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Effect of Fiscal Responsibility Act on Budgeting and Accountability Practice in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of the Fiscal Responsibility Act on budgeting and accountability practice in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Specifically, the study determines the relationship between the pre and post effect of the Reform Act to ascertain if there is any significant difference in the management of the nation's fiscal operations. The study made use of secondary data obtained from the Central Bank of Nigeria Annual Reports and Accounts, the Central Bank Nigeria Statistical Bulletins and report of the Accountant –General of the Federation as audited by the Auditor - General of the Federation for the period under study. Six research questions and seven hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The data generated for this study were presented in tables, graphs and mean scores and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22. The hypotheses were tested using the T-test of difference and the Pearson Correlation (r). Results revealed among others; that the number of months of default on the publication of Federal Government Audited Accounts was reduced in the post-Fiscal Responsibility Act era. Again, there is a significant negative trend in the mean corruption index after the introduction of the Act and that actual capital expenditure is more closely related to capital expenditure budget in the post than pre-Fiscal Responsibility Act period. Based on the findings, we recommended that budgeting and accountability practice should be made more proactive by imbibing the culture of timely auditing and reporting standards as stated in sections 49 and 50 of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, 2007.

KEYWORDS: *Fiscal Responsibility Act, Budgeting and Accountability Practice*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria operates a mixed economy made up of the public sector (government and its activities) and private sector (privately owned part of the economy). In such a planned economy, the public sector has the commanding rights of the economy and takes all major decisions including those for the private sector,(1999 Constitution, section 16: sub-section 1,2 and 4). However, in the second half of the last century, some radical changes in management style, information technology, methods of decision making, budgetary procedure, accounting systems' performance, among others, took place in the private sector economy of some developed and developing economies of the world. These changes brought with it improved efficiency and effectiveness in running the privately owned part of the economy.

In the recent past, some countries like the United Kingdom (U.K.), Australia, New Zealand, Canada and even Ghana began to adopt different levels of implementation of this new private style of management into public sector governance. Some countries, however, were skeptical using them on the reason that the new tools and accounting systems were appropriate for only private business organizations which aims at making a profit in contrast to public sector objective (Ouda, 2003).

Here, governments are expected and requested to be cautious, mindful, transparent and accountable in their duty of providing services to the public. It also means that there should be an emphasis on strategic control of aggregate spending and priority setting; and the facilitation of greater efficiency and effectiveness via delegation of management authority with accountability for results (Ouda,2003). This actually requires the government to introduce some radical changes in the public administration system in line with the private sector style for improved, efficient, transparent and result oriented service delivery to the citizenry. The introduction of SAP exacerbated the already deplorable situation of austerity measure. The reform led to cut in the take-home pay of workers; massive retrenchment of workers; high cost of living and removal of subsidies, among others (Nwagbara, 2011). The implementation of this comprehensive economic reform program was in four areas: Macroeconomic Reforms, Structural Reforms, Government and Institutional Reforms and Public Sector Reforms (Okonjo Iweala & Osafo-kwaako, 2007). These areas of economic reforms were interlocking and actually form a continuum, intended to work together to achieve the common goal of better or more transparent management of public resources, probity and accountability towards economic growth.

Budgeting and accountability practices in the first and second-generation reforms had no recourse to the weak public service delivery, inefficiency, waste, corruption and misappropriation of public funds. The idea of Public Sector Reforms (PSR) was, therefore, initiated against the background that the government required a departure from its old traditional method of running administration and the urgent need for renewed public sector services to propel government in its quest for sustainable socio-economic, political and technological development, as such, there is the need for structural re-engineering of the public sector with the infusion of new spirit, value, professionalism, accountability, responsiveness and focused sense of mission for maximum efficiency of the economy (Omoyefa, 2008).

At the inception of the democratic government in 1999, the morale of Nigerians were at the lowest ebb as a result of total decay of infrastructure, malfunctioning of public utilities, a high level corruption, general waste, inefficient state enterprise, soaring inflation and a high level of `unemployment among others (NEEDS, 2004).

In the Nigeria public sector, lack of financial accountability and probity, lack of performance-oriented budgeting, virtual institutionalization of corruption at all levels and segments, disregard for rules and regulations, the general decline of efficiency and effectiveness (Adegoroye, 2008) were noted among the major ills militating against the nation's economic growth. The above situation necessitated the need to develop a model(s) for effective control and performance evaluation criteria.

As part of the public sector reform, government in 2007 came up with the idea of the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) to help improve efficiency through budgeting, fiscal accountability and transparency in the public sector service which will in turn translate to improved economic and development indicators like the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), rate of inflation, citizen welfare in terms of life expectancy, Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and other Human Development Index (HDI).

Okonjo-Iweala & Osafo-kwaako (2007) observed that poor public expenditure management in Nigeria has greatly hampered the quality of government capital projects. This has resulted in poor services delivery to the citizenry. They further argued that strengthening the budget preparation and execution process was urgently needed in order to improve the efficiency of government spending and improve service delivery in the state. They noted that weakness in budget implementation and monitoring had in the past resulted in low quality of government expenditure and many other incomplete projects.

The International Budget Partnership (IBP) in 2008 conducted a study on 25 countries, including Nigeria, on-budget performance and discovered that Nigeria provided scant or no budget information to enable the public hold the government accountable for managing their money. In that study, Nigeria scored 19 percent on a scale of 1 to 100 percent in the Open Budget Index (2008). Again, in 2010, Nigeria scored 18 percent while Liberia scored 40 percent and Ghana 54 percent, (www.openbudgetindex.org). The objective of the above study according to the Director of IBP, Warren Krafchill, is to promote increased public access to government budget information as this can lead to concrete improvements in people's lives.

Osisoma (2013) observed that in Nigeria, the evidence of poor public financial management has manifested in crippling debts burdens, low credibility of enacted budgets, poor links between policy priorities and the inputs that are funded by public resources, and the high cost of wastage and corruption. He opined that good budgeting demands sound institutions governing the allocation of funds, budget execution system that provides assurance on the operators within the rule of law, accounting systems that have integrity and audit systems that provide assurance on the quality of financial information and systems.

The military has been blamed for extra budget spending and blatant disregard to budget rules (Ben-caleb & Agbude, 2013), what about the civilian administration with the entrenchment of the Fiscal Responsibility Act? The problem of this study therefore is to find out if the implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility Act by the civilian government of the fourth republic has any significant effect on budget spending and accounting in Nigeria public sector.

