



Jurnal Ilmiah Aset
Vol. 26 No. 2
 September 2024
 p-ISSN 1693-928X
 e-ISSN 2685-9629

The Influence of Governance on Competence and Partnership in Higher Education: a Study of Gambian Universities

Gibriel Badjie
 Lamin B. Jammeh
 Banna Sawaneh
 Lang Sanyang

School of Business & Public Administration,
 University of The Gambia, MDI Campus, Kanifing, The Gambia
 Email : gbadjie@utg.edu.gm, lbjammeh@utg.edu.gm,
bsawaneh@utg.edu.gm, lsanyang@utg.edu.gm

Abstract: *The study assesses the influence of governance on competence and partnership in university education in The Gambia using the situation as a mediating factor in a trilateral relationship. The study applied a questionnaire survey design using three universities as the study population. The PLS-SEM approach assesses the measurements and structural models. The study's findings established that governance significantly influences competence and partnership in university education in The Gambia. However, the situation as an environmental factor lacks the mediation capacity in the trilateral relationship. The study outcome shows differences, but only two were significantly contextual in relation to governance. The study recommends further research that adopts a qualitative approach to help provide a proper understanding of university governance in The Gambia.*

Hal. 45-57
 DOI: 10.37470/1.26.2.242

Diterima : 24 Juli 2024
 Disetujui : 6 Agustus 2024

Keywords: *Governance, Competence, partnership, University, PLS-SEM, The Gambia*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a life-changing catalyst for people to register and attain measured recognition in society. Higher education has transformed societies and nations into possibilities of hope and admiration for the future since the inception of university education in The Gambia through the government initiative. The government plays a central role in the University's day-to-day operations through policy guidance and funding support. The Gambia has only one public University and a few private universities, which continue to meet the country's human capital needs. Human capital is a country's human resources characterized by possessing intangible assets. Knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and behaviours collectively embody the capability for knowledge economy.

Governance defines the trajectory of universities through leadership management within traditional institutional structures and

organizational cultures distinct from other organizations, either business-like or not, with a special status of autonomy to help leverage its potential as the knowledge hub that enhances the social and political economy of the country (Gayle, Tewarie, & White 2005) as cited by (Herdlein, 2005). University governance is critical towards determining the competency (quality) of its output discharge into greater society, which can serve as the basis for long-term partnerships mutually beneficial to parties within the framework of bilateral, trilateral, or multilateral relationships for 21st-century universities (Chou, 2012). University governance in The Gambia followed a multi-layered approach, which stunted the growth of universities in the Gambia, particularly public universities. The first layer of the governance structure is the university council, which is charged with the overall policy direction guiding the vice-chancellor appointed through the political office of the chancellor, who is the head of the Republic of the Gambia. The Vice Chancellor works at the

behest of the President of the Gambia. Internally the senate is the upper structure that deals with academic matters, but their decisions are subjected to approval by the Vice Chancellor who cannot act without seeking approval from the council. The governance structure at the universities is centrally located at the administrative cadre with schools and faculties playing a minimal influential role depending on the choice of the vice chancellor.

Higher education no doubt propels the nation's development aspirations to become a reality as it is mandated to produce a nation's highly qualified, skilled, and well-crafted human capital to help it remain competitive among other countries. The Gambia's development index and progress have stagnated across all development sectors, including higher education. Many blame higher education failure for the country's lags and sluggish development, as when higher education fails, a country's development fails. Those charged with the leadership and management of higher education lack the competence to define the governance trajectory of the institutions strategically placed at the heart of the country's development plan to produce qualified human capital readily available for employment in the public or private sector. The Gambia is at fifty-nine (59) years, and one would expect remarkable development compared to other nations at similar age brackets. According to Hall et al., (2002), good governance is and will be a crucial element for the successful transformation of universities.

The Gambia has continuously ranked lower in the human development index for many years without any measure of improvement. Could this be blamed on the higher education sector not doing enough to supply the needed human capital? Do higher education institutions have the requisite competencies to produce enough human capital? Most of what universities produce lacks relevance to what the country needs to support its development goals. According to Sarr and Hydera (2005), most people trained in higher education sectors, especially the University of The Gambia, are hired in either the public or private sector organizations as white-collar job holders. The blue-collar, skills-oriented job holders are not catered to in all the existing universities. They only got training in a few technical, ill-equipped training centres in The Gambia. The specific goal of the study is to assess the influence of governance practices that define the competence and partnership relationships of universities in The Gambia in the context of situational factors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Governance in Higher Education

Governance is a highly contested concept that concerns collective control towards common goals. It relates to arrangements in which public and private actors seek to solve societal problems, create societal opportunities, and care for the institutions within which governance activities occur. It raises more questions about who decides when and what. It concerns higher education institutions' internal (institutional) and external (system) governance. Governance in higher education embodies both the external and internal coordination of teaching and research in pursuit of a knowledge economy. This coordination may have formal and informal components as higher education governance reforms evolve worldwide (2009 ESMU). According to Eurydice (2008:12), *"governance refers to 'the formal and informal exercise of authority under laws, policies and rules that articulate the rights and responsibilities of various actors, including the rules by which they interact'"*. Many studies on higher education governance share the underpinnings of such a definition (Clarke et al., 1994; Eurydice, 2008; Patterns et al., 2007).

In governance structures, a persistent and inspiring leader with a strong vision of institutional direction plays a defining role. Governance fully entails a philosophy of excellence, success, a culture of constant reflection, change and organizational learning. As such, it can impact the Universities in The Gambia. The governance structure has since been lacking in terms of decentralized implementation mechanisms. The aspect of institutional governance also comes into play. All institutional-level governance bodies must cooperate to share information and be transparent and trustworthy during the operations. In a university, the risk of external forces dominating governance should be highly avoided because when one or the other is too dominant over others, governance can be problematic. There must be a "balance of power" amongst the various authorities responsible (Lapworth, 2004; Mora, 2001). According to Herdlein (2005), university governance is the structure and authoritative decision-making process concerning the University's internal and external stakeholders. An effective university governance must provide purpose, direction, and set priorities, as well as have some level of control over the outcome of decisions.

