EFFECT OF BOARD ATTRIBUTES ON THE RETURN ON ASSETS OF LISTED DEPOSIT MONEY BANKS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study investigated the effect of board attributes on the financial performance of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria, with a focus on CEO duality and audit committee size as key governance variables. The research adopted an ex post facto design and employed a quantitative approach, analyzing ten Nigerian banks listed on the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX) over a ten-year period (2015–2024). Secondary data were collected from annual reports and financial statements, while return on assets (ROA) was used as a proxy for financial performance. Robust Least Squares regression was applied to account for outliers and non-normality in the data. The findings reveal a negative but statistically insignificant relationship between CEO duality and ROA, suggesting that concentration of leadership roles does not substantially affect asset utilization under the prevailing regulatory framework. Audit committee size exhibited a positive but insignificant association with ROA, indicating that merely expanding committee membership does not guarantee improved financial performance. These results align with governance theories emphasizing effective monitoring and oversight, highlighting that qualitative aspects of board attributes may be more critical than formal structural characteristics. The study underscores the importance of enhancing board engagement, independence, and audit committee expertise to strengthen bank performance.

Keywords: *Board Attributes, CEO Duality, Audit Committee Size, Return on Assets, Nigerian Banks*

INTRODUCTION

Corporate governance has remained a critical pillar for sustaining financial performance and stability in modern banking systems, particularly in emerging economies. In deposit money banks, board attributes serve as essential internal governance mechanisms through which strategic direction, managerial monitoring, and accountability are enforced. Recent studies emphasize that the effectiveness of boards significantly influences how efficiently banks deploy their asset base to generate returns (Adegbite & Nakajima, 2021). Given the asset-intensive nature of banking operations, Return on Assets (ROA) has continued to attract scholarly attention as a reliable measure of management efficiency and operational performance (Klein, 2023). Contemporary corporate governance literature further suggests that weaknesses in board leadership structures can translate into poor asset utilization and declining profitability, especially in highly regulated sectors such as banking (Abubakar & Obansa, 2022). In Nigeria, the importance of sound board governance has been reinforced by recurring financial sector reforms aimed at restoring investor confidence and strengthening bank performance. Despite the introduction of revised governance codes and stricter regulatory oversight, governance-related challenges remain evident in some listed deposit money banks (Oyerogba et al., 2021). Empirical evidence indicates that inefficiencies in asset management and risk oversight continue to affect banks' returns, raising concerns about the effectiveness of existing board structures (Ezeani & Oladele, 2023).

One prominent governance issue attracting recent scholarly attention is CEO duality, where the same individual occupies both the chief executive officer and board chairperson roles. Studies argue that such concentration of power may weaken board independence and compromise effective oversight, thereby affecting asset-based performance indicators such as ROA (Okafor et al., 2022). However, recent literature presents mixed findings on the performance implications of CEO duality. While some scholars suggest that CEO duality can enhance strategic coherence and decision-making efficiency, others contend that it increases agency problems and managerial entrenchment, particularly in developing economies with weaker institutional frameworks (Rahman & Saima, 2024). Evidence from African banking studies indicates that CEO duality may negatively affect asset efficiency due to reduced monitoring intensity (Musa & Garba, 2023). These contradictory findings suggest that the effect of CEO duality on ROA remains context-specific and requires further empirical clarification within Nigeria's banking sector (Ibrahim & Lawal, 2022).

Audit committee size represents another critical board attribute expected to strengthen internal control systems and enhance financial discipline in banks. Recent studies argue that an adequately sized audit committee improves oversight quality, enhances financial reporting credibility, and supports prudent asset management (Al-Homaidi et al., 2021). Nonetheless, empirical evidence remains inconclusive, as excessively large audit committees may experience coordination challenges that undermine their effectiveness (Uwuigbe et al., 2024). In the Nigerian banking context, concerns persist regarding whether audit committee size meaningfully contributes to improved asset returns or merely fulfills regulatory compliance requirements (Ezeani & Oladele, 2023).

Despite growing empirical attention, gaps remain in understanding how specific board attributes affect ROA in listed deposit money banks in Nigeria. Many recent studies rely on composite governance indices or market-based performance measures, thereby obscuring the direct influence of CEO duality and audit committee size on asset efficiency (Nwoye & Okorie, 2025). The increasing complexity of banking operations, coupled with heightened regulatory and technological pressures, further underscores the need for focused investigation. Consequently, this study examines the effect of board attributes specifically CEO duality and audit committee size on the return on assets of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria, with the aim of providing timely evidence to inform governance reforms and enhance bank performance.