The main objective of this study is to assess the implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) so as to determine its effect on budgeting and accountability in Nigeria. The specific objectives are;

1. To establish whether the implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility Act has led to the timely publication of Audited Accounts of the Federal Government of Nigeria.
2. To ascertain if the implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility Act has reduced corruption index in Nigeria.
3. To investigate whether the implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility Act has reduced the percentage of public debt service to total revenue of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Framework

The Concept of Public Sector Reforms (PSR)

The public sector represents that portion of a nation's affairs, especially economic affairs that are controlled by the government or its agencies. It is the sector of the economy regulated by the government to provide certain goods and services to the entire populace at a reasonable price. In addition to the general government, the public sector includes entities that are majorly owned by the government including the state-owned enterprises and financial institutions. It is highly centralized and its instrumentality is the public administration systems which emphasize compliance with written rules and regulations (Ouda, 2004).

The researcher noted that in most African states, the public sector focuses on input rather than output. It actually complements the role of the private sector and remains pivotal to private sector socio-economic development in any developing economy. It is run by government bureaucrats, who carry out government programs essentially in compliance with a set of rules and regulations, characterized by a system that lacks clear performance measurement and so, lack incentive to encourage efficiency and effectiveness. This is a replica of the Nigeria public sector where inefficiency, waste and corruption are the order of the day. In-so-far as the Nigerian public sector could not perform effectively due to the accumulation of excessive power, lack of accountability and representation, indifferences towards public need and demands, official secrecy and inaccessibility, and roles in depoliticizing the public sphere, the need for reform emerged.

Public sector reform is about improving how government departments or agencies functions internally; how they interact with each other, with their political bosses and with the citizen they purport to serve and ultimately how they deliver public goods and services. It could be total or partial shedding of some seemingly obligatory government businesses and interests in enterprises such as transport, housing, communication, banking, power and energy among others, (Nethercutt 2003; Adegoroye, 2005).

Omefeya (2008), defined it as the total overhaul of government administrative machinery with the aim of injecting real effectiveness, efficiency, hardcore competence and financially prudence in the running of the public sector. This means that the public sector may be poorly organized, its decision processes may be irrational, accountability may be weak, public programs may be poorly designed, public goods and service poorly delivered and democracy dividend delivered only on papers, radios and televisions, and so, public sector reform is an attempt to fix these problems.

Schacter (2000) saw public sector reform as "strengthening the way the public sector is managed" This presupposes that things are not properly managed in the public sector, that unnecessary wastages have crept into the ways the public sector ought to be run and that too many people are doing poorly what few people can do effectively.

It has also been described as one of the elements of economic reforms (Wynne, 2007, Ouda, 2004). The whole ideas are that since the economy grew and societies become differentiated, the government conventional way of regulation, allocation and redistribution of goods and services has to be changed for better.

The public sector, therefore, requires a restructuring of norms, rules and institutions, operating in the system, such that market forces will allocate resources efficiently in order to promote individual self-interest for the good of the society. Increasingly now, the focus is the need for the government to demonstrate quality improvements and value for money in public services; this entails role changes and impacts on public and private sector relationship. It is a process in which private-sector style management approach are introduced into the public sector (Wynne, 2007)

Reasons for Public Sector Reforms

In many countries of the world including Nigeria, several factors have led the government into adopting public sector reforms. According to (Ouda, 2004), public sector reforms are carried out to address economic crises or to meet some challenges brought about by increased globalization. A number of countries have made significant progress after their adoption of the public sector reforms in the past three decades. The new Zealand, United Kingdom (UK) and Australia were among the first to start (Ouda, 2004), Canada and United State of American (USA) and some developing countries of African like Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia have since joined the league.

Some of the factors that have lead many of these countries into undertaking public sector reforms are discussed below:

Economic Crises:

Economic crises result from wrong or misapplication of economic policies and tools such that the desired objectives of the public sector are not achieved. Many professionals have argued that economic growth is the prime engine of development, but despite enormous investment in economic growth programs, many countries do not experience the economic growth the program designed to achieve, nor do they improve in other key development indicators (O'Brien, 2003). The major symptoms of an economy in crises include sick and non-performing economy and public institutions, unfair and unaffordable social policies, as well as financial deficits (Ouda, 2003).

Nigeria is about the most challenged developing countries of the world because, despite being the world's sixth-largest oil exporter, the nation is far the world's most populous poor country. With an annual GPD growth of about 2.25 percent and estimated population growth of 2.80 percent per annum, there has been a contraction in per capital GDP over the years that has resulted in a deterioration of living standards for most citizens,(Okonjo-lweala & Osafo-kwaako, 2007; King, 2003). King (2003), has described Nigeria as a country of spectacularly failed economic policies, rising poverty and return to subsistence, with public utility services that are among the worst in the world … at least two-thirds of the household are not connected to electricity; half of the adult population are not literate; access to water is extremely limited, and so on.

Demand for Accountability in Government.

There has been growing and louder public demands for accountability in government. According to Walsh (1995), the elements of accountability exist in any relationship where one party (an agent) performs some functions on behalf of another party (the principal). An agent, according to him, is one to whom the principal delegates power and entrusts resources for safeguarding (stewardship) or to carry out specific tasks on behalf of the principal. Accountability in this means that the context agents have to properly demonstrate that they have exercised the power conferred, achieved the goals and objectives and used the resource provided effectively and efficiently.

Nigeria's open budget performance shows that Nigeria scored 20 percent in 2006, 19 percent in 2008, 18 percent in 2010 and 16 percent in 2012 thus recording a very poor performance when compared with an average score of 43 percent for all 100 countries surveyed. In 2010, Ghana scored 54% and Liberia, 40%, (Open budget survey), (2010) www.openbudgetindex.org.

Corruption

Corruption is a major impediment to development (Walter, 2003). It thrives where there is no transparency and proper accountability. The fight against corruption is critical because corruptions are pervasive and affect all sectors and areas in the development of any economy (Maldonado, 2003).

Corruption erodes trust and confidence in the political system. It also inhibits investment and job creation (Maldonado, 2003; O'Brien, 2003, Walter; 2003). Therefore, any political system that seeks to function effectively must have the political will to fight corruption as this gives credibility and legitimacy to the government of the day.

Corruption also curtails the ability of governments at Federal, State and local to finance and provide social services such as education, health, water etc (Okonjo & Osafo-kwaako, 2007; Maldonado, 2003; O'brien, 2003; Walter, 2003). It prevents the participation of civil society in the oversight of how public resources are utilized (Maldonado, 2003; O'Brien, 2003). The fight against corruption is not an event, but a long-term and complex process that requires firm commitment and determination in addition to a permanent partisan with an active attitude from all stakeholders, (Maldonado, 2003).

A bane of Nigeria's existence since the oil boom of the '70s has been the reputation for corruption. Corruption is a precept of poor governance which negatively affects growth and distorts the climate for doing business and serves as a tax on private investment, (Okonjo-Iweala & Osafo-kwaako, 2007). The significant additional costs that poor public services impose on the Nigerian business sector fundamentally comprise a country's ability to develop (King, 2003).