Institutions of higher education recipients of public funds are experiencing new challenges in

adjusting rapidly, efficiently, and relatively to the demands of society and the labour market. The major problem of institutional governance is to relate funding to the outcome of decisions that are meant to make relevant and significant contributions to societies and economies of the country, especially the public higher education of The Gambia, fully funded by the government with an expectation of responding to fill that societal need gap (Sizer & Howells, 2000; Sarr & Hydera, 2005; Touray & Adesopo, 2022).

Universities are only one of many actors producing knowledge for society and business. Rankings amongst universities put pressure on governance to define outcomes, and autonomy was central to that goal. The conditioning of high-ranking universities to three connected factors: concentration of talent, abundant funding, and appropriate governance for a niche comparative advantage is critical in survival and viability. Having the resources to manage efficiently and effectively would enable you to rapidly meet the demands of the ever-changing global market (Asian Development Bank, 2012; Sizer & Howells, 2000).

According to Touray and Adesopo (2022), governance takes a bottom-up approach in most institutions of higher education in The Gambia and, as such, negatively relates to the performance of the institutions. Governance in university settings is an interplay of forces that translate into favourable circumstances to facilitate a productive environment that supports the University's performance in many sectors (Herdlein, 2005). This demands a flexible and adaptable approach to tap into the knowledge economy to enhance its productive capacity. Information in the new university outlook effectively promotes a decentralized approach to governance with responsibility, accountability, authority and an inclusive governance system to help define its purpose (Herdlein, 2005).

Usman, (2014), in his study of governance in higher education in Pakistan, identified three layers of governance: structural, academic, and organizational level. The structure of governance in which decision-making is centralized may lead to distortion. The educational level creates a balance between research and teaching powered by the faculties or schools to improve education. However, it leads to some measures that compromise teaching and research quality standards. The organizational level governance centres on decision power and management of the universities in the hands of committees or teams, which are often ineffective and inefficient as the

authority resides in the hands of one person, the chief patron. This style of governance is reminiscent of universities in the Gambia, a patronage culture of governance.

Competence in Higher Education

Competency is the quality of being adequately or well qualified physically and intellectually in an institution of learning and teaching. The technical and behavioural orientation of the outcome characterizes competence. Competency relates to the quality of teaching and learning and the physical environment that supports that possibility. It sells both the higher education institution and its products. Competence refers to skill- and knowledge-based understanding of the individual concerning tasks and situations to help achieve a purpose. Quality, on the other hand, is defined as "fitness of purpose" and "fit for purpose", which translates into immediate entry into the workplace or, to put it differently, quality is "doing right things right." Two aspects—the purposes of education and teaching methods used to achieve those goals—are equally important. Internal quality assurance systems and processes within higher education institutions are a precondition for the successful operation of an external quality assurance system (Warn & Tranter, 2001).

There is an increasing engagement with the question of quality education. In a knowledge society, quality education is a critical factor in the survival of human civilization. Our challenge is to make all stakeholders of higher education realize the suicidal effect of a lack of quality education. In the discussion on the lack of quality in higher education, the "not me" syndrome is prevalent among the stakeholders. Everybody thinks that others are responsible for the situation. The only way to address this problem is to remember Mahatma Gandhi's observation that "*We must be the change that we wish to see in the world*" (Deem, 2011; Herdlein, 2005).

The quality culture of the University, which drives its competence, is enabled by the governance structure aligned with the purpose of the University. The organizational structures and decision-making procedures are clearly and effectively labelled under the University's quality assurance and standards policies (Hénard & Mitterle, 2010). According to Hall et al., (2002), the quality of governance contributes to the quality of higher education and thus helps realize national goals in most developing countries. According to Usman, (2014), many quality gaps remain in faculty, governance, academic programmes,

students, research, and other facilities, which harms the universities' private and public purpose and damages their international reputation. Changes are needed in the governance system to develop new policy dimensions to help bring a positive change to support the quality mechanism and produce outcomes fit for workplace engagement. Higher education institutions in The Gambia are significantly challenged with quality issues, especially in tools, facilities and capacity training (Touray & Adesopo, 2022). Competence refers to the quality of the graduates in terms of their readiness and willingness to harness their knowledge for the greater good—the competence of the graduates simply those recognized as deserving both in learning and character.

Partnership in Higher Education

The partnership is part of a larger educational picture, supported by an approach promoted and embodied through the relationship between students and the organization. The core principle of governance at the University is the ability to engage with multiple stakeholders both within and outside the circle of the University. The internal partnership of the University is very central to the definition and achievements of its purpose. The relationship among the university senior management (administrative cadre), faculty members, and the student body is critical to the entrepreneurial governance of new universities. The University's external relationships are core to its survival and linked to its strategic goals. The external linkages are highly heterogeneous, with unique characteristics and orientations. Universities in The Gambia, especially the public universities, vital external stakeholders include the governing council, Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, the President's Office, National Assembly, alums, other tertiary institutions, donor organizations, civil society organizations, and industry partners among others. The external linkages provide funding, capacity building, and technical support locally and internationally.