Research Hypothesis

H_{01} CEO duality has no significant effect on the return on assets of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria.

H_{02} Audit committee size has no significant effect on the return on assets of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Board Attributes

Board attributes refer to the structural and functional characteristics of a company's board of directors that influence its ability to provide effective oversight, strategic guidance, and monitoring of management activities. In the banking sector, board attributes are particularly important due to the complexity of operations, regulatory scrutiny, and high exposure to financial risk. Recent corporate governance literature emphasizes that board attributes shape decision-making quality and determine how effectively boards mitigate agency conflicts between shareholders and management (Adegbite & Nakajima, 2021). These attributes include leadership structure, board composition, committee effectiveness, and the distribution of power within the boardroom. Empirical studies conducted in emerging economies indicate that weaknesses in board attributes are often associated with poor financial discipline and inefficient asset utilization, especially in banks where governance failures can have systemic consequences (Abubakar & Obansa, 2022). Contemporary research further suggests that board attributes function as internal governance mechanisms that complement external regulation in safeguarding firm performance. In Nigeria's banking sector, regulatory reforms have increasingly emphasized board accountability and committee effectiveness as tools for improving financial outcomes (Oyerogba et al., 2021). Scholars argue that board attributes influence how effectively boards

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monitor executives, oversee risk management practices, and ensure compliance with governance codes (Uwuigbe et al., 2024). Moreover, recent evidence highlights that board attributes do not operate uniformly across contexts, as institutional environment, ownership structure, and regulatory enforcement shape their effectiveness (Rahman & Saima, 2024). Consequently, understanding specific board attributes such as CEO duality and audit committee size is critical for explaining variations in financial performance among listed deposit money banks.

CEO Duality

CEO duality refers to a governance structure in which a single individual simultaneously holds the positions of chief executive officer and chairperson of the board. This concentration of leadership authority has remained a contentious issue in contemporary corporate governance debates. Proponents of CEO duality argue that unified leadership enhances strategic coherence, reduces information asymmetry, and enables faster decision-making, which may improve organizational performance (Klein, 2023). In contrast, critics contend that CEO duality weakens board independence and undermines the board's monitoring role, thereby increasing agency problems and managerial opportunism (Okafor et al., 2022). Recent empirical studies from developing economies suggest that CEO duality is more likely to have adverse effects on financial performance in environments with weaker institutional controls and high ownership concentration (Ibrahim & Lawal, 2022). In the banking sector, where risk management and asset quality are critical, CEO duality may impair effective oversight of executive decisions, potentially leading to inefficient asset deployment (Musa & Garba, 2023). Nigerian banking studies further indicate that CEO duality can reduce transparency and accountability, particularly when boards lack strong counterbalancing mechanisms such as independent directors or active committees (Ezeani & Oladele, 2023). However, recent cross-country evidence shows that the effect of CEO duality on performance remains context-specific, suggesting the need for sector- and country-focused investigations (Rahman & Saima, 2024). As a result, CEO duality remains a crucial board attribute in explaining variations in return on assets among listed deposit money banks.

Audit Committee Size

Audit committee size refers to the number of members serving on a firm's audit committee, which is responsible for overseeing financial reporting processes, internal controls, and audit functions. In the banking sector, audit committees play a critical role in ensuring the integrity of financial statements and strengthening risk oversight mechanisms. Recent studies suggest that an adequately sized audit committee enhances monitoring effectiveness by providing diverse expertise and improving the committee's capacity to scrutinize complex financial activities (Al-Homaidi et al., 2021). Regulatory frameworks in Nigeria mandate the establishment of audit committees, reflecting their importance in promoting transparency and accountability within banks (Uwuigbe et al., 2024). Nevertheless, empirical evidence on the optimal size of audit committees remains mixed. While some scholars argue that larger audit committees improve oversight quality and reduce information asymmetry, others contend that excessively large committees may suffer from coordination difficulties, slower decision-making, and free-rider problems (Musa & Garba, 2023). Recent Nigerian studies indicate that audit committee size influences how effectively banks manage assets and control operational inefficiencies, thereby affecting financial performance (Ezeani & Oladele, 2023). Furthermore, contemporary governance research emphasizes that audit committee size must be considered alongside committee independence and expertise to fully understand its impact (Klein, 2023). Consequently, audit committee size remains a significant board attribute for evaluating its effect on asset-based performance measures such as ROA.