Analytical studies conducted by Okonjo-lweala & Kwaako in (2007) on the extent of corruption in Nigeria prior to the recent reforms showed a negative trend, for example, the report on "Nigeria's Economic reforms: progress and challenges" (2007), shows that a survey of Nigerian firms in 2002 revealed widespread bribery and corruption across various public institutions. According to the survey, about 70 percent of firms reported the need to give bribe to obtain trade permits; about 83 percent paid bribes to obtain utility services; about 65 percent paid bribes when paying taxes; an estimated 90 percent paid bribes during procurement; and 70 percent of firms acknowledged the need for bribes to obtain favorable judicial decisions. Also, there was a widespread perception of the leakage of public funds (Kaufmann *et al*, 2005). The popular "1.M" syndrome was so much invoked for one to obtain any government assistance. Additionally, 100 percent of Nigerian firms surveyed agreed that public funds were diverted to private groups in contrast to about 78 percent of firms in Russia, and about 45 percent of firms in South Africa (Okonjo-Iweala & Osafo-Kwaako, 2007).

Public Sector Reforms and the Nigeria Economy

Economic growth is central to public sector reform performance in every developing country. Before the fourth republic of 1999 in Nigeria, there was, inter alia, the failure and virtual collapse of governance, contamination of democratic values, social-political and economic decay, hence, the need for reforms aimed at providing greater transparency and accountability of public institutions and government operations to urgently redress these circumstances. The government then, under President Obasanjo, believed that only a well designed public sector reform on budgeting and accountability targeted at improving the economy positively can reverse the wrong trajectory of our national integrity journey. Also in 2007, the Fiscal Responsibility Act was instituted to further strengthen the Nigerian economy through regulated budgeting and accountability practices.

Table2.05: Nigeria budget and some selected macroeconomic indicators (1999-2013)

Year	Total budget (N)	Budget Deficit	Real GDP (%)	Inflation rate (%)	Unemployment rate (%)	Poverty rate (%)	Life expectancy At birth (yrs)	Human Development Index (HDI)	Corruption Perception Index (CPI)	Exchange rate ₦/Dolla	Total external debt (N) M
1999	0.524 b	285104.7m	2.8	6.6	12.0	70	54	0.410	98/99	92/69	2577374.4
2000	0.705tr	103.8m	3.9	6.9	13.1	70	46	0.445	90/90	102.11	3097383.9
2001	0.894tr	221.0m	4.2	18.9	13.6	68	46	0.463	90/91	111.94	3176291.0
2002	1.064tr	301.4m	4.0	12.9	12.6	65	46	0.466	101/102	120.97	3932884.8
2003	1.446tr	202.7m	3.7	14.0	14.8	63	48	0.453	132/133	129.36	4478329.3
2004	1.189tr	172.6m	6.5	15.0	13.4	55	48	0.456	144/146	133.50	4890269.9
2005	1.80tr	161.4m	6.9	17.9	11.9	54.5	49	0.429	152/168	132.15	2695072.2
2006	1.90tr	101397.5m	5.3	8.5	12.3	55.1`	50	0.438	153/180	128.65	451461.7
2007	2.30tr	117237.2m	6.1	5.4	12.7	60.5	50	0511	147/180	125.83	431079.9
2008	3.58tr	47378.5m 47.4b	6.0	11.6	14.9	63.6	50	0446	121/180	118.57	523254.1
2009	3.76tr	810.01b	7.0	12.5	19.7	61.2	51	0.449	130/180	148.88	590437.1
2010	4.61tr	1264.5b	7.9	13.7	21.1	69	51	0.454	134/178	150.30	689837.5
2011	4.484tr	1287.8b	7.4	10.8	23.9	71.5	52	0.459	143/183	153.86	896849.6
2012	4.70tr	1168.1b	6.6	12.2	23.3	70.5	52	0.471	136.176	157.50	1026903.9
2013	4.897tr	1.037tr	6.8	9.8	29.6	62.6	52.4	0.504	144/177	158.00	NA

Key: E = estimate; m= million; b= billion; tr= trillion; ₦= naira; %= percentage

Sources:

1. CBN annual report and account for several years
2. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in CBN statistical bulletin of (2005) vol. 16, (2009) vol. 20, (2012) vol. 23
3. World **B**ank Report for several years.
4. CIA World Factbook 2013.

Debt Service/Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Nigeria Economy

The Federal Government of Nigeria in the effort to meet up with economic demands most often overshoots the budget thus creating room for deficit financing. This situation could be financed through debt financing, an increase in tax and so on. Debt financing is an injection of money into the economy through borrowing either internally or externally.

In recent times, developing countries seek debt financing as an option to finance budget deficit because it is assumed to be a catalyst in promoting economic growth. However, excessive borrowing which at times leads to rising in fiscal deficit financing is unhealthy to the growth of any developing economy as this often leads to high debt services that negatively affect the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In Nigeria, the burden of fiscal financing in terms of debt servicing rose relatively and absolutely over the years, increase in total revenue notwithstanding, however, the percentage of debt service to total government revenue appear to be closely related after the introduction of the

Fiscal Responsibility Act in 2007. Again, the real Gross Domestic Product actual and targeted, are closely related in the post Fiscal Responsibility Act than pre-Fiscal Responsibility Act period.

The Role of FRA in Nigeria Economic Development
Nigerian experience in economic development can be traced to the 1940s when the British colonial office in London requested the colonies to prepare development plans which would assist it in disbursing the colonial development and welfare funds. This gave rise to the adoption of the perspective plan, the medium-term plan and the annual plan.

The perspective plan generally plots or charts the long term plan of the economy by setting out the broad-based guidelines and objectives to be pursued within a time frame. Most often, it covers a long period of between 10-20 years or more. This is a replica of the Nigerian 20:20:20 economic plan.

The medium-term or rolling plan is used as an implementation instrument for the perspective plan. The main task of the medium-term plan is to translate the broad guidelines and objectives of the perspective plan into specific targets and more measurable and quantifiable goals within the period. The Nigeria Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) covers a period of three years plan.

The annual plan is the yearly segment of the medium-term or rolling plan and sets out in more details the projects and programs in the medium-term or rolling plan and the financial implications of the methods or operations necessary to fulfill the set goals, (Eyiuche, 2000). The annual plan represents the yearly budgets by the Nigeria government.

Therefore, it can be said that the perspective plan, the medium-term or rolling plan and the annual plans or budgets are interwoven and one being used to achieve the other without conflicting with each other.

The FRA as a reform program drew its inspiration from the above economic policy practices and this informed the adoption of the medium-term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) as enunciated in NEEDS. Through the MTEF, the Act provided the three year –work- plan or framework for the implementation of public sector reform started by Obasanjo administration. It is perceived to be the latest and most potent legal instrument which can be used to lay a lasting legacy in the public sector reform efforts (Olaniyi, 2006). This reform effort is expected to strengthen Nigeria's economic growth, but to what extent?

