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Relationship Between Governance Accounting Practices and Risk Management among Non-Governmental Organizations in Kajiado County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operate in increasingly complex environments characterized by donor dependency, accountability pressures, financial uncertainty, and operational risks, making effective governance and risk management essential for organizational sustainability. Governance accounting practices such as board oversight, internal audit, compliance monitoring, transparency, and accountability structures are expected to strengthen institutional control and support risk management. However, empirical evidence on the relationship between governance accounting and risk management within NGOs in Kenya remains limited. This study examined the relationship between governance accounting practices and risk management among NGOs in Kajiado County, Kenya. A cross-sectional mixed-methods design was adopted, involving 93 respondents drawn from registered NGOs through a census approach. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and key informant interviews and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression, alongside thematic analysis of qualitative data. The descriptive findings indicated high levels of governance accounting adoption among NGOs, particularly in relation to internal audits and financial controls ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.56$), compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.63$), and board oversight structures ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 0.56$). Correlation analysis revealed a positive but statistically insignificant relationship between governance accounting and risk management ($r = 0.186$, $p = 0.074$). Similarly, regression analysis showed that governance accounting had a positive but statistically insignificant relationship with risk management ($\beta = 0.306$, $p = 0.074$), explaining 3.5% of the variation in risk management outcomes ($R^2 = 0.035$). Qualitative findings suggested that governance accounting contributed to institutional stability and accountability but was more effective when embedded in routine organizational decision-making rather than maintained primarily for compliance. The study concludes that governance accounting is an important accountability and control mechanism within NGOs, but its independent contribution to risk management is limited when examined in isolation. The study recommends stronger integration of governance systems into strategic risk oversight, institutional decision-making, and organizational accountability frameworks.

Keywords: Governance accounting, risk management, NGOs, accountability, internal controls, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Governance has become an increasingly important issue in the management and sustainability of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), particularly in contexts where organizations operate under financial uncertainty, donor dependence, and growing accountability demands. NGOs are expected not only to deliver social value but also to maintain transparency, compliance, and sound internal control systems in order to sustain stakeholder trust and organizational legitimacy (Ebrahim, 2019; Jordan & van Tuijl, 2018). In such settings, governance accounting practices have emerged as a critical dimension of organizational accountability because they provide the structures, systems, and reporting mechanisms through which institutions monitor compliance, enforce internal controls, and oversee financial and operational risks (Bebbington et al., 2014; Schaltegger & Burritt, 2017).

Governance accounting refers to the systems and practices through which organizations record, monitor, and report governance-related processes such as board oversight, internal audit, compliance management, policy

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enforcement, accountability structures, and transparency mechanisms (Adams, 2019; Gray, 2021). Within NGOs, governance accounting plays an especially important role because these organizations often rely on donor funding, external partnerships, and public trust, all of which require strong systems of stewardship and institutional oversight. Effective governance accounting can therefore strengthen organizational resilience by improving control over resources, reducing fraud and misuse, supporting regulatory compliance, and enhancing strategic risk monitoring (Hopkin, 2018; ISO, 2018).

Risk management is increasingly recognized as a central function of effective NGO governance. NGOs face a wide range of risks, including financial instability, donor withdrawal, project failure, weak internal controls, reputational damage, leadership failures, and non-compliance with statutory or donor requirements (Aven, 2016; Power, 2019). In this context, governance accounting practices are expected to contribute to risk management by providing formal mechanisms for oversight, monitoring, accountability, and corrective action. Strong board supervision, internal audit systems, and transparent reporting processes may enable NGOs to identify and address risks before they escalate into broader institutional crises (Mikes & Kaplan, 2015; Simons, 2019).

Existing literature suggests that governance systems are strongly linked to organizational stability and accountability. Studies in both private and nonprofit sectors have shown that board effectiveness, internal controls, audit mechanisms, and accountability reporting are associated with improved organizational performance and lower exposure to operational and financial risk (Adams, 2017; Arena et al., 2020). In the NGO sector, governance has also been associated with donor confidence, financial sustainability, and legitimacy, especially in organizations operating in highly regulated or donor-dependent environments (Ebrahim, 2019; O'Dwyer & Boomsma, 2019). However, much of this literature has focused on governance in broad institutional terms, with less attention given to governance accounting practices specifically as measurable accountability systems linked to risk management.