Faculty and students' partnership matters as a critical stakeholder engagement in university governance relationships. The student serves as a customer and a product to refine into a quality product "fit for purpose" for absorption into the workplace for public or private sector organizations. The graduates of the University help to sell the work of the University and rebrand its image and reputation depending on how their contributions transform their respective places of

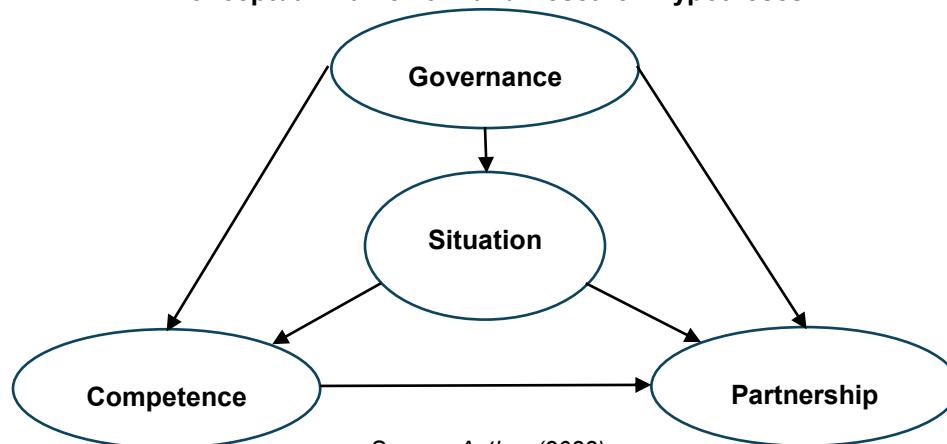
work. (2012) identifies gains for students who typically engage in projects at different universities and seek knowledge and development. The author further indicates that empowering students through partnership leads to enthusiasm for learning and increases their passion for education. Partnership can also enable students to share authority and responsibility with staff in developing the educational system. Research also suggests that partnerships produce similar outcomes for students and faculty. Partnerships have also led to transformational learning for staff and students and challenged the difficulties of traditional hierarchical structures within the governance model of the University.

Partnership in higher education is a commonality as universities are universal properties in the world of knowledge economy. Universities, by nature of their existence, are established to collaborate on academic and other partnership ventures to strengthen their ability to become the powerhouse of knowledge through teaching, learning and research. Partnership and collaboration are favour gaining, cost saving to stay relevant and gain competitive advantage in the educational marketplace economy (Herdlein, 2005). The triple helix of university-industry-government each plays an independent yet overlapping role in the trilateral relationship to enhance knowledge-based economic growth for society's greater good. The relationship between business, academia, and government is the backbone of society. Universities charged with creating, disseminating, and utilizing the knowledge economy attain a competitive advantage in the quality of graduated students in industries and research output. Universities help stimulate businesses to become relevant and nurture firm creation through their entrepreneurial activities in research efforts. The sector, on the other hand, helps to translate theoretical thoughts into practical reality. At the same time, the government plays the role of buffer to regulate the relationship and help produce capital for society's good (Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2017).

Situation in University Education in The Gambia

The situation is the internal and external factors that shaped and positioned universities in society. To a large degree, universities function based on the dictates of internal and external variables. The situation is the buffer for the University's profit, growth and sustainability. The role of university governance is to craft a road map towards achieving its purpose through the mission

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework and Research Hypotheses



Source: Author (2022)

(what they are?) and vision (what they want to become?). Governance in the university context is triple-layered in structure, academic and organizational, and internally integrative in collaboration with external partners for the sustainability and competitive value of the University. Universities today are becoming distinctly entrepreneurial and saddled between not-for-profit orientation and profit orientation, on the other hand, to stay in existence in a competitive marketplace economy of knowledge. The Gambia University situations are tightly controlled and centralized, with bureaucratic political influence always.

Rationally, governance is a crucial driver to the management of universities to ensure effective and efficient performance, which entirely depends on leadership. Using situational analysis as an approach is warranted to help anticipate, respond to, and help alter environmental challenges in the future (Zone, 1982). University governance in The Gambia, especially in the only public University, has witnessed the heavy burden of government involvement. The University's support from the government in terms of funding and providing regulatory guidance is significant and very influential.

A university as an organization is not isolated; it exists within other societal systems. As systems theory puts it, universities operate within the two most essential environments as typical organizations. The internal environment is a closed system comprising sub-systems tasked with provisions, operations, and input transformation into outputs. The internal climate contains tangible and intangible resources central to defining the organization's sustainability. The external environment labelled the open system,

sees universities as typical organizations within the other systems or factors instrumental in their survival as entities. The external environment is instrumental to the universities through the provision of inputs and disposal of its outputs (Luthans et al., 2014).

Governance in the University deals with multiple stakeholders with diverse interests and challenges; therefore, these factors are sources of internal threats and weaknesses. Competency as a mediating variable between governance and partnership is a strength but can also be a weakness if not invested in. In contrast, partnership as the variable of burden in the relationship is purely an opportunistic strategy for the universities to live to the letter of the MoU or MoA. Accordingly, the contingency approach further emphasized that the functional relationship between environmental situation, management and performance is a reality. There is no best way to govern a university; rather, it depends on factors or situational variables that affect the organization but are beyond the control of the organization's management (Luthans et al., 2014). The conceptual model portrays the relationship among the four variables, i.e., governance, competency, partnership, and situation. The situation variable is centrally sited to create a trilateral relationship among the variables of interest. Governance lies at the top, with two arrows extending to competency and partnership, signifying the influence of both. Governance has a direct relationship with competency and collaboration. On the other hand, competence mediates the relationship between governance and partnership, but it also has a direct relationship with alliance. Its established governance in the University facilitates

collaboration cooperation, and exercise collective control towards the common goals. Theoretically, universities in The Gambia take on a contingent approach to governance as internal and external politics play an essential role in steering the affairs of university management.