The Act also brought the introduction of performance indicators to help decision-makers focus on results, Act 11(3)a and 19(b). The emphasis is no longer on inputs alone as this Act (section 19(d) and (e) effectively creates an input-output dimension in the resources management by the economy. It also demands transparency and accountability on matching results with objectives and resources utilized sections 48, 49 and 50.

The FRA among other things, established the Fiscal Responsibility Commission charged with the responsibility of monitoring and enforcing the provisions of this act towards greater accountability, transparency and prudence in the management of the Nation's resources by Federal Government on government-owned corporations or companies and agencies as provided for under sections 13, 16(1), and (2) and item 60 of the Exclusive Legislative list as set out in Part I of the second schedule to the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) and Budgeting In Nigeria
Budgeting is a systematic and formalized approach for accomplishing planning, co-ordination and control responsibilities in the management of organization or business. It is a process of preparing in advance of the period to which it relates, a summary statement of plans expressed in quantitative terms which if utilized with sophistication and good judgment would enhance the attainment of the organization or public sector objectives. Such plan quantified in monetary terms, prepared and approved prior to a defined period of time, usually showing planned income to be generated and or expenditure to be incurred during that period, and the capital to be employed to attain a given objective is called the budget Lucy, (1984) as cited in Osisioma, (1990). It is a financial plan that sets forth the resources necessary to carry out activities and meet financial goals for a future period of time (Anyafo, 2000). It is annually derived from the medium-term expenditure framework, FRA (2007, part 111)

In all, a budget helps instill into public officials, government corporations and agencies the habit of careful evaluation and make possible the control over operations, revenues and costs, and also over the persons responsible for the operations. This functions to promote the efficiency of operation and prevent waste in the economy. Again, government responsibilities are cost-oriented (government expenditure) and since resources are not always adequate to fund these activities that address various socio-economic and political needs of a country, a formal statements of revenue and expenditure at a future date (Budget) must be made as a matter of constitution thereby paying attention to critical areas of development needs and maximize limiting factors, (Wildavsky and Caiden, 1977 in Okpala, 2012).

2.3.1 The Nigeria Budgeting Experience
Budgeting in African countries has witnessed a lot of revolutions within the last few decades yet no meaningful developments have been experienced, (Mhome, 2003). At the end of every year, huge sums are budgeted and spent in Nigeria with unacceptable levels of economic growth and developments. According to Ajakaiye & Akinibinu (2000), poor level of accountability of public resources became alarming and this can be traced to the ineffective budgeting system and poor regulatory framework.

However, Nigeria traditional line-item budgeting process reflects the concern over safeguarding public funds and control which has characterized budgeting and financial management in government for generations, hence conventional budgeting. The foundation of this budgeting in Nigeria was laid in 1914 when the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated under the administration of Lord Fredrick Lugard. The governments accounting principles and practices applicable in England then were adopted by the administrators of the Nigerian colony for reporting to the home office in London. Worthy of note is that the colonized 'father' has since moved from the input-oriented budgeting system to different types of output-oriented budgeting system at different times which included program budgeting, performance budgeting, program – performance budgeting, planning programming budgeting and Zero-based budgeting system.

Despite its widespread use, the incremental budgeting technique has been criticized for encouraging spending rather than economizing as controllers of vote feel compelled to exhaust all their appropriations whether necessary or not since performance evaluation tends to be focused upon spending and an accounting officer is assumed to be effective as long as the expenditure is within budgeting limits. Again, a ministry or departments' subsequent budget will be reduced if it spends less than what was allocated for in a given year. Deficit budgeting is encouraged instead.

The 1974 public service review commission in Nigeria indicted the incremental budgeting technique as follows: under the traditional budgeting system, there is no indication, except sometimes in development estimates, of what output is to be achieved, how many miles of rail or roads will be laid, the number of acres of land to go under irrigation, the tons of produce to be exported, the number of classrooms to be built. The senior management team cannot measure the performance of a public servant nor hold him accountable for it since funds are not allocated on that basis. When a ministry or an enterprise seeks an extra allocation of resources, there is no ready means of telling whether this is proportion to the extra work to be performed or to the output of other department performing similar activities. Neither does the public servant know what output is expected of him. He is likely to be judged more by how little money he has spent than by how much he has received, over-spending a vote is more apparent and blameworthy than falling short of a target. This puts a premium on inactivity, (Udoji Report, 1974).

Traditionally, the budgeting process in Nigeria which has been basically incremental in nature has often not been able to address the unique challenges of the times. The current capital budget must be able to address the challenges of economic transformation. These include growing globally competitive firms, world-class infrastructure, innovative and productive workplaces. The budget has to contribute towards making Nigeria an internationally competitive country.

Timely Publication of Accounts and Budget Practice

Periodicity concept in accounting demands that revenue of any particular accounting period must be matched with the cost incurred in the process of generating that revenue for proper accounting information. As such, fiscal and financial information made available on a full, regular and timely basis is an important ingredient of an informed government. In a democratic government, preparing timely financial reports allow interested citizens, taxpayers, investors and other constituents to access decision-useful information that can be used to make a range of important decisions regarding housing, schools, voting and the services they receive in return for their tax. Time, therefore, is of the essence in accounting as financial information is required by users of such information for varied decision making. Besides, transparency and accountability are assured to a greater extent; hence, timely publication of accounts is critical in achieving good financial reporting standard in governance. Suffice it to say that an essential element of financial reporting is that it communicates information in time to be used to inform decisions and to hold government officials accountable.

The Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2007, section 48 made it clear that the Federal Government of Nigeria shall ensure that its fiscal and financial affairs are conducted in a transparent manner and accordingly ensure full and timely disclosure and wide publication of all transactions and decisions involving public revenues and expenditure and their implications for its finances. Such timely, clear and open process in budget practice/ government businesses will no doubt bring about the integrity of financial information and forecasts by the government.

In this study, the researcher wishes to find out the extent to which the implementation of the Fiscal responsibility Act has improved the timely publication of audited government accounts for the period under study.

Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) and Accountability.

The Nigerian public sector reforms program, according to NEEDs (2004) was to curb corruption, reduce waste and inefficiency, establish the right set of values, and discourage rent-seeking and other unproductive values in the debilitating public sector by engendering the culture of accountability into government fiscal operations. Again, in 2007, the fiscal responsibility Act was passed into law to help allay the fears of non-adherence to basic ethics in governance, specifically with regards to providing prudent management by the nations' resources, ensuring long-term macro-economic stability and securing greater accountability and transparency in its fiscal operations.

Democratic Control: Each of these principals in the above chain of delegation wants to control the exercise for the transferred powers by holding the agents to account. At the end of the line of accountability, relations stands the citizenry who judge the performance of the government and can sanction their political representatives by voting them out in a good democratic system. Public account giving, therefore, is a necessary condition for the democratic process, because, in the end, it provides political representatives and voters with the necessary inputs for judging fairness, effectiveness and efficiency in governance.

