitiveness to achieve needed results. According to Bukenya and Kinatta (2012), the efficacy of the procedures put in place to trace ongoing monitoring determine the scope and frequency of monitoring required to achieve set organizational objectives in the control process. Empirically, Gavrea, Ilie, and Stegerea (2011) found out that the relationship between continuous monitoring and performance of employees of manufacturing firms in Romania is significant. Similarly, Mwema and Gachunga (2014) established similar results in the Kenyan context.

As argued by Katushabe (2016), supervision is a critical ingredient in the menu of monitoring as it reinforces the purpose of assigned tasks from the superior to the employee. Ssebakumba (2013) reinforced this argument as his study found similar results.

2.3.3 Review of Control Activities

Katushabe (2016) observes that control activities include all activities that are put in place as part of internal controls by an organization to remove the element(s) of risk and thus reasonably assure achievement of organizational objectives. Jianguo et al. (2019) complement this by adding that control activities include all the measures that are established to identify and address risk within an organization. According to Hayes et al. (2014), control activities comprise a set of policies and processes set in motion by an organization to mitigate against the effect of risk and put an organization on a path towards sustained growth and development. Apostolou et al. (2013) therefore argue that control activities ensure that organizational transactions are properly authorized and all records pertaining to finances are properly recorded in line with control procedures. Lawson et al. (2017) emphasize segregation of duties among personnel as part of control activities. In corroborating this, Bukeyan and Kinatta (2012) argue that when fundamental duties and responsibilities are separated amongst personnel of an organization, the risk of error or fraud is reduced to the barest minimum. Tunji (2013) therefore indicates that separation of duty and responsibility enables an organization to control the incidence of abuse of power and authority and also streamline organizational activities. For their part, Daniela and Attila (2013) indicated that control activities should include proper documentation, data recording, vital information accessibility, protection of assets, and physical controls. In support of this, Tunji (2013) argues for maintenance of strict physical asset controls so that only authorized people can have access to those assets. Similarly, Bukenya and Kinatta (2012) observe that weak assets should be safeguarded through the establishment and maintenance of physical controls such as lock and badge system, encryption of data with very strong and uncompromising password and possible adoption of biometric system. In their empirical contribution to this, Chezey and Agbo (2013) found that strong internal controls and effective supervision stemmed the tide of fraudulent activities in an organization.

Accounting and internal audit are the other dimension of critical control activities in an organization. To this end, Tunji (2013) argues that sound controls system relies on the accounting system of an organization as it ensures that all transactions and operational activities are properly documented and processed in the right books for purposes of records and evidential value. For his part, Katnic (2011) emphasized the role of internal audits in identifying fraud and other transactions and activities of dubious character and validity in an organization.

3.0 Methodology

This is a case study design. Yin (2018) defines a case study as an in-depth investigation into a phenomenon situated in its natural environment. As applied to the study, the design was chosen because the study was an empirical inquiry into how controls are related to organizational performance within the Ghana Prisons Service, where respondents were selected from the Headquarters of the Ghana Prisons Service to respond to the variables under study through the research instrument within the natural setting. The study further used a mixed method approach. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019), the adoption of mixed method approach allows the integration of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and procedures of analysis in a study. It is imperative to note that the essence of quantitative data in this regard is to allow the study to draw statistical inferences in determining the kinds and effectiveness of controls in place at the Ghana Prisons Service. Similarly, qualitative data would augment quantitative data by providing in-depth perspectives of the variables under study. This would also ensure that the lived experiences of respondents as well as reliability of the empirical results are corroborated for deeper understanding of the issues under study.

The population for the study was the entire personnel of the Ghana Prisons Service. However, the target population was the personnel at the Prisons Headquarters based at Cantonments, Accra – Ghana. Given this, the total sample size drawn was 30 comprising 2 members of the Top-Management, 2 members of the Prison Service Council and 26 Middle Level Management personnel of the Ghana Prisons Service. This selection of the sample size was based on the functions and activities of the personnel at the Headquarters of the Ghana Prisons Service. Consequently, the appropriate sample selection technique was employed to avoid the risk of selecting participants who may not be related to the issues under study and consequently, the collection of poor-quality data which may result in poor unacceptance of the research findings (Etikan, 2016). In view of the above concerns, this study employed the simple random and purposive sampling techniques in selection of personnel to respond to the variables under investigation. Purposive or judgmental sampling is the technique in which the researcher makes deliberate choice of a participant because of the attributes that participant possesses (Etikan, 2016).