On the one hand, competence is an independent variable of partnership, but most importantly, it mediates the relationship between governance and partnership as the variable burden. As in university education, the quality of work is a catalyst for recognition and helps to build long-term mutually beneficial relationships with diverse partners. Therefore, it is to assert that competence can influence partnerships in university education circles.

The situation serves as the ultimate mediating factor in the trilateral relationship governance independent variable with the two variables of burden concerning both internal and external environment. Its model portrays the environment in higher education as desirable and needed to achieve sustainable, social, economic, political, and technological development in The Gambia. University governance is about the leadership and management of the University and, therefore, positively relates to the competency (quality) of the University through the creation of a teaching-learning climate. University governance is responsible for the strategic vision, which defines the types of partnerships readily available to serve the purpose of the University, from internal partnerships to external partnerships. Therefore, governance positively influences university partnerships to foster collaboration and cooperation. Competency relates to the quality of university output, which is placed at workplaces of either public or private organizations, creating soft relationships. The quality of its products through teaching, learning and research will strengthen its ability to negotiate and establish strategic partnerships to serve its purpose. Competency has a positive relationship with university partnerships and can mediate. Based on the explanations above, the study posits that.

H1: University governance positively influences university competence.

H2: University governance positively influences university partnerships.

H3: The influence of university governance on university partnership is mediated by competence.

H4: Competence in the University positively relates to university partnership.

H5: The situation strategically mediates the trilateral governance, competence, and partnership relationships.

METHOD

The study applied a descriptive survey design strategy using a questionnaire. The study population involves three universities in the Gambia. The study adopts the survey approach due to the large sample size that befits the moment. The study adopted a simple stratified random sampling proportionate to the size allocation to each subgroup, thus reducing sampling error as the universities have unequal populations. Based on the population of each University, questionnaires were disproportionately allocated to each institution, such as UTG (175) and I.O.U. (50) and A.I.U. (25) respectively, making a total of 250 as the representative targeted sample size for both staff and students as the subject of the study. The data was generated from 187 valid returned questionnaires out of the initial 250 copies distributed across three (3) universities. The participants came from one public and two private universities, as the study population had a response rate of 74.8% against a 24.2% non-response rate due to reasons unclear to the research. The questionnaire for the study was divided into five parts: personal information, governance as the independent variable, competency mediating variable, situation as another mediator and partnership as the variable of interest.

Survey Instrument

The questionnaire served as the main instrument for the survey data collection, guided by the research objectives and divided into five parts. The instruments were measured with a 5-point Likert scale, with the lowest point represented by 1, with a neutral mid-point with 3 and 5 as the highest points. The measures in the scale are strongly disagreed, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree on the variables of governance, competency, partnership, and situation in the higher education system in The Gambia. The other measures utilized as a 5-point Likert scale involve 1 = not important/influential, 2 = important/influential, 3 = undecided, 4 = very important/influential, and 5 = a great deal of importance/influence. Three-point evaluation criteria were used to assess teaching-learning facilities as 1 (needs improvement), 2 (excellent) and 3 (exemplary). The questionnaire instruments were

adopted from (Krause et al., 2015; Nam & Nam, 2004) reworked and modified to fit the needs of the study.

Data Analysis Plan and Technique

The study first used descriptive statistics to assess the organizational data aligned with the study's critical variables. Second, the study adopted an exploratory analysis in a situational context with a partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) technique to determine the relationship of governance, competence, and partnership with or without the mediation of a situation in a trilateral relationship. This technique is purposely deployed to test the study's hypotheses and help assess the research objectives. Besides, the study evaluates the difference in perspective between public and private universities in The Gambia using a multigroup analysis approach as an input of SmartPLS 3 software as the most suited software for this function (Sarstedt et al., 2011).

The measurement criteria using PLS-SEM involved outer loading items (factor loading scores) and average variance extracted (AVE) to determine the convergent validity while the discriminant validity is determined with cross loading scores, Fornell-Larcker Criterion as well as the Heterotrait-Monotrait Criterion to establish the reliability and validity of the measures. The structural model and its model fit are assessed with path coefficients and R-square, determining the effects of the relationships on the model, showing the predictive relevance of the model (Hair et al., 2011; Henseler et al., 2009; Wong. K. K., 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics (Survey Response)

A total of 187 returned questionnaires represent the views of three universities in The Gambia. About 83% of the survey participants represent a public university, while 17% represent two private universities, as in Table 1 below. The Table highlights the critical characteristics of participating universities in the survey as crucial control variables. What is evident from the Table is that university education started in The Gambia very late as the oldest age range is between 21-25, which is the University of The Gambia and the only public University. Without a doubt, most of the views expressed were hailed from public and private universities, as shown in the Table, with a disproportionate imbalance in response rate.

Governance

Governance is the predictor variable in this study that directly affects competency and partnership in university education. The governance variable is measured with two indicators (work climate and stakeholders) using 27 items on the questionnaire with two categorical scales statement approach. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure items on the questionnaire. The factor loading for the governance variable ranges from **0.70-0.810** with Cronbach's Alpha 0.877, rho_A 0.883, composite reliability 0.904 and Average variance Extracted (AVE) at 0.575 (Ringle, Wende & Becker 2015).

Competency

Competency is the mediating variable in this study that indirectly links governance to partnership but directly influences partnership behaviour. The competency variable is measured with two indicators (human capital and teaching-learning facilities) using 14 items on the questionnaire with two different categorical scales.