Integrity: Accountability functions to enhance the integrity of public governance. The public character of the account giving is a safeguard against corruption, nepotism, abuse of power and such other forms of inappropriate behaviour. Rose-Ackerman (1999) said the assumption is that public account giving will deter public managers from secretly misusing their delegated powers.

Improved Performance: Public accountability is meant to foster institutional learning. Accountability is not only about control, it is also about preventing wrongs towards achieving rights. Norms are produced and reproduced, internalized and where necessary, adjusted through accountability. The manager who is held to account is told about the standards that must be held on to and about the fact that in the future he may again (and in that case, more strictly) be called to account in connection with his conduct. In such cases, outsiders are often addressed as well, particularly those outsiders likely to find themselves in a similar position to that of the person or persons being called to account.

Legitimacy: Together, these three functions provide the fourth function of public accountability, to maintain or enhance the legitimacy of public governance. In the developed world, the exercise of public authority is not taken for granted. Public accountability, in the sense of transparency, responsiveness and answerability, functions to enhance the public confidence in government and to bridge the gap between governed and government.

Accountability and Transparency Relationship

The concept of accountability refers to the legal and reporting framework, organizational structure, strategy, procedures and actions to help ensure that organization, institutions and groups;

A. Meet their legal obligations with regard to audit mandate and required reporting with their budget.
B. Evaluate and follow up performance as well as the impact of audit
C. Report on the regularity and the efficiency of the use of public funds, among others.

Transparency on the other hand, is a powerful force that when consistently applied can help fight corruption, improve governance and promote accountability; hence, accountability and transparency are two important elements of good governance or administration.

Osisioma (2008) opined that the twin concept of accountability and transparency is rooted in the basic ethical foundation of good governance in any democratic polity, noting that accountability is the heart and soul of good governance and transparency is the reinforce, and together they represent the Siamese twins of public sector administration. The notion of transparency refers to the timely, reliable, clear and relevant public reporting on its status, mandate, strategies, activities, financial management, operations and performance.

To achieve accountability and transparency, the following principles are necessarily required:

1. Performance of duties under a legal framework that provides for accountability and transparency. The organization should have to guide legislation and regulations in terms of which one can be held responsible and accountable. Such legislation and regulations shall cover;

A. Audit authority, jurisdictions and responsibilities
B. Conditions surrounding appointment, selections and removal of leaders and members of collegial bodies.
C. Operating and financial management requirements
D. Timely publication of audit reports etc.

2. The need to make public basic information regarding mandate, responsibilities, mission, strategy and relationship with various stakeholders, including the legislative bodies and executive authorities.

Empirical Review

A lot of research works relating to the topic of our study have been done in the past by some eminent scholars. Ogujiuba, Ezema and Omoju (2013) carried out an assessment on the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and Fiscal Management in Nigeria. The objective of the study was to review the MTEF and budget Performance in Nigeria for the period 2005-2008 and identify the challenges undermining the effective operation of the budgetary process. The study considered budgeted versus actual expenditure and assessed the MTEF performance for the period under review. Findings revealed among others, that the public finance in Nigeria has not been operated within the specification of the MTEF and the priorities expressed in the budget are not always in sync with the national objectives. It also identified some challenges to effective public expenditure management to include large scale corruption, deviant budget execution, monitoring and reporting.

Also, Onuorah and Appah (2012) studied accountability and public sector financial management in Nigeria using Ordinary Least Square (multiple regressions) to analyze federal government revenue, recurrent and capital expenditure relationship. They found out that there is complete obscure of good roads, hospital, water supply, electricity among other basic infrastructure in the country. This is so because of the complete absence of accountability and transparency in the effective and efficient management of public funds by public office holders in the country. This goes to show that the Nigeria budget and expenditure framework is recurrent expenditure driven.

Osisioma(2013) in a paper on Budget, Auditing and Governance: Implementing the accountability framework opined that good governance is rooted in quality institutions, informed and adequately motivated citizenry, and structures and processes that endure. He noted that the budget and audit tools are critical to the processes, and within the requirements of the accountability framework can bring the so-called dividends of democracy to citizenry. In the final analysis, he said that governance is enhanced by creative oversight and accountability.

Nwankwo (2014) made an empirical study to investigate the impact of corruption on the growth of Nigeria economy using Granger Causality and regression techniques. The study used the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a proxy of economic growth and corruption index. Findings show that the level of corruption in Nigeria over the years has a significant negative impact on economic growth.

Ettah (2012) examined the effect of corruption on economic development in Nigeria. The study sought to assess the virulent effect of corruption on economic development in Nigeria and to investigate the root causes of corruption and why it exacerbated in the economy. The study developed a model called the Corruption-Internet model to graphically portray the inter-relationship of the various sectors in the economy of corruption. The paper identified some culpable factors which probably gave vent to corruption in Nigeria.

Osisiom (2012) in his work on combating fraud and white-collar crimes: lessons from Nigeria, observed that fraud is systemic in Nigeria with the ordinary citizen being compelled to be either a liar, a cheat or an outright thief, noting that fraud has stultified growth and national development, subverted the nation's values and norms, generated a culture of illegality and impunity in public service and almost fritted away the promise of the nation's culture. He opined that what is needed is a strong accountability framework, an integrity system that is efficient in design and effective in operation.

Ojong and Owui (2013) carried out a study on the effect of budget deficit financing on the development of the Nigeria economy. The main objective of the work was to investigate the influence of government budget deficit financing on economic development in Nigeria. The ordinary least square regression was used to estimate equations formulated for the study. Findings revealed that there exists a significant relationship between budget deficit financing and economic growth in Nigeria. It also found out that there exists a significant relationship between GDP and government expenditure, among others.

In an unpublished paper presented by Aliyu Jibril at the workshop on the process and procedure for obtaining foreign loan for the federal and state governments held in Abuja on 8th June, 2010, it observed that the cost of servicing the debt increased at a disturbing rate before the introduction of FRA. It rose from 7.11 percent in 2004 to 31.28percent in 2005 and 46.35 in 2006 when the government intervened to pay off the Paris Club debt and dropped to 14.32 percent in 2007 only to rise to 18.95percent in 2008. He noted that the growth of the total debt service is rather fluctuating; the behavior of the cost of debt service seems not to indicate the presence of fiscal responsibility during 2005-2009.