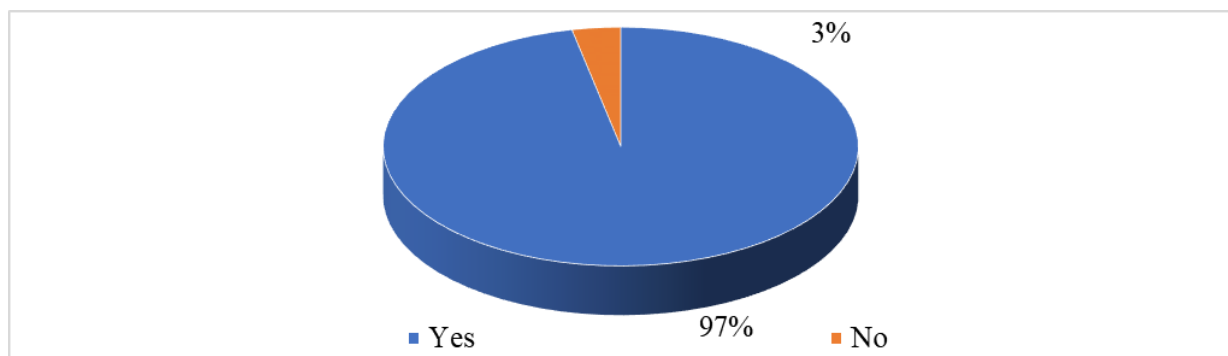
Data was collected using survey questionnaires and in-depth interview guides in conformity with the research approach for the study. In this regard, survey questionnaires were self-administered to selected respondents, who are in the Middle Level Management category, while in-depth interview was administered to selected respondents in the Top Management category and Members of the Ghana Prisons Council. It is important to note that survey questionnaires adoption was expedient in relation to cost and easy coverage. Similarly, in-depth interview added depth and quality of perspective to the issues under study. Data was then analyzed by employing descriptive statistics and presented using tables and charts to look at how controls systems are being operationalized in the Ghana Prisons Service. Also, written texts from in-depth interview responses were transcribed verbatim and analyzed manually using thematic analysis. Also, data was processed using version 25 of the IBM SPSS statistics.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This section presents and discusses results from data collected from the field of study. It contains analysis of data gathered from the questionnaires administered to staff and interview guide for Top Management and Council Members of the Ghana Prisons Service. The data is presented in tables as well as pictorial forms. In all, 26 questionnaires were administered and retrieved from Middle Level Management personnel of the Ghana Prisons Service.

Figure 4.2: Knowledge of some internal control systems used by the Ghana Prisons Service



Source: (Field Study, 2021)

Asked whether respondents have any knowledge of some internal controls system used by the Ghana Prisons Service, majority (29, 96.7%) of the respondents agreed, while 1 (3.3%) of the respondent disagreed. From Figure 4.3, it can be there be inferred that that most of the respondents have adequate knowledge of some internal controls system used by the Ghana Prisons Service.

Respondents were asked to list some of the controls systems in place at the Ghana Prison Services. From the study, some of the controls systems are provided below:

Table 4.2.1: List of some internal control systems used by the Ghana Prisons Service

1. Chain of command	2. Monitoring and Evaluation
3. Disciplinary procedure	4. Auditing
5. Channels of communication	6. Approval of stationary by supervisor
7. Financial Control	8. Audit report
9. Internal audit	10. Public Financial Management Regulation 2019
11. Inmate categorization	12. Public Procurement Act 2016
13. Parade state	14. Risk Assessment
15. PFMR Act 2016	16. Presentation of Inmate Accounting Slip to OIC
17. Writing Report on Searches to OIC	18. Gate Journal
19. Presentation of Grievance Addressing Channel	20. Work attendance Book
21. Segregation of Duties	22. Personnel Management
23. Approval Authority Requirements	24. Inmate Management
25. Inspection of Drivers log books	26. Circular Floats
27. Inspection of all supplies to service	28. On-line Purchase Recruitment/Cadet Forms
29. Pre-audit	30. Validation of Salaries
31. Transfer of Officers Strategically	32. IT General Controls
33. Prisons standing Orders	34. Physical Safeguards
35. Prison Service (Staff Discipline) Regulation 2016	36. Detective

37. Prison Service (General Administration) Regulation 2016	38. Corrective
39. Shift System	40. IT General Controls
41. Chain of Command System	

(Source: Field Study, 2021).

This finding of the study is supported by Katushabe (2016) who observed that control activities include all activities that are put in place as part of internal controls by an organization to remove the element(s) of risk and thus reasonably assure achievement of organizational objectives. Further, Jianguo et al. (2019) complement this by adding that control activities include all the measures that are established to identify and address risk within an organization.

