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Original Article

Operational Efficiency of Internal Controls in Enhancing the Financial Performance of Bakeries in Kabale District

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Risk Management, **Operational** Efficiency, Bakeries, **Financial** Performance, Independent Check.

The study aimed to investigate the impact of internal controls on the financial performance of Kijuguta Bakery, particularly focusing on the effectiveness of quality control tools in enhancing sales performance and the relationship between independent checks and financial outcomes. Utilizing a descriptive research design that combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches, data was gathered through questionnaires and interviews from 132 participants selected via simple random and purposive sampling methods. The results showed that 76% of respondents agreed that improved decision-making led to the provision of quality products, while 14% were unsure and 10% disagreed. This indicates that the majority recognized the positive influence of better decision-making on product quality. A significant relationship between product quality and sales performance was identified, with a high correlation coefficient (r = 0.853) and a p-value of 0.00, showing that product quality strongly influences sales. The study suggests that Kijuguta Bakery can further enhance financial performance by implementing clear policies and procedures for segregating duties among staff.

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, the history and evolution of sales performance measurement has its roots in the 1970s, emerging from dissatisfaction with backwardlooking accounting systems among industry players (Høgevold et al., 2022). The 1980s saw a realization in the West that Japanese success was attributed to operational efficiency and effectiveness, prompting significant attention to performance measurement studies (Morgan, 1991). Despite this surge, there remain notable research gaps, particularly in understanding the nuanced effectiveness different measurement methodologies industries and organizational structures (Dwivedi et al., 2024). Furthermore, while the late 1990s saw a proliferation of over 3600 articles on performance measurement (Ngirabakunzi et al., 2024), there persists a need for deeper exploration into the practical implementation and long-term impacts of these strategies in diverse business environments (Kagermann et al., 2010). Thus, while a revolution in the trade arena was acknowledged during this period, it also underscored the ongoing need for continued research and refinement in the realm of performance measurement (Kelly, 2016).

Between 1976 and 1980, industrial manufacturing production in developed nations like Greece experienced robust growth, averaging an annual rate of 4.2% (Romano & Traù, 2024). However, this growth trajectory faltered significantly in the subsequent years, plunging to a mere 0.1% between 1981 and 1988 (Chick, 2020). This decline was primarily attributed to the underperformance of the industry sector and its dwindling competitiveness, as noted by Angelopoulos in 1990 (D'Arcangelo et al., 2022). Shifting to the early 2000s, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, and Cadbury Schweppes emerged as

dominant players in the soft drink market (Wood, 2022).

In the 2010s, the proliferation of smartphones and internet connectivity led to the rise of e-commerce platforms, opening new avenues for sales expansion (Levy, 2016). The 2020s saw increased investment in logistics and digital infrastructure (Turyatemba et al., 2023), facilitating smoother sales transactions and enabling businesses to reach previously untapped markets in SSA (African Union, 2019). Mobile money platforms like M-Pesa in Kenya and Tigo Pesa in Tanzania have played a pivotal role in transactions, facilitating financial enabling businesses to reach customers in remote areas and conduct sales more efficiently (Paelo, 2019). This has spurred the growth of e-commerce platforms and digital marketplaces (Olum et al., 2024), transforming the way goods and services are bought and sold in East Africa.

In Uganda, the evolution of sales performance has been influenced by a variety of factors including technological advancements, economic policies, and socio-cultural changes (Scuderi et al., 2019). Historically, sales in Uganda were predominantly conducted through traditional markets and informal trading networks (Larsson & Svensson, 2018). However, the advent of mobile technology, particularly mobile money services like MTN Mobile Money and Airtel Money, revolutionized the sales landscape (Phiri, 2019). Mobile money platforms have facilitated financial transactions, enabling businesses to reach customers in remote areas and conduct sales more efficiently (Jakhiya et al., 2020). This has led to the emergence of e-commerce platforms and digital marketplaces, providing consumers with access to a

wider range of products and services (Jain et al., 2021).

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift towards digital sales channels in some parts of Kigezi region like Kabale District as lockdowns and social distancing measures forced businesses to adapt (Robert, 2020). Virtual selling techniques such as live streaming and social commerce gained traction, allowing businesses to continue reaching customers amidst the crisis (Semusu Turvasingura, 2023). Despite these advancements, challenges such as limited internet penetration and logistical constraints remain barriers to fully realizing the potential of digital sales in Uganda. However, ongoing investments in infrastructure and efforts to promote digital literacy are expected to drive further evolution in sales performance in the country.