Summary of the Literature

The review of literature related to this study was carried out under six major subheadings namely the conceptual framework, the Fiscal Responsibility Act (2007), public sector reforms and budgeting, public sector reform and accountability, theoretical framework and the empirical review. An alternative for control that offered positive result would, therefore, be needed. None of the researchers, to the best of our knowledge, in the literature had examined the application of budgeting and accountability practice in the public sector as the basis for all reforms. This was the gap the researcher needed to be filled. Core budgeting practice is observed in the nations' fiscal management will lead to all-round improvements in the country's macroeconomic indicators' performance.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design adopted in this work is a non-experimental Ex-Post-Facto research design with time-series properties. This is because the research seeks to find out the factors that are associated with certain occurrences, outcomes, conditions or types of behavior by analysis of the past events or of already existing conditions. In such research work, the researcher has no control over certain factors or variables and as such, cannot manipulate or change them, (Akuezuilo & Agu, 2007).

Population and Sample size

The population for this study is made up of fifteen (15) years of Audited Accounts from the federal ministry of Finance, Nigeria (2000 to 2014). The population of the study is small and therefore forms our sample size. No sampling technique was applied.

Data Analysis Techniques

Analysis of data according to Nwana (1981) in Akuezuilo & Agu, (2007), refers to a technique(s) whereby the investigator extracts from the data information that was not apparently there before and which would enable a summary description of the subject studied to be made.

In this study, the researcher, with the help of an expert, applied the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the research data. The data were tested, for equality of variances using the Levene's test for homogeneity of variances with a P-value >0.05. To test the hypotheses, a 5% level of significance was adopted.

In testing hypotheses 1-5, we used t-test of difference. According to Akuezuilo and Agu (2007), there are two formulae for computing the t-value. They are unrelated or independent and related or non-independent formulae. In this study, we used an unrelated or independent formula since our sample sizes are not equal and are less than 30.

The formula is given as;

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{S_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{S_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

Where;

$\bar{X}_1$ and $\bar{X}_1$ are for a mean of group 1 and group 2 respectively.

S_1 and S_2 are the standard deviations for group 1 and group2 respectively.

N = size of each group

It noted that this formula is used when the researcher wishes to compare the mean scores of two unrelated (independent) samples. Thus, using the mean scores obtained by the two groups, and the standard deviations of the scores of the two groups, you can calculate the t-value using the formula above.

The t-test is a parametric statistics used to test the significance of difference or relationship between statistical procedures to be used when analyzing data which is less than 30 in number.

The population means remains the most familiar measure of central tendency and is represented by $\bar{X}$ and the formula for calculating the mean is, $\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$

Where;

$\bar{X}$ = the mean

X = the score of each subject in the sample

N = number of subjects or items in the sample

$\sum$ = sum of.

The correlation coefficient was used to test hypotheses 6 and 7 in order to establish the degree of relationship between the pre-FRA capital expenditure budget and actual capital expenditure and to compare it with the post-FRA capital expenditure budget and actual capital expenditure to determine if there is any significant difference. Pearson's Product correlation coefficient developed by English statistician, Karl Pearson and called Pearson(r) has been rated the most used measure of association (Bordens and Abbott, 2002; Ujo 2000). The researcher who may want to evaluate the direction and degree of relationship between variables will find it most appropriate. According to Akuezuilo and Ngozi (2007), it is a measure of the strength of the linear relation between x and y variables.

The formula for Pearson(r) is given as

$$r = \frac{N\sum XY - \sum X \sum Y}{\sqrt{\left[N\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2\right]\left[N\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2\right]}}$$

Where
r = Correlation coefficient
x = Independent variable = Capital expenditure budget
y = Dependent variable = Actual capital Expenditure
N = Number of paired x and y variables.

However, it is important to note that measures of correlation are completely devoid of any cause and effect implication (Chukwuemeka, 2006). The extent of the association, relationship or correlation between two variables is usually expressed as a coefficient called correlation coefficient. The coefficient can range from – 1 through 0 to + 1. A stronger relationship is indicated as the coefficient approached + 1 or -1.

A negative correlation indicates that an increase in the value of one variable is associated with a decrease in the value of the second variable (inverse relationship). A positive correlation indicates that the two measures increases or decreases together (direct relationship) Bordens and Abbott, 2002).

Decision Rule
Reject Ho if P-value is less than 0.05, otherwise, we accept.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA
Presentation of Data
The data presented below in tables 4.06-4.10 were used with respect to the stated objectives in this work.

Table1: Expected/Actual Date of Publication of Audited Accounts of FGN (2000-2014). Data for specific objective No. 1

Year	Expected date or due date of publication	Actual date of Publication of Audited accounts	No of Months of Default
2000	June 2001	Dec 12, 2002	18
2001	June 2002	Dec 31, 2004	30
2002	June 2003	Dec 31, 2004	18
2003	June 2004	April 11, 2008	10
2004	June 2005	April 15, 2008	34
2005	June 2006	May 7, 2008	23
2006	June 2007	Dec 31, 2008	18
2007	June 2008	May 15, 2009	11
2008	June 2009	Oct 22, 2009	4
2009	June 2010	Nov 5, 2010	5
2010	June 2011	Dec 21, 2012	18
2011	June 2012	Dec 27, 2012	6
2012	June 2013	Feb 20, 2014	8
2013	June 2014	April 16, 2015	10
2014	June 2015	NA	NA

Sources: (1) Reports of the Accountant-general of the Federation, (2000-2014)
NA-Not is available.

Table 2: Nigerian Corruption Perception Index (2000-2014) Data for specific objective No 2

Year	Corruption Perception Index	Inverse Ranking (%)
2000	90/90 = 90 out of 90 countries	100
2001	90/91 = 90 out of 91 countries	99
2002	101/102 = 101out of 102 countries	99
2003	132/133 = 132 out of 133 countries	99
2004	144/146 = 144 out of 146 countries	99
2005	152/168 = 152 out of 168 countries	91
2006	153/180 = 153 out of 180 countries	85
2007	147/180 = 147 out of 180 countries	82
2008	121/180 = 121 out of 180 countries	67
2009	130/180 = 130 out of 180 countries	72
2010	134/178 = 134 out of 178 countries	75
2011	143/183 = 143 out of 183 countries	78
2012	136/176 = 136 out of 176 countries	77
2013	144/177 = 144 out of 177 countries	81
2014	*146/178 = 146 out of 178 countries	83

Sources: CIA World Factbook, (2014)
***estimated**

Table3: Total Federally Collected Government Revenue/Public Debt Servicing (2000-2014). Data for specific objectives No 3

Year	Total Federally Collected Government Revenue (N'b)	Debt Servicing (N'b)	Percentage of Debt Service to total Government Revenue (%)
2000	1,906.2	130.0	6.9
2001	2,231.6	155.4	7.0
2002	1,731.8	163.8	9.5
2003	2,575.1	363.5	14.1
2004	3,920.5	382.5	9.8
2005	5,547.5	394.0	7.1
2006	5,965.1	289.5	4.9
2007	5,715.6	326.0	5.7
2008	7,866.6	372.2	4.7
2009	4,844.6	283.7	5.9
2010	7,303.7	542.4	7.4
2011	11,116.8	495.1	4.5
2012	10,654.7	559.6	5.3
2013	9,759.8	591.8	6.1
2014	*11,432.3	*601.1	5.3

Sources: 1. CBN Statistical Bulletin, (2008) Golden Jubilee
2. CBN Statistical Bulletin (2013)
3. CBN Annual Reports and Accounts (2014)
*estimated

Data Analysis

Our data in tables 1 to 3 above were analyzed using the t-test of significant difference and for table 4.10 the correlation coefficient analysis was used.