Concept of Return on Assets

Return on Assets (ROA) is a widely used accounting-based measure of financial performance that assesses how efficiently a firm utilizes its total assets to generate profits. In the banking sector, ROA is particularly relevant because banks rely heavily on asset management, including loans, investments, and other earning assets, to generate income. Recent financial performance literature identifies ROA as a comprehensive indicator of managerial efficiency and operational effectiveness in

deposit money banks (Abubakar & Obansa, 2022). Unlike market-based measures, ROA directly reflects internal operational outcomes and is less influenced by external market volatility (Klein, 2023). Contemporary studies emphasize that ROA is sensitive to governance quality, risk management practices, and strategic decision-making within banks (Adegbite & Nakajima, 2021). In Nigeria, variations in ROA among listed deposit money banks have been linked to differences in asset quality, cost efficiency, and governance structures (Oyerogba et al., 2021). Recent empirical evidence further suggests that weak board oversight and ineffective committee structures can lead to poor asset utilization, thereby reducing ROA (Ibrahim & Lawal, 2022). As banking operations become increasingly complex due to digitalization and regulatory pressures, ROA remains a critical metric for evaluating how well banks deploy their asset base to achieve profitability (Nwoye & Okorie, 2025). Consequently, ROA serves as an appropriate dependent variable for examining the performance implications of board attributes in listed deposit money banks.

Theoretical Framework

Agency Theory: Agency Theory was developed by Jensen and Meckling (1976) and explains the relationship between principals (shareholders) and agents (managers), emphasizing conflicts that arise due to separation of ownership and control. The theory posits that managers may pursue personal interests at the expense of shareholders, leading to agency costs and inefficient use of organizational resources. To mitigate these conflicts, governance mechanisms such as effective boards and monitoring structures are required. In the context of deposit money banks, Agency Theory suggests that board attributes play a critical role in constraining managerial opportunism and enhancing accountability. Specifically, the separation of the CEO and board chair roles is expected to strengthen board independence, while an adequately sized audit committee enhances oversight of financial reporting and internal controls. Recent governance studies argue that weak board structures increase the risk of poor asset utilization and reduced financial performance (Adegbite & Nakajima, 2021). Thus, Agency Theory provides a strong foundation for examining how CEO duality and audit committee size influence return on assets in listed Nigerian banks.

Stewardship Theory: Stewardship Theory was advanced by Donaldson and Davis (1991) and is grounded in the assumption that managers are trustworthy stewards whose interests align with those of shareholders. Unlike Agency Theory, it emphasizes empowerment, trust, and unified leadership as drivers of organizational performance. The theory argues that combining leadership roles, such as CEO duality, can enhance strategic clarity, decision-making efficiency, and organizational cohesion. In banking institutions, effective stewardship may facilitate efficient asset deployment and improved financial outcomes. Recent studies suggest that when institutional frameworks are supportive, CEO duality can contribute positively to performance by reducing leadership conflict and improving coordination (Rahman & Saima, 2024). However, the theory also recognizes that stewardship outcomes depend on contextual factors such as governance culture and regulatory strength. In this study, Stewardship Theory helps explain potential positive effects of CEO duality and cooperative board structures on return on assets of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Recent empirical studies have continued to examine corporate governance mechanisms and firm performance across sectors and countries. In 2025, Nwoye and Okorie (2025) investigated board leadership structure and profitability of 14 listed Nigerian banks using CEO duality, audit committee size, and ROA, applying panel fixed effects regression. They found CEO duality to negatively affect ROA and recommended stricter separation of leadership roles. Similarly, Rahman and Saima (2025) examined board attributes and asset efficiency in South Asian financial firms using 120 firms and GMM estimation, reporting that moderate audit committee size improves ROA. Extending beyond banking, Chen, Liu, and Wang (2025) studied Chinese manufacturing firms using OLS and found governance quality to significantly enhance asset returns, recommending sector-specific governance reforms.

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In 2024, Uwuigbe et al. (2024) analyzed audit committee characteristics and financial performance of Nigerian listed firms using 10 years of panel data and random effects regression, finding audit committee size to significantly improve ROA. In a related banking study, Ezeani and Oladele (2024) examined governance mechanisms and bank efficiency in Nigeria using ROA and ROE, employing fixed effects estimation and reporting a negative effect of CEO duality. From another context, Al-Homaidi et al. (2024) studied GCC banks using panel regression and showed that effective audit committees strengthen asset utilization, recommending enhanced committee expertise.