In Kenya, NGO accountability studies have largely focused on donor reporting, financial management, and governance compliance, with relatively limited empirical examination of how governance accounting practices relate to risk management outcomes within NGOs (Mohamed & Makori, 2022; Mutua, 2023). Most available studies have also concentrated on corporate organizations or urban-based institutions, leaving limited evidence from county-level NGO contexts where institutional capacity, donor pressure, and operational risks may differ significantly. This gap is particularly important in counties such as Kajiado, where NGOs operate in environments characterized by environmental uncertainty, resource limitations, community vulnerability, and dependence on external funding.

Kajiado County provides a particularly relevant setting for examining governance accounting and risk management because NGOs in the county are required to navigate complex accountability expectations while operating under constrained institutional and financial conditions. In such settings, governance accounting practices such as board oversight, internal controls, compliance monitoring, and accountability reporting may play a critical role in reducing organizational risk and strengthening institutional resilience. However, there remains limited empirical evidence on whether and to what extent governance accounting practices are associated with risk management effectiveness among NGOs operating in such contexts.

Problem Statement

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are increasingly required to demonstrate strong governance, accountability, and internal control systems in order to maintain donor confidence, stakeholder trust, and long-term operational sustainability. At the same time, NGOs face a wide range of organizational risks, including financial mismanagement, compliance failures, weak internal controls, reputational threats, and project implementation challenges, all of which can undermine their effectiveness and institutional credibility (Ebrahim, 2019; Hopkin, 2018).

Governance accounting practices, including board oversight, internal audit, compliance monitoring, policy enforcement, and transparency mechanisms, are therefore expected to play a critical role in strengthening organizational risk management. Despite the growing importance of governance in nonprofit management, empirical evidence on the relationship between governance accounting practices and risk management within

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NGOs remains limited, particularly in developing country contexts. In Kenya, existing studies have focused largely on donor reporting, financial accountability, and governance compliance, with limited attention given to governance accounting as a measurable accountability system linked to organizational risk management (Mohamed & Makori, 2022; Mutua, 2023). Furthermore, most available studies have not adequately examined this relationship in county-level NGO settings characterized by resource constraints, institutional vulnerability, and high dependence on external funding.

This gap is particularly relevant in Kajiado County, where NGOs operate in a context of environmental uncertainty, diverse community needs, and constrained institutional capacity. In such settings, strong governance systems may be essential for ensuring accountability, reducing exposure to organizational risks, and sustaining program effectiveness. However, there remains limited empirical evidence on whether governance accounting practices are significantly associated with risk management among NGOs operating in this context. This study therefore sought to address this gap by examining the relationship between governance accounting practices and risk management among Non-Governmental Organizations in Kajiado County, Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between governance accounting practices and risk management among Non-Governmental Organizations in Kajiado County, Kenya, with a focus on how governance-related accountability systems such as internal audit, board oversight, compliance structures, and transparency mechanisms are associated with organizational risk management.

Study Design

This study employed a cross-sectional mixed-methods design to examine the relationship between governance accounting practices and risk management among Non-Governmental Organizations in Kajiado County, Kenya. The design enabled the concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for triangulation of findings and a more comprehensive understanding of governance accountability systems and organizational risk management practices.

Study Setting

The study was conducted in Kajiado County, Kenya, a county characterized by environmental vulnerability, socio-economic diversity, and active presence of Non-Governmental Organizations involved in health, education, environmental conservation, community development, and humanitarian support. NGOs operating in the county function within a context of donor dependency, resource constraints, and community accountability demands, making the setting appropriate for assessing governance accounting practices and risk management.