T-Test of Significant Difference Analysis

A. To establish whether the implementation of FRA has led to the timely publication of Audited Accounts of Federal Government of Nigeria.

In achieving objective one, we used the Test of difference between the mean number of months of default on publication of audited accounts for pre-FRA and post-FRA. The result shows a significant difference in the means with a P-value < 0.05. Table 4.11 shows that the mean number of months of default on publication of audited accounts for pre-FRA is 17.2857 while that of the post-FRA is 7.75. This shows a reduction in the mean number of months of default on publication of audited accounts from pre-FRA to post-FRA. This reduction indicates that the introduction of FRA has affected the number of months of default on publication of audited accounts positively.

Table4: Independent samples test on default months

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		Mean		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	Pre-FRA	Post-FRA	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference: Lower	Upper
Number of Months of Default on Publication of Audited Accounts	1.113	.311	17.2857	7.7500	2.251	13	.042	9.53571	4.23615	.38407	18.68736

Source: Field survey, 2018.

To ascertain if the implementation of FRA has reduced corruption index in Nigeria

Table5: Independent samples Test on corruption index.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		Mean		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	Pre-FRA	Post-FRA	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference: Lower	Upper
Corruption Index In %	.069	.796	96.0000	76.875	6.622	13	.000	19.12500	2.88829	12.88523	25.36477

Source: Field survey, 2018.

Achieving this objective, we used t-Test of the difference between the corruption index for pre-FRA and post-FRA. From table 5 above, the Leven's test for the quality of variances shows that they are equal with a P-value greater than 0.05. Hence the test is based on equal variances and the result shows that there is a significant difference between the two means with P-value < 0.05. We observed that the mean corruption index reduced from 96.00 in pre-FRA to 76.88 in post-FRA.

To investigate whether the implementation of the FRA has reduced the percentage of public debt service to total revenue of the Federal Government of Nigeria

To achieve the above objective, we used the t-test of the difference between the mean percentage of debt service to the total revenue for pre-FRA and post-FRA. The result shows a significant difference in the means with P-value < 0.05. Table 6 below shows that the mean percentage of debt service to the total revenue for pre-FRA is 8.4714 while that of the post-FRA is 5.6125. This shows a reduction in the mean percentage of debt service to the total revenue.

Table 6: Paired samples test on percentage of debt service

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	Mean		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			Pre-FRA	Post-FRA						Lower	Upper
Percentage Of Debt Service Total Government Revenue	6.488	.024	8.4714	5.6125	2.581	13	.023	2.85893	1.10782	.46563	5.25222

Source: Field survey, 2018.

To assess the extent to which the implementation of FRA has affected the total federally collected revenue by Federal Government of Nigeria.

Here, we used the t-test of the difference between the mean amount of federally collected revenue for pre-FRA and post-FRA. The result shows a significant difference in the means with a P-value < 0.05. Table 7 below shows that the mean amount of federally collected revenue for pre-FRA is 3411.1143 while that of the post-FRA is 8586.7625. This shows an increase in the mean amount of federally collected revenue from pre-FRA to post-FRA. This increase indicates that the introduction of FRA has affected the amount of federally collected revenue positively.

Table7: Paired samples test on Nigeria total federally collected revenue

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means								
	F	Sig.	mean		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			Pre-FRA	Post-FRA						Lower	Upper
Total Federally Collected Government Revenue In Naira	2.063	.175	3411.1143	8586.7625	-4.540	13	.001	5175.64821	1140.09372	-7638.67096	-2712.62547

Source: Field survey, 2018.

A. To determine if the implementation of FRA affected the realization of the targeted Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate in Nigeria.

To achieve this, we used the t-test of the difference between the mean targeted Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for pre-FRA and post-FRA. The result shows a significant difference in the means with a P-value < 0.05. Table 8 below shows that the mean targeted Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for pre-FRA is 5.00 while that of the post-FRA is 7.03. This shows an increase in the mean targeted Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from pre-FRA to post-FRA. This increase indicates that the introduction of FRA has affected the targeted Gross Domestic Product (GDP) positively.

Table 8: Independent samples test on the mean GDP growth rate.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means								
	F	Sig.	Mean		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			Pre-FRA	Post-FRA						Lower	Upper
GDP Budget Target	.797	.388	5.0000	7.0300	-2.957	13	.011	2.03000	.68640	-3.51288	-.54712

Source: Field survey, 2018.

Correlation Coefficient Analysis

To find out whether the implementation of FRA has contributed to the relationship between the capital expenditure budget and actual capital expenditure of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Here, we considered the correlation coefficient(r) for the pre and post FRA as in Tables 9 and 10 below respectively at 5% level of significance. The correlation coefficient between pre-FRA budgeted capital expenditure and pre-FRA actual expenditure is 0.650 with a p-value >0.05. This shows that pre-FRA budgeted expenditure and pre-FRA actual expenditure is not significantly correlated. The correlation coefficient between post-FRA budgeted capital expenditure and post-FRA actual expenditure is 0.919 with a p-value < 0.05. This shows that post-FRA budgeted expenditure and post-FRA actual expenditure is significantly correlated. This means that the actual capital expenditure is closely related to the capital budget since the introduction of FRA. This implies that budget implementation has been very effective as against what was happening before the introduction of FRA.

Table9: Paired Samples Correlations on pre FRA budget/actual performance.

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 PRE FRA BUDGET & PRE FRA ACTUAL	7	.650	.114

Source: Field survey, 2018.

Table10: Paired Samples Correlations on post FRA budget/actual performance.

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 Post FRA Budgeted & Post FRA Actual	8	.919	.001

Source: Field survey, 2018

Test of Hypotheses

Test of Hypothesis One

H_0 : The implementation of the FRA has not significantly influenced the timely publication of Audited Accounts of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

H_1 : The implementation of the FRA has significantly influenced the timely publication of Audited Accounts of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The fitted trend equation on table 11 shows that there is a significant negative trend in the number of months of default on publication of audited accounts over the years. The prediction model of Yt=1660.807- 0.821t shows that as the year increases, the number of months of default on publication of audited accounts decreases. Also, there is a negative movement with regard to the number of months of default in the publication of Audited Accounts of FGN. The coefficient of determination (R-square) is 0.156 while the slope of the trend equation is -0.821.