Studies from 2023 further reinforce these findings. Musa and Garba (2023) examined board structure and performance of Nigerian deposit money banks using ROA and GLS estimation, reporting that larger audit committees improve asset efficiency. Klein (2023) analyzed governance quality and performance of European banks using dynamic panel models and found leadership separation to enhance ROA. In the non-financial sector, Adegboye and Lawal (2023) reported similar governance–performance relationships in Nigerian manufacturing firms.

Earlier evidence from 2022 shows consistent patterns. Ibrahim and Lawal (2022) used fixed effects regression on Nigerian banks and found CEO duality to weaken ROA. Okafor et al. (2022) studied corporate governance and performance of African firms using panel OLS and reported audit committee effectiveness as performance-enhancing. Likewise, Al-Matari (2022) found similar results in Middle Eastern firms.

In 2021, foundational evidence was provided by Adegbite and Nakajima (2021), who examined governance reforms and firm performance in emerging economies using qualitative and panel methods. Oyerogba et al. (2021) empirically linked weak board oversight to declining ROA in Nigerian banks, while Al-Qudah et al. (2021) confirmed in Jordanian firms that governance quality improves asset efficiency. Collectively, these studies justify continued investigation into board attributes and ROA across contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an ex post facto research design and employed a quantitative research approach to examine the effect of board attributes on the financial performance of listed Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) in Nigeria. The ex post facto design is appropriate because the study analyzed existing secondary data without manipulating variables, focusing on relationships between naturally occurring phenomena. The population comprised all thirteen (13) DMBs listed on the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX) as of December 31, 2024. A purposive sample of ten (10) banks was selected based on their continuous listing on the NGX from 2015 to 2024. The ten-year period was chosen to capture post-IFRS adoption reporting and the implementation of the Nigerian Code of Corporate Governance, ensuring consistency in financial reporting and governance practices across the sampled banks.

The study's independent variables were board attributes, measured using CEO duality (coded as 1 if the CEO also serves as board chair and 0 otherwise) and audit committee size (total number of members on the audit committee). The dependent variable was Return on Assets (ROA), calculated as net income divided by total assets, representing the efficiency of asset utilization in generating profit.

Data were obtained from secondary sources, including annual reports, financial statements, and corporate governance disclosures submitted to the NGX. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were applied. Descriptive statistics, including mean, median, and standard deviation, summarized the characteristics of board attributes and ROA. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of relationships among variables and to assess multicollinearity. Preliminary diagnostic tests indicated the presence of outliers and non-normality, violating assumptions of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. Consequently, Robust Regression was employed to obtain reliable parameter estimates while accounting for outliers.

The model specification for this study is expressed as follows:

$$\mathrm{ROA}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \mathrm{CEOD}_{it} + \beta_2 \mathrm{ACSIZE}_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

Where:

- ROA_{it} = Return on Assets of bank *i* in year *t*

- CEOD $_{it}$ = CEO duality of bank i in year t
- ACSIZE $_{it}$ = Audit committee size of bank i in year t
- β_0 = Intercept
- $\beta_1 - \beta_2$ = Coefficients of independent variables
- ε_{it} = Error term

This methodology ensures a rigorous, data-driven approach to investigating how specific board attributes influence bank performance in the Nigerian banking sector.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistic

	ROA	ASIZE	CEO
Mean	0.077900	5.790000	0.190000
Median	0.060000	6.000000	0.000000
Maximum	0.260000	6.000000	1.000000
Minimum	0.010000	5.000000	0.000000
Std. Dev.	0.061960	0.409360	0.394277
Skewness	1.172003	-1.423983	1.580419
Kurtosis	3.760922	3.027728	3.497726
Jarque-Bera	25.30569	33.79866	42.66098
Probability	0.000003	0.000000	0.000000
Sum	7.790000	579.0000	19.00000
Sum Sq. Dev.	0.380059	16.59000	15.39000
Observations	100	100	100

The descriptive statistics provide preliminary insight into the behavior of return on assets (ROA), audit committee size (ASIZE), and CEO duality (CEO) among the sampled listed deposit money banks in Nigeria over the study period. The mean ROA of 0.0779 indicates that, on average, the banks generated approximately 7.8 kobo of profit from every one naira of assets employed, reflecting moderate asset utilization efficiency within the sector. The median ROA of 0.06, which is lower than the mean, suggests the presence of some highly profitable observations that pulled the average upward. This is further supported by the positive skewness (1.172), indicating that a few banks recorded relatively high ROA values compared to the majority.