Table 4.2.2: Are these control systems fully operationalized?

Required Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	30	100
TOTAL	30	100

Source: Field Study (2021)

When asked whether these control systems are fully operationalized, (30, 100%) of the respondents agreed as illustrated by Table 4.2.2 that all the listed control systems in the Ghana Prison Services were fully operationalized. It can therefore be deduced that these control systems are fully operationalized in the service to assist employees to work efficiently.

Again, respondents were asked to indicate how these control systems function in the Service. From the responses obtained from the field, it was gathered amongst others that:

- Disciplinary procedure ensures that appropriate sanctions are given to those who flout rules and regulations.
- The channels of communication within the service ensures that grievances are properly channeled through laid down procedures.
- Proper accounting for money received from the accounts.
- Auditing of the accounts of the service by external auditors.
- Different levels of approving authority.
- The audit of all payments and expenditure
- Prison inmate are classified and categorized by separating remands from convicts and juveniles from adults.
- Internal controls are guided by financial laws of the country, the enforcement as a prerequisite for the release of funds and appropriation.
- Duties are performed on departmental basis and different shifts.

It is refreshing to note that these findings of the study are backed by Apostolou et al. (2013) when he argued that control activities ensure that organizational transactions are properly authorized and all records pertaining to finances are properly recorded in line with control procedures. Additionally, Lawson et al. (2017) emphasized segregation of duties among personnel as part of control activities. In corroborating this, Bukeyan and Kinatta (2012) argue that when fundamental duties and responsibilities are separated amongst personnel of an organization, the risk of error or fraud is reduced to the barest minimum. Tunji (2013) therefore indicates that separation of duty and responsibility enables an organization to control the incidence of abuse of power and authority and also streamline organizational activities. For their part, Daniela and Attila (2013) indicated that control activities should include proper documentation, data recording, vital information accessibility, protection of assets, and physical controls.

Table 4.2.3: Have these controls system impacted positively on the performance

Required Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	93.3
No	1	6.7
TOTAL	29	100

Source: (Field Study, 2021)

On the question of whether these controls system have impacted positively on the performance of the Ghana Prisons Service, Table 4.2.3 indicates that (28, 93.3%) of the respondents agreed, while only (1, 6.7%) of the respondent disagreed. The result shows that these controls system have impacted positively on the performance of the Ghana Prisons Service. Respondents were further requested to indicate in what ways these controls system have impacted positively on the performance of the Ghana prisons service. Findings obtained from study indicated that:

- It has helped in making amends and preventing future mishaps.
- Continues use of these policies have led to the improvement in its execution.
- Personnel commitment and regular supervision
- Supervising and appraising those who are responsible for monitoring and enforcing control measures.
- Strict adherence to financial management regulations.
- Effective supervision and strict adherence to laid down regulations on internal controls.

These revelations of the study are corroborated by Chezey and Agbo (2013) who found out of their empirical study that strong internal controls and effective supervision stemmed the tide of fraudulent activities in an organization.

Table 4.2.4: Awareness of Official Policies of Internal Control

Required Responses	Frequency	Percentage%
Yes	30	30
TOTAL	30	100

Source: (Field Study, 2021)

In response to whether respondents were aware of official policies of internal control, (30, 100%) of the respondents agreed that they know of official policies of internal control. The result shows that majority of the employees in the Ghana Prison Services were aware of official policies of internal control. Respondents were again required to list some of the official policies of internal control which were revealed as follows:

- Scheme of service administration
- Guidelines on promotion and progression
- Prisons Service (Staff Discipline) Regulations, 2016 (C.I 93)
- Promotion guidelines and progression
- Internal audit guidelines/Agency
- Charters and Director General's circular
- Rent policy
- Disciplinary action and new policies

Table 4.2.5: Are Monitoring Mechanisms in Place

Required Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	30	100
TOTAL	30	100

Source: Field Study (2021)