Study Population

The study population comprised registered Non-Governmental Organizations operating in Kajiado County and key organizational officers involved in financial accountability, governance oversight, reporting, and risk management. The primary respondents included finance managers, project managers, monitoring and evaluation officers, and administrative officers who were knowledgeable about the organization's governance systems, accountability structures, and risk management practices. In addition, key informants were drawn from selected NGO leadership and management teams to provide qualitative insights into governance accounting implementation and organizational risk management.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

A census approach was adopted to include all accessible registered NGOs operating in Kajiado County. A total of 104 registered NGOs were targeted for participation, out of which 93 completed responses were obtained and included in the final analysis, representing a response rate of 89.4 %. One respondent was targeted per NGO, preferably the officer most knowledgeable in financial management, governance, compliance, or risk oversight. For the qualitative component, key informants were purposively selected based on their managerial or supervisory roles and their direct involvement in governance, reporting, or organizational oversight.

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Data Collection Methods and Tools

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and a key informant interview guide. The structured questionnaire was administered to NGO representatives and captured information on governance accounting practices and risk management practices. Questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Governance accounting items focused on areas such as board oversight, internal audit, compliance monitoring, transparency, accountability systems, policy implementation, and governance reporting. Risk management items captured practices related to risk identification, monitoring, mitigation, and institutional control systems.

Qualitative data were collected through key informant interviews to explore contextual experiences, implementation challenges, and practical perspectives on governance systems and organizational risk management. Open-ended responses were also used to capture views on major organizational risks, governance challenges, and recommendations for strengthening institutional accountability and risk oversight.

Operationalization of Risk Management

Risk management was operationalized in accordance with ISO 31000:2018, which conceptualizes risk management as a systematic process involving risk identification, assessment, treatment, monitoring, and review. Five questionnaire items were developed to capture these dimensions, including the organization's ability to identify risks, assess potential impacts, implement mitigation measures, monitor risk exposure, and maintain effective internal control systems. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). A composite risk management index was computed by averaging the scores across the five indicators, with higher scores representing stronger risk management practices.

Construct	Dimension	Source
Risk Management	Risk Identification	ISO 31000 (2018)
Risk Management	Risk Assessment	ISO 31000 (2018)
Risk Management	Risk Treatment/Mitigation	ISO 31000 (2018)
Risk Management	Monitoring and Review	ISO 31000 (2018)
Risk Management	Internal Control Effectiveness	ISO 31000 (2018)

Pre-Testing, Validity, and Reliability

The data collection tools were pre-tested among selected NGOs outside the study area to assess clarity, relevance, and consistency of the questionnaire items and interview guide. Content validity was ensured through expert review by academic supervisors and alignment of the tool items with the study objective and variables. Reliability of the quantitative questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, and necessary revisions were made to improve internal consistency before the main data collection. The final instrument was considered suitable for use after refinement based on pilot feedback and reliability testing.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were entered and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondent characteristics and the level of adoption of governance accounting and risk management practices. Inferential analysis included Pearson correlation analysis to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between governance accounting and risk management. In addition, simple linear regression analysis was used to determine the extent to which governance accounting practices predicted risk management among NGOs.

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Qualitative data obtained from key informant interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses were transcribed, organized, and analysed thematically. The qualitative findings were used to complement and contextualize the quantitative results, particularly in relation to governance implementation, accountability challenges, and practical risk management experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant institutional ethics review structures, and research authorization was secured from the appropriate regulatory authorities prior to data collection. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data collection commenced. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study by excluding personal identifiers from the data collection tools and reporting findings in aggregated form. Access to the raw data was restricted to the researcher and the academic supervisors only.

RESULTS

Governance Accounting Findings

Descriptive Analysis of Governance Accounting Practices

Governance accounting practices were measured using five indicators: clear governance structures and board oversight, ethical leadership and transparency, regular internal audits and financial controls, compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements, and donor-influenced governance reporting mechanisms. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics based on responses from 93 NGOs.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Governance Accounting Practices (n = 93)

Governance Accounting Practice	Mean	Std. Deviation
Clear governance structures and board oversight	4.51	0.56
Strong ethical leadership and transparency	4.49	0.65
Regular internal audits and financial controls	4.59	0.56
Compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements	4.55	0.63
Donor-influenced governance reporting mechanisms	4.49	0.58

The findings indicate very high levels of agreement across all governance accounting practices. Regular internal audits and financial controls recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.59, SD = 0.56), followed closely by compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements (M = 4.55, SD = 0.63). Clear governance structures and board oversight (M = 4.51, SD = 0.56), ethical leadership and transparency (M = 4.49, SD = 0.65), and donor-influenced governance reporting mechanisms (M = 4.49, SD = 0.58) also recorded high mean scores.