Table 1
Organizational Profile
Organization Data

Variable	Category	No.	Percentage
Name of the Institution	01-Public (UTG)	155	83.0
	02-Private (I.O.U.)	19	10.0
	03-Private (A.I.U.)	13	7.0
	Total	187	100.0
Age range	6-10	32	17.1
	16-20	2	1.1
	21-25	153	81.8
	Total	187	100.0
Ownership and control of the University	Government	155	82.9
	Private	32	17.1
	Total	187	100.0

Source: Primary data (2021)

The statement approach uses a five-point scale to measure. The factor loading for the competency variable ranges from 0.67-0.76 with Cronbach's Alpha 0.788, rho_A 0.792, composite reliability 0.855 and Average variance Extracted (AVE) at 0.542 (Ringle, Wende & Becker 2015).

Partnership

Partnership is the variable burden (dependent) in this study that is directly or indirectly influenced by governance, competency, and situation in university education. The partnership variable is measured with one indicator (relationship climate) embracing both internal and external relationships using 16 items on the questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale measure. The factor loading for the partnership variable ranges from 0.69-0.77 with Cronbach's Alpha 0.714, rho_A 0.730, composite reliability 0.820 and Average variance Extracted (AVE) at 0.534 (Ringle, Wende & Becker 2015).

Situation

The situation is the mediation variable between governance as the independent variable and competency and partnership as it sits at the heart of the model. The Situation variable is consequential in mediating the behaviour of all the variables in the relationship in this university education study. The situation variable is measured with two indicators (internal and external factors) using 11 items on the

questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale measure. The 5-point Likert scale statements demonstrate a degree of agreement or disagreement. The factor loading for the partnership variable ranges from 0.77-0.89 with Cronbach's Alpha 0.849, rho_A 0.899, composite reliability 0.896 and Average variance Extracted (AVE) at 0.684 (Ringle, Wende & Becker 2015).

Model Measurement

The model measures four variables of interest: governance as an independent variable, competence mediating, partnership as a dependent variable and situation as an overall mediator variable. To establish the reliability of each item, a factor loading of 0.70 is highly recommended as the threshold, according to (Henseler et al., 2016). However, as a rule of thumb, as reported by (Wong, 2013), factor loadings less than .70 can be accepted if it does not weaken the validity and reliability of the measures. As shown in Table 2 below, it can be observed that all the items of the models measure above .70 except for three items loading CA5 = .670, PA2 = .699 and PA6 = .691, respectively, with solid validity and reliability scores.

Outer Model Analysis

Table 2 above shows the measurement model results with Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A and composite reliability measuring higher than .70. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is defined

Table 2
Comprehensive Measurement Model Results

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Governance	GC3	0.713	0.877	0.883	0.904	0.575
	GC4	0.813				
	GC5	0.813				
	GC6	0.756				
	GC7	0.766				
	GC8	0.717				
	GC9	0.723				
Competence	CA1	0.707	0.788	0.792	0.855	0.542
	CA5	0.670				
	CA6	0.771				
	CA7	0.763				
	CA8	0.764				
Partnership	PA2	0.699	0.714	0.730	0.820	0.534
	PA3	0.779				
	PA4	0.750				
	PA6	0.691				
Situation	S5	0.778	0.849	0.899	0.896	0.684
	S6	0.895				
	S7	0.810				
	S8	0.823				

Source: Primary data (2021) & SmartPLS 3 output Ringle, Wende, & Becker, (2015)

as the grand mean value of the squared loadings of the items as related to the constructs and as a measure to establish the convergence validity is rated above .50 as a threshold demonstrating minimum variance. The above measures established both convergent validity and convergent reliability of the constructs.

Discriminant Validity

To establish the discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, cross-loading, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio is measured to that effect. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion in Table 3 below is determined by the square root of AVE for each variable, not exceeding the correlation of the latent variables. The cross-loading scores in Table 4, higher than the loadings of the corresponding variables indicator, established discriminant validity. The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio in Table 5 is determined by values less than 1.0 according to Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt (2015) and further suggests that HTMT below .90 means

discriminant validity is established. Therefore, all three measures were within the recognized threshold, and discriminant validity was confirmed.

Structural Model Assessment

The exploratory power of the model is explained with the coefficient determinant of R^2 0.33 on partnership as the variable of burden for the study: the R-square and the path coefficient measure the predictive relevance of the structural model. The R^2 value of 0.33 score indicates that all variables cumulatively and substantively explain 33% of the variance in partnership in university education. A combination of governance and situation explains 28% of the variance in competency, while governance explains only 4% of the variance in the situation; see Figures 1 & 2 for details.

The inner path coefficient of the model shows that governance has a 52% strong and positive influence on competence and 20% positive influence on competence while -19% on the

Table 3
Fornell-Larcker Criterion Results

	Competence	Governance	Situation	Partnership
Competence	0.736			
Governance	0.523	0.759		
Situation	-0.140	-0.199	0.827	
Partnership	0.547	0.429	-0.083	0.731

Source: Primary data (2021) & SmartPLS 3 output Ringle, Wende, & Becker, (2015)

Table 4
Cross-Loading Results

	Competence	Governance	Situation	partnership
CA1	0.707	0.436	-0.092	0.380
CA5	0.670	0.330	-0.082	0.354
CA6	0.771	0.389	-0.204	0.452
CA7	0.763	0.413	-0.077	0.425
CA8	0.764	0.346	-0.049	0.392
GC3	0.372	0.713	-0.122	0.307
GC4	0.440	0.813	-0.176	0.326
GC5	0.397	0.813	-0.091	0.377
GC6	0.453	0.756	-0.166	0.418
GC7	0.369	0.766	-0.167	0.263
GC8	0.309	0.717	-0.187	0.211
GC9	0.403	0.723	-0.157	0.325
PA2	0.273	0.215	0.060	0.699
PA3	0.458	0.464	-0.041	0.779
PA4	0.442	0.256	-0.094	0.750
PA6	0.382	0.257	-0.143	0.691
S5	-0.084	-0.148	0.778	-0.121
S6	-0.169	-0.215	0.895	-0.060
S7	-0.070	-0.091	0.810	-0.034
S8	-0.105	-0.162	0.823	-0.052