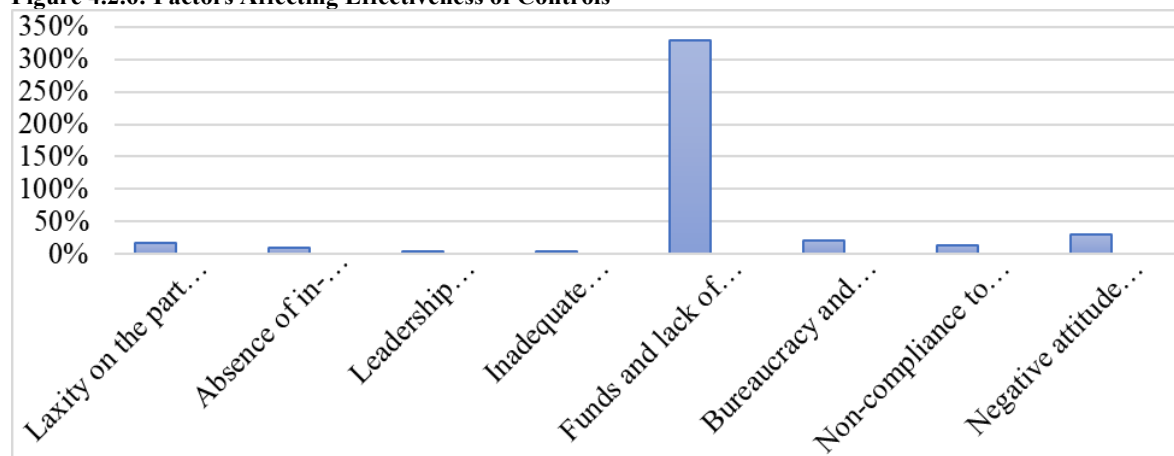
On the issue of whether there are monitoring mechanisms in place, 30, which represents 100% of the respondents agreed that there were monitoring mechanisms in place to checke the enforcement of the policies in the Ghana Prison Service. Furthermore, the respondents were mandated to indicate list of the mechanisms in place in the Ghana Prisons Service which includes:

- Routing letters through the float system
- Investigation bodies and trial panels
- Chain of command and situational report
- The internal auditor would have to approve before items are issued

- Periodic visit to station by the monitoring and evaluation, audit and technical team
- Audit implementation committee
- Internal audit and annual external audit review
- Segregation of responsibilities
- Proper delegation of powers
- Pre-auditing and post auditing mechanisms
- Scrutinizing of payment documents
- Receiving of vehicle log-books
- Receipts and PV's are pre-audited
- Annual and quarterly reports from unit heads
- internal audit/ procurement unit submit reports to management for monitoring

On the question of how effective are the mechanisms put in place, majority of the respondents said that these mechanisms put in place in the Ghana Prisons Services are very effective in their work schedules and general operational duties in the organization.

Figure 4.2.6: Factors Affecting Effectiveness of Controls



Source: (Field Study, 2021)

On the question of the factors affecting the effectiveness of controls in the Service as evident on Figure 4.2.6, (5, 16.7%) of the respondents said laxity on the part of some schedule heads to enforce policies, (3, 10%) absence of in-service training on effective trial procedures, while (1, 3.3%) of the respondents said leadership philosophy and operating style, inadequate information, funds and lack of education respectively. Also, (6, 20%) of the respondents said bureaucracy and hierarchical structure of the service, (4, 13.3%) non-compliance to rules and regulations whereas (9, 30%) of the respondents said negative attitude towards internal controls by schedule officers. It can therefore be inferred that negative attitude towards internal controls by schedule officers was the factor affecting effectiveness of controls.

It is important to note that these outcomes of the study connect well with the observation by Appiah (2012) that when management of organizations exemplifies strong ethical conduct towards financial management, it establishes strong organization foundation, reinvigorate consciousness towards controls, and above all, maximize the efficacy of internal controls relative to organizational performance.

Table 4.2.8: Are there any challenges encountered in the use of these control system?

Required Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	30	100
TOTAL	30	100

Source: (Field Study, 2021)

In response to whether there are any challenges encountered in the implementation of these control system, (30, 100%) of the respondents agreed to the challenges encountered in the implementation of these control system. It can be implied that the majority of the employees were of the opinion of the challenges encountered in the implementation of these control system. Akin to this, respondents were asked to list some of these challenges. The following responses were recorded:

- Noncompliance to rules and procedures of the service
- Ignorance of most officers on the existence of the policies
- Lack of resources for auditing
- Poorly designed guidelines
- Financial and logistical constraints
- Unavailability of skilled personnel to perform the required task.
- Officers' unwillingness to comply with control measures.

Table 4.2.9: Have these Challenges Impacted on Performance?