Overall, the descriptive results suggest that governance accounting practices are strongly institutionalized among NGOs in Kajiado County. The relatively low standard deviations indicate consistency in responses, suggesting that most organizations demonstrate similar levels of governance implementation.

Correlation Analysis between Governance Accounting and Risk Management.

A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between governance accounting practices and risk management among NGOs in Kajiado County. Composite indices were computed by averaging the five governance accounting items and the five risk management items for each of the 93 participating organizations.

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Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix for Governance Accounting and Risk Management (n = 93)

Variables	Governance Accounting	Risk Management
Governance Accounting	1	0.186
Risk Management	0.186	1

p = 0.074

The results indicate a positive relationship between governance accounting practices and risk management (r = 0.186). However, the relationship is not statistically significant at the 5 percent level (p = 0.074). Although the direction of the relationship suggests that higher levels of governance accounting are associated with improved risk management practices, the strength of the association is weak and does not meet the conventional threshold for statistical significance.

These findings suggest that, while governance accounting practices are widely implemented among NGOs, their independent relationship with risk management is relatively modest when examined in isolation.

Regression Analysis for Governance Accounting and Risk Management

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of governance accounting practices on risk management among NGOs in Kajiado County. Governance accounting was operationalized as a composite index derived from the five governance indicators, while risk management was treated as the dependent composite variable. The regression results indicate that governance accounting practices have a positive but statistically insignificant effect on risk management ($\beta = 0.306$, $p = 0.074$). Although the positive regression coefficient suggests that higher levels of governance accounting adoption are associated with improved risk management performance, the p-value exceeds the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that the effect is not statistically significant at the 5 percent level. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.035$) shows that governance accounting explains approximately 3.5% of the variation in risk management among the surveyed NGOs. Furthermore, the overall regression model is not statistically significant ($F = 3.26$, $p = 0.074$), reinforcing the conclusion that governance accounting does not independently predict risk management effectiveness within this model.

Based on these findings, the null hypothesis stating that governance accounting practices have no significant effect on risk management cannot be rejected. While governance accounting practices are strongly institutionalized at the descriptive level, their independent statistical contribution to risk management appears limited when examined in isolation. This suggests that governance mechanisms may influence risk management indirectly or operate synergistically with other sustainability accounting dimensions rather than functioning as a standalone predictor. Figure 1 presents the regression plot illustrating the relationship between governance accounting and risk management.

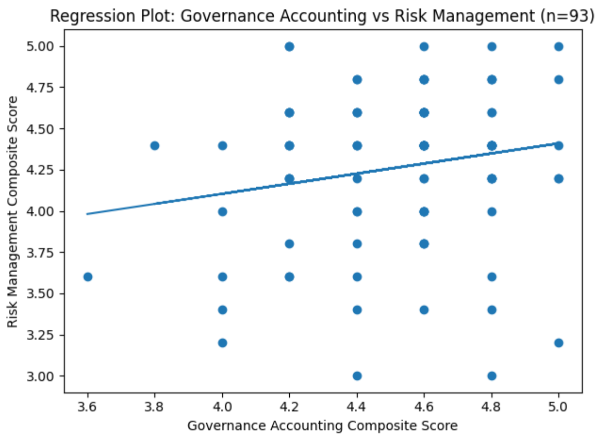

Figure 1: Regression Plot of Governance Accounting and Risk Management (n = 93)

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The scatter plot with the fitted regression line demonstrates a slight upward trend, visually confirming the positive direction of the relationship. However, the dispersion of data points around the regression line indicates considerable variability, reflecting the weak strength of association. The visual evidence aligns with the statistical findings ($\beta = 0.306$, $p = 0.074$), confirming that although governance accounting is positively related to risk management, the relationship does not reach statistical significance at the 5 percent level.