Kijuguta Bakery in Kabale Municipality has demonstrated a robust business performance, becoming a staple in the local market. However, the Kijuguta Bakery faces challenges such as fluctuating raw material prices, which impact cost management and profitability. In response to the dynamic market, Kijuguta Bakery is exploring expansion opportunities and partnerships to sustain growth and further improve its product offerings. This paper is structured as follows: The first section introduces internal controls and their role in enhancing the financial performance of Bakeries. The second section presents a review of the relevant literature. The third section outlines methodology used in the study, while the fourth section presents the results and discussion. Finally, the concluding section offers conclusions and discusses the policy implications of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internal controls are fundamental for the financial health of Bakeries (Agaba et al., 2023). Studies have extensively cited the importance of internal controls in mitigating financial risks. Agaba and Turyasingura (2022) argue that robust internal

control systems significantly enhance financial performance by ensuring proper accountability and reducing fraud. Conversely, Kyabarongo et al. (2024) highlights that despite internal controls, financial mismanagement still plagues many Bakeries, often because of insufficient implementation and oversight. This contrast points to a gap in the practical application of control measures, which may vary depending on organizational size and governance (John Bosco et al., 2023).

In addition, some researchers emphasize the role of specific internal controls such as financial audits. Moses and Bosco (2023) found that regular internal audits directly improve Bakeries' financial performance, mainly by identifying areas of inefficiency and promoting transparency. Others, like Ankunda (2016) argue that internal audits alone are insufficient without accompanying risk management policies. This comparison underscores the multifaceted nature of internal controls and the necessity for a holistic approach that combines audits, risk management, and oversight.

On the other hand, scholars critique the reliance on internal audits, suggesting that it often creates a false sense of security like Kyabarongo et al. (2024) asserts that some Bakeries focus too much on audits while neglecting other vital control mechanisms like segregation of duties and employee training. This critique illustrates a broader issue in internal control frameworks—an overemphasis on one component while underestimating the need for a comprehensive strategy involving multiple controls working synergistically. Therefore, a critical synthesis of these findings reveals the need for a balanced internal control system that not only focuses on financial audits but also incorporates governance, segregation of duties, and staff training. For example, Turyasingura and Moses (2023) show that when Bakeries adopt integrated internal control systems, their financial performance improves markedly, primarily through enhanced operational efficiency and reduced

incidences of fraud. Connecting these arguments, it is clear that internal controls contribute to financial stability, but their effectiveness is contingent upon proper implementation and integration of all control components (Johnson et al., 2021).

Also, while different scholars offer varied perspectives on the role of internal controls in Bakeries, a consensus emerges around the importance of both strong governance and proper internal audit systems. As noted by Patience et al. (2022), the effectiveness of internal controls is often tied to the commitment of SACCO leadership in implementing and maintaining these systems. The relationship between leadership commitment, governance, and the efficacy of internal controls is essential in understanding how Bakeries can improve their financial performance sustainably.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design was selected as it enabled the researcher to construct questions that helped solicit the desired information (Creswell, 2017). Descriptive survey design systematically collects data to depict the current state of a phenomenon, addressing the "how," "what," "when," and "then" objectives of the study (Turyasingura et al., 2023; Turyasingura et al., 2024).

The study employed a mixed research approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative

methods. Mixed methods research, which involves gathering and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data, is effective for testing objective theories related to various variables (Benson & Ayiga, 2022). The quantitative data, in particular, consisted of numerical values that could be statistically analyzed. However, on the other hand, qualitative research relies on data obtained by the researcher from first-through interviews, questionnaires, participant-observation in natural settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Based on the objectives of the study, namely the effectiveness of quality control tools in improving sales performance and the relationship between independent controls and financial results, a qualitative approach to the effectiveness of quality control tools and a quantitative approach to the relationship between perceived quality and sales performance were applied. This helped in identifying patterns and measuring the strength of these relationships. Triangulation combined these methods, ensuring comprehensive and robust insights, validating findings, and providing a holistic view about the study.

The study sample size was 132 which was put into strata namely, six (06) employees and (01) manager and one hundred twenty-five (125) customers in Kijuguta Bakery. And they were selected basing on a table for determining sample size as suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and use of proportional allocation of stratification

Proportional allocation of stratification=

Target population

 \times

Total sample size

Total target population

Sampling Procedures

From the target population, 6 out of 9 employees were selected, along with 1 manager, and 125 out of 190 customers of the Kijuguta Bakery. Simple random sampling was employed to select customers, ensuring reduced bias in the sampling process. Purposive sampling was applied to the

employees and manager, as they were considered to have the most relevant information for the study. The use of simple random sampling for customers helped minimize respondent bias, while purposive sampling for the manager and employees ensured the inclusion of individuals who were more

informed and up-to-date with the study's subject matter.

Table 1: Type of participants

Items	Target population	Sample size		
Employees	9	06		
Manager	01	01		
Customers / Business people	190	125		
Total	200	132		

Source: Kijuguta Bakery, Report, (2024).