Required Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	30	100
TOTAL	30	100

Source: (Field Study, 2021)

On the question of whether these challenges have impacted on the performance of the institution in anyway, 30 (100%) of the respondents agreed. The result showed that these challenges have impacted on the performance of the institution. In which ways these challenges have impacted on the performance the institution, the study found that:

- Aggrieved officers resorting to court when they feel they have not been properly treated
- proper redefinition of guidelines
- Reduction in revenue and non-achievement of target
- Caused the service to be inefficient in its operations
- Delays in recruitment process

Qualitative Data

In order to obtain relevant qualitative in-depth perspective on key variables of the study, the researcher conducted interviews with the two (2) top Senior Management members of the Ghana Prisons Service and one Member of the Ghana Prisons Service Council. For the sake of confidentiality and anonymity, they were named first, second and third respondents. The interview ensured that specific information about the research study was collected by the researcher as well as enabling the interviewees to express their respective opinions and share their experiences without limiting them to closed ended questions. The interview had the most relaxed guidelines to allow respondents freewill to express themselves. The designation of the interviewees ranged from senior top managers in the Service.

According to the first respondent, the role of the Ghana Prisons Council can be found in Article 208 Of the 1992 Constitution under two main headings.

These include both Advisory and Regulatory roles. The advisory roles include 4 main issues which include advising the president on issues relating to the council, organizing and maintenance of the prison system of Ghana, budgeting, administration and finances of the

Service and promotion of officers above the rank of ADP. The regulatory roles include making regulation for efficient administration of the prison service and regulations regarding the performance of the prison service in tandem with constitution of the republic and other laws. Examples of regulations are: the control and administration of prison service and its establishment.

(Male, Council Member).

According to the second respondent, internal controls are measures put in place to ensure effective and efficient management of the organization and achievement of set objectives. He further mentioned that *“before we can talk about internal controls of the services, we must know what our core mandate is. We work to ensure safe custody, welfare, rehabilitation and reformation for safe custody, we have measures in ensuring dynamic and static security, modern and purpose-built structures and gadgets, training and capacity building to be current with modern trends, Intelligence gathering and observational techniques with welfare, we have healthcare delivery systems, systems to ensure efficient management of logistics, timely supply of logistics”*.

(Male, Management Member).

This view is in tandem with the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors (CIIA, 2020), when it defines controls as measures that are put in place by an organization’s management and the board intended to check against risk and thus assure the attainment of set objectives.

Equally, the first respondent also said that *“internal controls are measures put in place to ensure that the mandates, objectives and policies of the organization are achieved. In other words, they are checks and balances to ensure that the organization is on the right path of achieving its set objectives”*. On the other hand, the third respondent said that *“with regard to financial controls, we have sealings for amounts that various categories of staff can approve; controls to ensure punctuality, there is a standing order for morning and evening parades; there is also gate journal to register the movements of officers in and out of the workplace; there is the hierarchical system in place for officers to seek redress to their grievances; forfeiture of remission of inmates on disciplinary grounds among others.”*

(Male, Council Member).

In what ways are the internal control systems related to the performance of Ghana Prisons Service with regard to the following: accountability, participation, discipline, core mandate of the service, the third respondent said that *“accountability which includes the use of the ceiling system ensures financial prudence and appropriate and effective use of funds. Again, participation where the opportunity for officers to sought to redress as a control system enhanced participation and removes apathy among officers”*.

(Male, Management Member).

This outcome of the study relates well with Appiah (2012) when he observed that when management of organizations exemplifies strong ethical conduct towards financial management, it establishes strong organization foundation, reinvigorate consciousness towards controls, and above all, maximize the efficacy of internal controls relative to organizational performance.

Discipline which the respondent indicated that the journal and booking system as well as parades under the auspices of the Chief Officer of Administration helped to ensure discipline among officers. Lastly, core mandate of the service which entailed all internal controls in place here helped in the reformation, rehabilitation and general management of prisoners which form their core mandate as a public service organization.

According to the first respondent, the key factors that can promote effectiveness of controls were capacity building of the staff and effective monitoring and these can be attained through enhanced funding and support for the Service from all stakeholders including government.

5.0 Conclusion

Internal controls system, which is regarded as the strength of every organization has become essentially important to organizational management systems. The reason being that the control system in any organization is a pillar for an efficient accounting system and management. From the study, it was gathered that the internal control of the Ghana Prisons Service is rigorously interconnected to the structure used by management to supervise the activities of the Service. It is fundamental for management of the Service to provide interested parties with reasonable assurance that their organization is been effectively controlled and that the accounting data it receives on a timely basis are accurate and dependable. Developing a strong system of internal control provides this assurance. The study concluded that management believes internal controls are important and as such, see to it that effective control policies and procedures are implemented. This control conscious attitude are communicated to subordinates through the management operating system.

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