Audit committee size recorded a mean of 5.79 members, with a median of 6, implying that most banks maintained audit committees close to the maximum regulatory threshold. The low standard deviation (0.41) shows limited variation in audit committee size across banks, suggesting strong regulatory compliance. The negative skewness (-1.424) indicates that most observations cluster at the upper end, with fewer banks having smaller committees.

CEO duality has a mean of 0.19, indicating that only about 19% of the observations experienced CEO duality, while the median of zero confirms that most banks separated the roles of CEO and board chair. The relatively high positive skewness reflects the dominance of non-duality observations. The Jarque–Bera statistics and associated probabilities indicate that all variables deviate from normality, justifying the use of robust regression techniques for reliable estimation.

Correlation analysis

	ROA	ASIZE	CEO
ROA	1.000000	0.149701	-0.028985
ASIZE	0.149701	1.000000	0.061957
CEO	-0.028985	**0.061957**	1.000000

The correlation matrix presents preliminary evidence on the direction and strength of relationships among return on assets (ROA), audit committee size (ASIZE), and CEO duality (CEO) in listed deposit money banks in Nigeria. The correlation coefficient between ROA and ASIZE is 0.1497, indicating a weak but positive relationship. This suggests that banks with slightly larger audit committees tend to exhibit higher return on assets, implying that broader audit oversight may contribute marginally to improved asset utilization. However, the low magnitude of the coefficient

shows that audit committee size alone does not strongly determine profitability, reinforcing the need for multivariate analysis to capture its net effect.

The relationship between ROA and CEO duality is –0.0290, reflecting a very weak negative association. This implies that the presence of CEO duality is marginally associated with lower asset returns, supporting the argument that concentration of leadership roles may weaken board monitoring and efficiency. Nevertheless, the near-zero value indicates that this relationship is not strong at the bivariate level and may be influenced by other governance or firm-specific factors.

The correlation between ASIZE and CEO duality is 0.0620, showing a weak positive relationship, which suggests that audit committee size is largely independent of whether a bank practices CEO duality. Importantly, all correlation coefficients are well below the commonly accepted multicollinearity threshold, indicating the absence of serious multicollinearity concerns and confirming the suitability of the variables for regression analysis.

Robust Least Squares regression

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-Statistic	Prob.
ASIZE	0.015642	0.014876	1.051491	0.2930
CEO	-0.003231	0.015466	-0.208914	0.8345
C	0.070094	0.096961	0.722906	0.4697
	Robust Statistics			
R-squared	0.054067	Adjusted R-squared		0.014238
Rw-squared	0.084280	Adjust Rw-squared		0.084280
Akaike info criterion	102.9184	Schwarz criterion		117.7076
Deviance	0.285649	Scale		0.054927
Rn-squared statistic	6.791618	Prob(Rn-squared stat.)		0.147319
	Non-robust Statistics			
Mean dependent var	0.077900	S.D. dependent var		0.061960
S.E. of regression	0.059675	Sum squared resid		0.338305

The Robust Least Squares regression results provide insight into the effect of audit committee size (ASIZE) and CEO duality (CEO) on the return on assets (ROA) of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria, while accounting for the presence of outliers and non-normality in the data. The coefficient of ASIZE is positive (0.0156), indicating that an increase in audit committee size is associated with an improvement in ROA. This suggests that larger audit committees may enhance oversight and strengthen internal controls, thereby supporting more efficient asset utilization. However, the associated probability value (p = 0.2930) indicates that this relationship is not statistically significant at conventional levels. This implies that although audit committee size may contribute positively to performance, its effect is not strong enough on its own to significantly influence ROA within the sampled banks.

The coefficient of CEO duality is negative (–0.0032), suggesting that banks where the CEO also serves as board chair tend to experience slightly lower returns on assets. This aligns with agency-based arguments that concentration of power may weaken board monitoring and reduce asset efficiency. Nonetheless, the effect is statistically insignificant (p = 0.8345), indicating that CEO duality does not exert a meaningful influence on ROA during the study period.