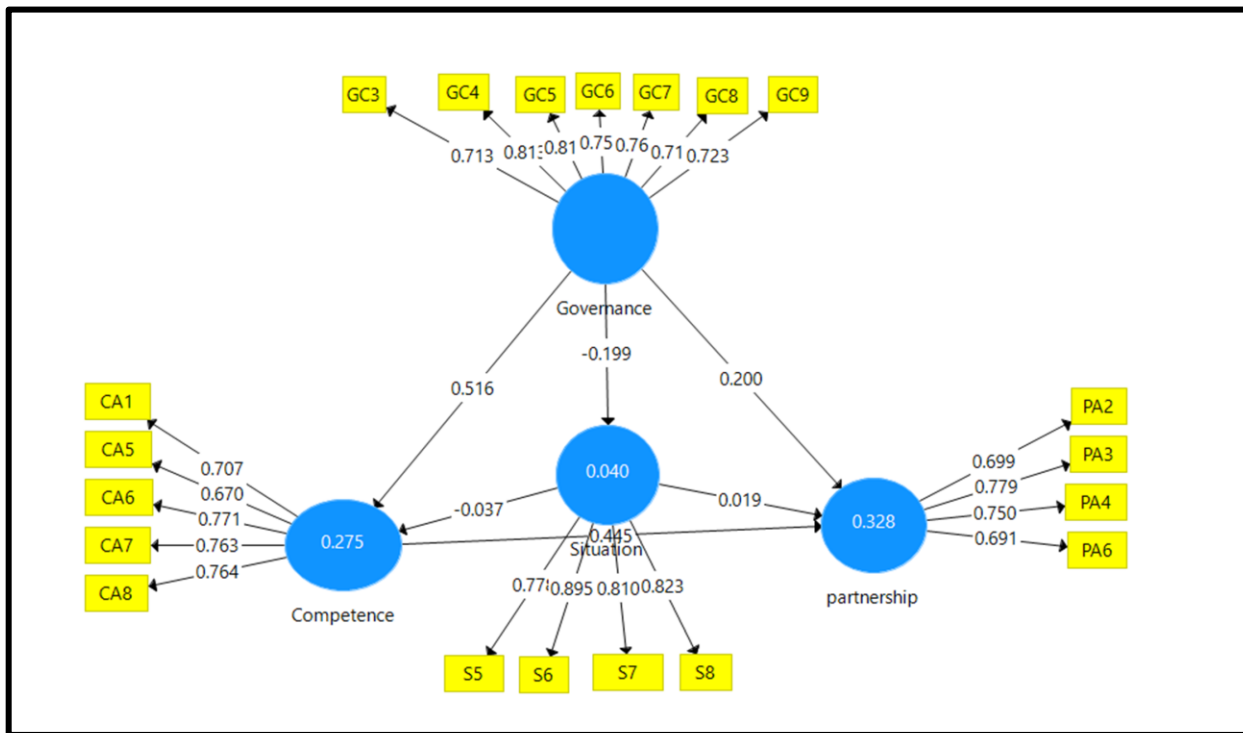
Source: Primary data (2021) & SmartPLS 3 output Ringle, Wende, & Becker, (2015)

Table 5
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Results

	Competence	Governance	Situation	partnership
Competence				
Governance	0.618			
Situation	0.168	0.216		
partnership	0.703	0.502	0.158	

Source: Primary data (2021) & SmartPLS 3 output Ringle, Wende, & Becker, (2015)