The research methods used in data collection included questionnaires, interview and documentary evidence. Interviews were used to get primary data of qualitative nature for the research. The researcher used standardized interview with a list of questions and lists of respondents to get information. The method was used because it gave clear answers, as she was able to ask again. This instrument was used on manager and employees of the Kijuguta Bakery since they were believed to have the right information for the study.

A set of questions were sent to both staff and other respondents by the researcher and this method was used because it had high response rate and there was privacy while respondents were answering questions. This method was used on customers of the Kijuguta Bakery.

Response rate

The responses from the interviews and questionnaires were used to analyze the data and compile the report for this study, achieving a 100% response rate. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2008) and Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 50% or higher is considered adequate for analysis and reporting. Therefore, a 100% response rate is exceptionally good and indicates that the survey results are highly representative of the study population.

Gender of the respondents

The researcher also considered the gender of respondents and the results in Table 2 below were recorded:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: Showing the gender of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage		
Male	99	75		
Female	33	25		
Total	132	100		

Source: Field data, 2024

As shown in Table 2, the results indicate that 75% of the respondents were male, while 25% were female. Despite efforts to achieve gender balance among participants, the data reveals that men were the majority involved in Kijuguta Bakery's activities. This higher male representation suggests that men were more actively involved in the Kijuguta Bakery's operations, making them more available to provide relevant information for the

study. This gender consideration was crucial for understanding the dynamics within the Kijuguta Bakery and ensuring that the data collected accurately reflected the experiences and contributions of all participants, thereby enhancing the study's comprehensiveness and reliability.

Age of the respondents

Table 3: The age of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage		
18-29	20	15		
30-35	53	40		
36-44	46	35		
45 and above	13	10		
Total	132	100		

Source: Field data, 2024

The effects in Table three display that the majority of respondents (40%) have been between 30-35 years old, whilst the smallest institution (10%) become elderly forty-five and above. Additionally, 35% of respondents were aged 36-44, and 15% were between 18-29 years. The researcher took into consideration age as a component to collect insights primarily based on respondents' lifestyles experiences and knowledge. The higher participation of 30-35 shows that this age group is generally extra targeted on operating hard and saving for the future in the Bakery. The age distribution also highlights how respondents' know-how of product best and income overall performance varied, with the ones in the 30-35 age variety probably having the most relevant enjoy and know-how. This new insight informs that age influences the work motivation and perceptions of individuals, in particular concerning monetary and sales-related problems.

Level of educational attained by the respondent

Table 4: Level of Education Attained by the Respondents

Educational level	Frequency	Percentage	
Primary	13	10	
Secondary	40	30	
Diploma	53	40	
Degree and beyond	26	20	
Total	132	100	

Source: Field data, 2024

According to the results presented in Table 4 above 40% the highest numbers of the respondents had diploma and were highly employed because of the skills they had whereas 10% the lowest number of respondents had attained primary because these were needed to provide cheap labor at the Kijuguta Bakery and other 30% had attended secondary who were employed also to provided labor in the preparations of the Kijuguta Bakery products and the remaining 20% had degree and beyond who were employed to help in the management of the Kijuguta Bakery products. The researcher

considered the respondents' highest level of education in order to get relevant information based on their literacy levels and this means that the respondents who had acquired diploma were involved much in the activities of the Kijuguta Bakery which helped in the performance of the Kijuguta Bakery.

Main occupation of the respondents

The researcher recorded the main occupation of the respondents, and the results were presented in Table 5 below:

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Table 5: Showing the main occupation of the respondents

Main occupation of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Management	33	25
Employees	53	40
Business men	46	35
Total	132	100

Source: Field data, 2024

According to the results presented in Table 5 above, 40% the highest numbers of the respondents were employees because there were able to give the right information which the researcher wanted for the study while 25% the least numbers of respondents were management because these were few that helped in the running of the Kijuguta Bakery programs and the remaining 35% of the respondents

were businessmen because these also had information on product quality and sales performance of Kijuguta Bakery in Kabale since they were selling the products of the Kijuguta Bakery. The researcher considered the main occupation of the respondents with aim of getting information depending on their understanding.

Table 6: Showing respondent's views on the different quality control tools used to enhance sales performance of Kijuguta Bakery in Kabale

Quality control tools	Stro	ngly	Ag	ree	Not	sure	Disa	gree	Stro	ngly	To	tal
used to enhance sales		ree	Ü					J	disa	gree		
performance	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Better and effective	53	40	47	36	19	14	13	10	-	-	132	100
decisions to provide												
quality products												
Use of better	38	29	71	54	23	17	-	-	-	-	132	100
communication channels												
among the Kijuguta												
Bakery customers												
There is monitoring of the	31	23	87	66	14	11	-	-	-	-	132	100
sales agents by the												
Kijuguta Bakery top												
employees												
The products used in	59	45	52	39	10	8	11	8	-	-	132	100
making the Kijuguta												
Bakery goods are brought												
in time to ensure timely												
delivery												

Source: Field data, 2024

The findings reveal that 76% of participants agreed that better and more effective decisions were made to ensure the provision of quality products, while 14% were uncertain, and 10% disagreed. This suggests that the majority of respondents recognized the impact of effective decision-making on product quality. These results align with Buja et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of

entrepreneurial spirit and sound business judgment in decision-making. While these qualities are crucial, the study warns against personal biases, repeated mistakes, and reliance on hunches, recommending the adoption of evidence-based decision-making to mitigate such risks. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with feedback from some interviewees, who noted that

management's decisions to improve product quality significantly boosted sales performance.