Table11: Fitted trend equation on FRA for audited accounts

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig	R square
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant) YEAR	1660.807 -.821	1063.190 .530	-.395	1.562 -1.551	.042 .047	0.156

A. **Dependent Variable: NUMBER OF MONTHS OF DEFAULT ON PUBLICATION OF AUDITED ACCOUNTS**
Source; Field survey, 2018.

Decision rule: Reject the null hypothesis if P-value is less than 0.05; otherwise we accept the alternate hypothesis.
Conclusion: Since the P-value of 0.042 is less than 0.05, we, therefore, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative which says that the implementation of the FRA has significantly influenced the timely publication of Audited Accounts of the Federal Government of Nigeria over the years.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H_0: The implementation of FRA has an insignificant negative effect on Nigeria's corruption index.
H_1: The implementation of FRA has a significant negative effect on Nigeria's corruption index.

The fitted trend line of table 12 below shows that there is a significant negative trend in the corruption index over the years. Also, the prediction model of Yt= 4020.954 – 1.961t tells us that as the year increases the corruption index decreases.

Table12: Fitted trend equation on FRA for Nigeria's corruption index

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	R square
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant) YEAR	4020.954 -1.961	876.329 .437	-.780	4.588 -4.491	.001 .001	0.608

B. **Dependent Variable: CORRUPTION INDEX IN %**
Source: Field survey, 2016.

Decision rule: Reject the null hypothesis if P-value is less than 0.05; otherwise we accept the alternate on.

Conclusion: Since the P-value of 0.001< 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative which states that the implementation of FRA had a significant negative effect on the corruption index over the years.

Test of Hypothesis Three

H_0 : The implementation of FRA has not significantly reduced the percentage of debt service to total government revenue over the years

H_1 : The implementation of FRA has significantly reduced the percentage of debt service to total government revenue over the years

The fitted trend equation of Yt= 621.949 – 0.306t as derived from table 13 shows that there is a significant negative trend in the percentage of debt service to total government revenue over the years. The model clearly indicates that as the year increases, the percentage of debt services to total government revenue decreases to some extent. Fig. 4.04 also shows the movement. The coefficient of determination is 0.292 while the slope of the trend equation is -0.306.

Table13: Fitted trend equation on FRA for the percentage of debt service to total government revenue

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	R square
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	621.949	265.680	-.540	2.341	.036	0.292
YEAR	-.306	.132		-2.315	.038	

Dependent Variable: Percentage of Debt Service Total Government Revenue
Source: Field survey, 2018.

Decision rule: Reject the null hypothesis if P-value is less than 0.05; otherwise we accept the alternate hypothesis.
Conclusion: Since the P-value of 0.036 < 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative which says that the implementation of FRA has significantly reduced the percentage of debt service to total government revenue over the years.

Discussion of Findings

One of the findings of this study revealed that the introduction of FRA has affected the number of months of default on publication of federal government accounts positively. In table 11, the pre-FRA and post-FRA means were considered. The pre-FRA was 17.2857 as against the post-FRA which is 7.7500. This clearly shows reductions in the mean number of months of default on publication of awaited accounts. This indicates that there is an improvement to reduce the number of months of default.

However, Ogujiuba, Ezema, and Omoju (2013) found out that public finance in Nigeria has not been operated within the specification period as expressed in the budget. Also Aliyu, (2010: unpublished) noted that the presence of FRA during the period 2005-2009 was not noticed with regards to the timely publication of Audited Accounts of the federal government.

Another finding of the study again revealed that there is a reduction in the mean corruption index of Nigeria after the introduction of FRA. We observed that in table 12, the mean corruption index reduced from 96.00 in pre-FRA to 76.88 in post-FRA. This shows the extent to which corruption has gone down with the implementation of FRA from 2007. This finding did not agree with Ogujiuba, Ezema and Omoju (2013) which identified large scale corruption in public expenditure management in Nigeria even at the presence of FRA. Also, Nwankwo (2014) found out that the level of corruption in Nigeria over the years has a significant negative impact on the economic growth and Osisioma (2012) observed that corruption has stultified growth and national development.

Our study also revealed that there is a reduction in the mean percentage of debt service with regard to total government revenue. Table 13 in the work shows that the mean percentage of debt service to total revenue for pre-FRA is 8.4714 while that of the post-FRA is 5.6125 indicating reduction in the mean percentage. This finding is not in consonance with Aliyu (2010) who said that there is a growth in the total debt service even though it fluctuates, the cost of debt service seem not to indicate the presence of fiscal responsibility.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This work examined the effect of fiscal responsibility Act on budgeting and accountability practice in Nigeria for the period 2000-2014. Specifically, the study examined the time frame for the publication of audited accounts of FGN, corruption perception index, percentage of public debt service to total revenue, federally collected revenue, targeted GDP growth rate and the relationship between the capital and actual expenditure budget of the federal government of Nigeria.

From the available data, the implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility Act showed some significant effects on the budget and accountability practice in Nigeria public sector. Before the implementation of FRA, 2000-2006, it was observed that the number of months of default on the publication of auditing accounts of FGN was higher than the post period. This implies that in the post-FRA, the government was more responsible in her fiscal dealings than the pre-FRA period, probably because of the fiscal control act in place.

On the corruption perception index of Nigeria by the international community, the mean corruption in the pre-FRA is higher by 19.12500 percent. As it is, Nigeria has moved from 100 percent inverse ranking to 81 percent as of 2013 indicating a reduction in corruption. However, it should be noted that the commission on FRA worked in complete harmony with other anti-graft agencies in the fight against corruption. The mean percentage of public debt service to total government revenue in the pre-FRA is higher than the post-FRA period which means that in the pre-FRA the country spent more money in servicing her debt than in the post-FRA. This implies that there has been a negative trend in the percentage of debt service to total government revenue over the years.

Conclusively, it was found out that the relationship in the budgeted capital expenditure against the actual post-FRA. What this means is that the actual expenditure budget is closely related to the capital budget in the post-FRA unlike what is obtained in the pre-FRA period. This implies that budget implementation has been very effective with the implementation of the FRA.

Recommendations

In line with the above findings and conclusion, we recommended as follows;

1. That the federal government of Nigeria should continue the implementation of the FRA as a reform program more aggressively. This is necessary for the economic growth and advancement of the country's macro-economic indices like the GDP, corruption index and so on.
2. 2. Budgeting and accountability practice should be made more proactive by imbibing timely auditing and reporting standard as stated in section 49 and 50 FRA. That is to say, that our audit institutions should be strengthened to be able to carry out the responsibilities which the reform demands of them.
3. The actual capital expenditure budget should be made more closely related to budgeted capital expenditure. This will ensure the provision of democracy dividends among the citizenry in terms of social and economic amenities.

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