Figure 2
Path Model Results

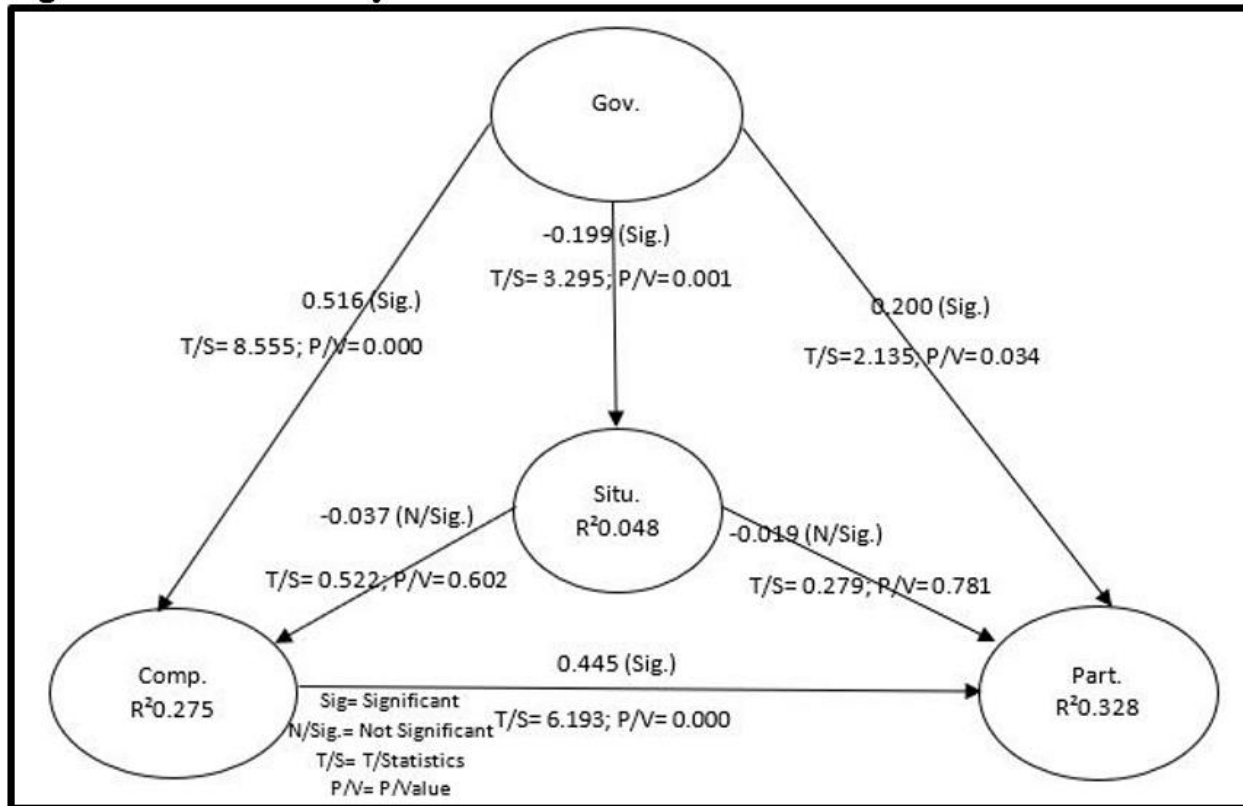


Source: Primary data (2021), & SmartPLS 3 Output Ringle, Wende, & Becker,(2015); Henseler et al., (2009)

situation. Competence as a mediating variable between governance and partnership shows a 45% influence on partnership. The situation has a 1% influence on partnership and -03% on competence. According to Garson, (2016), the path coefficient varies between -1 to +1 weight, as close to one (1) indicates a strong path and close to zero (0) means a weak path relationship. Therefore, as deduced from the structural model, the hypothesized path relationship between governance and competence is statistically significant. The hypothesized path relationship between governance and partnership is statistically relevant, and the path relationship between governance and situation is substantial. The path relationship between competence and partnership is satisfactorily significant, establishing the full mediation of competence. However, the mediation relationship of situation to competency

and partnership failed to secure recognition, as seen in Table 6 for the support and rejection of the hypotheses. Figure 1 and Figure 2 display the measures of the structural model. In research on governance in Southern African higher education, Hall et al. (2002) found that the degree of governance structures, the depth of delegation, and the capacity for implementation help universities turn policies into practices that affect all aspects of university education. The study results in Table 6 below established that governance positively and significantly influences competence and partnership in the day-to-day running of the higher education institutions in The Gambia. The outcome is affirmed by a similar research on governance in Southern African Higher education, Hall et al., (2002) who found that the degree of governance structures, the depth of delegation and the capacity for

Figure 3
Path Model Analysis



Source: Primary data (2021)

Table 6
Hypotheses Test Results

Hypotheses	Path	Path Coefficient	t-Statistics	p-Values	Remarks
H1	Governance -> Competence	0.516	8.553	0.000	Supported
H2	Governance -> partnership	0.200	2.135	0.034	Supported
H3	Governance -> Situation	-0.199	3.295	0.001	Supported
H4	Competence -> partnership	0.445	6.193	0.000	Supported
H5	Situation -> Competence	-0.037	0.522	0.602	Rejected
H6	Situation -> partnership	-0.019	0.279	0.781	Rejected

Source: Primary data (2021) & SmartPLS 3 output Ringle, Wende, & Becker, (2015)

implementation help universities to turn policies into practice that affects all aspect of university education. The results also support the mediation of competence between governance and partnership in higher education institutions in The Gambia. This emphasized that competence (quality) in university education is a recipe for building strong relationships with internal and external constituents. Higher education quality sells and helps position the University among other institutions. The study's outcome is also affirmed by Deaconu et al. (2014), who state that the relationship between the higher education system and the labour market depends on the competence and quality of its product. However,

the results failed to support mediation in a trilateral governance, competence, and partnership relationship. They are taking note of the local context of the higher education system in The Gambia, where many activities concerning university governance have a robust external influence. The Gambia has only one public university, which is highly controlled by the state regarding funding and regulatory framework.

CONCLUSION

The study assesses the effect of governance practices that define the competence and partnership mediated by the situation in

universities in The Gambia. The study uses the PLS-SEM approach to assess, measure, and confirm the structural models. The study's outcome portrays a significant strong influence of governance on competence and partnership and full support for mediating competence between governance and collaboration.

The findings, however, declined to support the mediation of the situation in the trilateral relationship of governance, competence, and partnership in higher education in The Gambia. This is possible because universities are expected to remain independent without little outside control, enabling them to play a vital role in efforts to change and influence society through a knowledge-based economy.

The study outcome implies that the leadership in higher education sectors in The Gambia, as informed by the research outcome, should invest more in governance efforts because it has a relatively positive effect on both the competence (quality) and partnership of the Universities. The study is constrained by research in The Gambia, which is quite challenging, especially in accessing data from educated Gambians. The data collected were imbalanced towards the only public University in The Gambia. The study recommends further research to be conducted in the form of a qualitative approach that will dig deep into informants' minds to get the essential information that will portray an accurate picture of university education in The Gambia. Many people in the Gambia are not trustworthy when it comes to the self-administered questionnaire statement. They tend to hurry to answer the questions or statement to make you feel that they have done you a favour which often compromised the results.

Author Contributions: All the authors (G.B, L.B.J, B.S, & L.S) listed in this paper contributed equally and maximally to the study. All authors worked on proposals and instruments (questionnaire), completed the introduction, literature, methodology, discussion, and conclusion, and edited the original manuscript.

Funding: The University of The Gambia fully funds the work through the Directorate of Research and Consultancy.

Acknowledgement: The authors thanked and acknowledged the support from the University of The Gambia management for providing research funding for the first time in the University's history.