According to the findings, 83% of participants were in favor of Kijuguta Bakery patrons using better avenues for communication, while 17% were unsure. This result supports Schulman's (2020) claim that safety and operational effectiveness depend on efficient communication, including information inflows, internal flows, and outflows from organizations. Reliable sources of health and safety information are essential for improving safety standards and forming policies, just like market intelligence is for corporate expansion. The findings also agree with some interviewees who reported that:

".....better communication enhances sales performance since when people are talked with politely, they like the sales agent hence increased sales...."

The findings indicate that 89% of the participants agreed that there was monitoring of the sales agents by the Kijuguta Bakery's top employees while 11% were not sure. The organ's executive board of directors or other senior management team needs to ensure that it is kept informed of and alerted to, relevant safety and health risk management issues (Vahle et al., 2023).

According to the study's findings, 84% of participants agreed that the ingredients required to make the baked goods were delivered on time, while 8% disagreed and 8% were unsure. The findings also agree with some interviewee who reported that;

"...... continuous provision of quality products by Kijuguta Bakery is guaranteed since products used in making the Kijuguta Bakery goods are brought in time to ensure timely delivery of the products to customers....."

Table 7: Relationship between product quality and sales performance

Correlations		Product quality	Sales performance
Product quality	Pearson Correlation	1	0.853**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	132	132
Sales performance	Pearson Correlation	0.853**	1
•	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	132	132

^{**} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The study reveals a strong and statistically significant relationship between product quality and sales performance, with a high correlation coefficient (r = 0.853) and a p-value of 0.00, indicating that product quality has a substantial impact on sales. This finding provides new knowledge by empirically demonstrating that improving product quality can directly enhance sales outcomes, validating the importance of quality as a key driver of business success. It highlights the practical implication that businesses can achieve better sales performance by prioritizing quality improvements in their products. The result also suggests that customer perceptions of quality play a crucial role in influencing purchasing decisions,

reinforcing the value of adopting customer-centric strategies focused on quality enhancement. This insight encourages companies to view investments in quality management not just as costs, but as strategic initiatives that can yield significant financial returns through increased sales.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that various quality control tools significantly enhance sales performance, as evidenced by 76% of participants agreeing on better decision-making for quality products, 83% endorsing effective communication with customers, 89% acknowledging monitoring of sales agents, and

84% affirming timely procurement of materials to prompt delivery. These ensure measures collectively boost Kijuguta Bakery competitiveness by improving customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. The findings contribute new knowledge by demonstrating the practical impact of quality control tools on business success, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). The work is relevant to Uganda's National Development Plan III (NDPIII), which prioritizes industrialization and increased household incomes, and aligns with the East African Vision 2050 by promoting regional economic integration and competitiveness. Thus, implementing quality control practices is a vital strategy for sustainable growth in the Kijuguta Bakery industry and beyond.

Relationship between product quality and sales performance

There is a very high positive and statistically significant relationship between product quality and sales performance at Kijuguta Bakery in Kabale (r = 0.853, p < 0.05), indicating that enhancing product quality is essential for increasing sales. These findings have important implications for policymakers and other scholars. For policymakers, the results highlight the need to support quality management practices and establish standards that promote quality improvements in the food industry, which could help boost economic growth and consumer protection. The positive association between quality and sales performance underscores the importance of creating policies that incentivize businesses to invest in quality control measures as a strategy to increase market competitiveness and achieve sustainable development goals. For scholars, this research provides empirical evidence on the significance of product quality in business performance, offering a foundation for further studies that explore the relationship between different quality control practices and sales in various industries. An area for further research is to investigate the specific quality control tools and techniques that have the most substantial impact on sales performance in the Kijuguta Bakery sector.

Policy recommendations

To enhance the sales performance of Kijuguta Bakery, it is recommended that management establish policies promoting the use of effective quality control tools. such as improved communication channels with customers. This will ensure timely feedback and better customer relations, which are crucial for maintaining product quality and increasing sales. Given the study's findings on the strong positive relationship between product quality and sales performance, policies should prioritize ongoing quality assurance measures. These policies could include regular quality assessments, staff training on quality standards, and implementation of continuous improvement programs.

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