The model's R-squared value (0.0541) shows that board attributes explain a modest proportion of variations in ROA, which is typical in governance studies. The insignificant Rn-squared statistic further confirms the overall insignificance of the model, suggesting that other firm-specific or macroeconomic factors may play a more dominant role in determining asset returns in Nigerian banks.

Test of Hypothesis

The first hypothesis (H_{01}), which states that CEO duality has no significant effect on the return on assets of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria, was tested using the Robust Least Squares regression results. The coefficient of CEO duality was negative (β = –0.0032), indicating a marginal

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inverse relationship with ROA. However, the associated probability value (p = 0.8345) exceeds the 5% level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis is not rejected, implying that CEO duality does not have a statistically significant effect on the return on assets of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria during the study period.

Similarly, the second hypothesis (H_{02}), which posits that audit committee size has no significant effect on the return on assets of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria, was examined. Although audit committee size exhibited a positive coefficient (β = 0.0156), its probability value (p = 0.2930) is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected, indicating that audit committee size does not significantly influence the return on assets of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

CEO Duality and Return on Assets

The empirical finding of a negative but statistically insignificant relationship between CEO duality and return on assets suggests that leadership concentration does not materially enhance asset efficiency among listed deposit money banks in Nigeria. This outcome aligns with evidence from recent banking studies indicating that combining the roles of CEO and board chair often weakens oversight without necessarily translating into measurable performance losses in strongly regulated environments. For instance, Nwoye and Okorie (2025) and Ezeani and Oladele (2024) documented a negative influence of CEO duality on bank profitability, while Ibrahim and Lawal (2022) reported similar outcomes for Nigerian banks using fixed effects estimation. These findings resonate with governance arguments that leadership separation strengthens monitoring and constrains managerial discretion. However, the insignificance observed in this study suggests that the regulatory framework governing Nigerian banks may already impose sufficient checks to dilute the marginal impact of CEO duality. This contrasts with evidence from European and Asian contexts, where leadership separation has been shown to enhance asset efficiency more strongly (Klein, 2023; Rahman & Saima, 2025). The result implies that improving asset performance may require deeper governance effectiveness beyond formal leadership structure, including enforcement quality and board engagement, rather than relying solely on role separation.

Audit Committee Size and Return on Assets

The positive but insignificant relationship between audit committee size and return on assets indicates that merely increasing the number of committee members does not automatically improve asset utilization in Nigerian deposit money banks. This finding mirrors recent empirical evidence suggesting that while audit committees are essential governance mechanisms, their effectiveness depends more on functionality than numerical strength. Studies such as Uwuigbe et al. (2024), Musa and Garba (2023), and Rahman and Saima (2025) reported positive effects of audit committee size on ROA across Nigerian and South Asian firms, suggesting that broader oversight can enhance monitoring capacity. Conversely, evidence from other contexts highlights diminishing returns where larger committees face coordination challenges (Al-Homaidi et al., 2024). The current finding supports the view that regulatory compliance with audit committee size requirements may already be widespread, limiting observable performance variation. Earlier studies in Africa and the Middle East similarly emphasize that audit committee effectiveness, rather than size alone, drives performance outcomes (Okafor et al., 2022; Al-Matari, 2022). This suggests that strengthening expertise, diligence, and independence within audit committees may be more consequential for improving asset efficiency than expanding committee membership.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of board attributes—specifically CEO duality and audit committee size—on the return on assets of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria over a ten-year period. The findings indicate that CEO duality has a negative but statistically insignificant relationship with ROA, suggesting that the concentration of leadership roles does not substantially affect banks' asset efficiency under the existing regulatory environment. Similarly, audit committee size exhibits a

positive but insignificant effect on ROA, implying that while larger committees may enhance oversight capacity, the numerical composition alone does not guarantee improved financial performance. These outcomes align with governance theories that emphasize the importance of monitoring, oversight, and board effectiveness while highlighting that the practical impact of structural attributes may be context-dependent. Collectively, the results suggest that strengthening qualitative aspects of governance mechanisms could be more critical than formal structural adjustments in enhancing bank performance.

Recommendations

1. CEO Duality: Banks should consider reinforcing board independence and engagement through clear delineation of leadership responsibilities and active monitoring mechanisms to complement formal separation of roles.
2. Audit Committee Size: Attention should be directed toward enhancing audit committee competence, expertise, and diligence rather than merely increasing membership, ensuring effective oversight and improved asset utilization.

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