Conflict of Interest: The authors confidentially declare no conflict of interest concerning this paper

REFERENCE

- Asian Development Bank. (2012). *Administration and Governance of Higher Education in Asia*. <http://hdl.handle.net/11540/900>
- Chou, D. C. (2012). Building a successful partnership in higher education institutions. *International Journal of Information Systems and Change Management*, 6(1), 84–97. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJISCM.2012.050350>
- Fornell, C. & Larcker, D., F. (1981). *Evaluating Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error*. 18(1), 39–50.
- Clarke, D. J., Cumella, S., Corbett, J., Baxter, M., Langton, J., Prasher, V., Roy, A., Roy, M., & Thinn, K. (1994). Use of Icd-10 Research Diagnostic Criteria To Categorise Psychiatric and Behavioural Abnormalities Among People With Learning Disabilities: the West Midlands Field Trial. *Mental Handicap Research*, 7(4), 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-3148.1994.tb00131.x>
- Deem, R. (2011). ' *New managerialism* ' and higher education : *The management of performances and cultures in universities in the United Kingdom Higher Education: the management of performances and cultures in*. 0214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0962021980020014>
- Etzkowitz, H., & Zhou, C. (2017). The Triple Helix. In *The Triple Helix*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315620183>
- Eurydice. (2008). *Higher Education Governance Policies , structures , funding and*.
- Garson, David, G. (2016). Partial Least Squares: Regression and Structural Equation Models. In *Statistical Associates Blue Book Series* (2016 editi). Statistical Publishing Associates. <https://doi.org/10.1201/b16017-6>
- Hair, J. F., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2011). PLS-SEM: Indeed a silver bullet. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 19(2), 139–152. <https://doi.org/10.2753/MTP1069-6679190202>
- Hall, M., Symes, A., & Luescher, T. (2002). Governance in South African higher education. In *Journal of Curriculum Studies* (Vol. 29, Issue 768307933). <http://usir.salford.ac.uk/2969/>
- Hénard, F., & Mitterle, A. (2010). Governance and Quality Guidelines in Higher Education: A review of Governance Arrangements and Quality Assurance Guidelines. *Oecd*, 114. <https://www.oecd.org/edu/imhe/46064461.pdf>
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2016). Testing measurement invariance of composites using partial least squares. *International Marketing Review*, 33(3), 405–431. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-09-2014-0304>
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sinkovics, R. R. (2009). The use of partial least squares path modeling in international marketing. *Advances in International Marketing*, 20(May 2014), 277–319. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1474-7979\(2009\)0000020014](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1474-7979(2009)0000020014)

- Herdlein, R. J. (2005). Governance in the Twenty-First Century University: Approaches to Effective Leadership and Strategic Management. In *Journal of College Student Development* (Vol. 46, Issue 2, pp. 210–212).
<https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2005.0014>
- Hulland, J. (1999). Use of Partial Least Squares (PLS) in Strategic Management Research: A Review of Four Recent Studies. *Acta Pharmacologica Sinica*, 20(4), 195–204.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/aps.2012.31>
- Joe F Hair, Jeffrey Joe Risher, Marko Sarstedt, C. M. R. (2018). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*.
- Krause, J., Dias, L. P., & Schedler, C. (2015). *Competency-Based Education: A Framework for Measuring Quality Courses*. 1–10.
- Lapworth, S. (2004). Arresting decline in shared governance: Towards a flexible model for academic participation. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 58(4), 299–314.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.2004.00275.x>
- Luthans, F., Stewart, T. I., Luthans, F., & Stewart, T. I. (2014). General of Theory Contingency Management University of Nebraska. *The Academy of Management Review*, 2(2), 181–195.
- Mora, J. G. (2001). Governance and management in the new university. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 7(2), 95–110.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2001.9967044>
- Nam, S., & Nam, I. C. (2004). *Corporate Governance Recent Evidence from. October*.
- Patterns, C., Governance, O. F., & Education, I. N. H. (2007). Education Policy Analysis -- 2003 Edition. *Education Policy Analysis -- 2003 Edition*, 59–78.
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264047846-zh>
- Sarr, A., & Hydera, S. Y. (2005). A Situational Analysis of Education in The Gambia. *Save The Children*.
<http://www.edugambia.gm/data-area/publications/policy-documents/120-sectorreport2006/download.html>
- Sarstedt, M., Henseler, J., & Ringle, C. M. (2011). Multigroup analysis in partial least squares (PLS) path modeling: Alternative methods and empirical results. *Advances in International Marketing*, 22(January), 195–218.
[https://doi.org/10.1108/S1474-7979\(2011\)0000022012](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1474-7979(2011)0000022012)
- Sizer, J., & Howells, L. (2000). The changing relationship between institutional governance and management in the United Kingdom: A scottish higher education funding council perspective. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 6(3), 159–170.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2000.9967021>
- Touray, Y., & Adesopo, A. (2022). *The Pre-reform Conundrum of the Gambia Public Higher Education System: A Quantitative Examination*. 22(1), 5–29. <https://doi.org/10.3968/12463>
- Usman, S. (2014). Governance and Higher Education in Pakistan: What Roles do Boards of Governors Play in Ensuring the Academic Quality Maintenance in Public Universities versus Private Universities in Pakistan? *International Journal of Higher Education*, 3(2).
<https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v3n2p38>
- Warn, J., & Tranter, P. (2001). Measuring quality in higher education: A competency approach. *Quality in Higher Education*, 7(3), 191–198.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13538320120098078>
- Wong, K. K. (2013). Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) Techniques Using SmartPLS. *Marketing Bulletin*, 24(1), 1–32.
- Zone, A. P. (1982). The TOWS Matrix A Tool for Situational Analysis Situational Analysis. *Long Range Planning*, 15(2), 54–66.