Overall, both the statistical output and the graphical representation consistently indicate that governance accounting, when examined independently, exerts a limited and statistically insignificant influence on risk management outcomes among NGOs in Kajiado County.

The qualitative findings also revealed that governance accounting practices were widely recognized as important for organizational stability and accountability. Respondents emphasized the role of internal controls, board oversight, financial reporting systems, and policy compliance in supporting risk management within NGOs. However, some participants indicated that governance structures were stronger in larger NGOs than in smaller organizations, where formal oversight mechanisms were sometimes less developed. These findings suggest that governance accounting functions as a stabilizing framework that supports sustainability accounting implementation and strengthens institutional accountability.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Governance Accounting and Risk Management

The study found a positive but statistically insignificant relationship between governance accounting and risk management among NGOs in Kajiado County ($r = 0.186$, $p = 0.074$; $\beta = 0.306$, $p = 0.074$). The positive direction of the relationship suggests that NGOs with stronger board oversight, internal audit systems, compliance structures, accountability mechanisms, and governance reporting tended to report relatively stronger risk management practices. However, the relationship was weak and did not achieve statistical significance at the 5 percent level. These findings indicate that governance accounting, when examined independently, has limited explanatory power in predicting risk management outcomes among NGOs.

Explaining the Statistical Insignificance of Governance Accounting

Although governance accounting practices were highly institutionalized among the surveyed NGOs, their relationship with risk management was positive but statistically insignificant ($r = 0.186$, $p = 0.074$; $\beta = 0.306$, $p = 0.074$). Descriptive findings showed consistently high levels of governance adoption, with regular internal audits and financial controls recording the highest mean score ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.56$), followed by compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.63$) and board oversight structures ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 0.56$). These results indicate that governance systems are widely established across NGOs in Kajiado County. However, qualitative findings suggested that many of these governance mechanisms are primarily maintained to satisfy donor requirements, regulatory obligations, and accountability expectations rather than to support proactive strategic risk oversight. This may explain why governance accounting accounted for only 3.5% of the variation in risk management outcomes ($R^2 = 0.035$) despite its widespread adoption. The findings therefore suggest that governance accounting is often implemented as a compliance-oriented function rather than as a strategic risk management capability.

Interpretation of Governance Accounting

The findings suggest that governance accounting plays an important institutional role within NGOs even though it was not found to be a statistically significant independent predictor of risk management. The positive regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.306$) and positive correlation coefficient ($r = 0.186$) indicate that governance accounting moves in the expected direction, with stronger governance practices associated with relatively better risk management outcomes. However, the absence of statistical significance and the low explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = 0.035$) suggest that governance accounting alone is insufficient to explain variations in organizational risk management. Rather, governance accounting appears to function as a foundational accountability and control system that supports organizational stability, transparency, and oversight. Its contribution to risk management is therefore likely to be indirect and dependent on the extent to which governance mechanisms are integrated into strategic decision-making, risk oversight processes, and broader sustainability accounting practices. These findings imply that governance accounting is most effective when used as a strategic management tool rather than merely as a compliance and reporting mechanism.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that governance accounting practices exhibited a positive but statistically insignificant relationship with risk management among NGOs in Kajiado County. Although governance systems such as board oversight, internal audits, compliance monitoring, accountability structures, and governance reporting were widely institutionalized across the surveyed organizations, their independent effect on risk management was limited, explaining only 3.5% of the variation in risk management outcomes. The findings suggest that governance accounting functions primarily as an accountability and control framework that supports organizational oversight, transparency, and institutional stability. However, its effectiveness in enhancing risk management appears to depend on the extent to which governance mechanisms are integrated into strategic decision-making and proactive risk oversight rather than being maintained solely for compliance and reporting purposes. The study therefore concludes that governance accounting remains an important foundation for organizational resilience, but its contribution to risk management is likely to be indirect and strengthened when combined with broader sustainability accounting and management practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that NGOs should deliberately embed governance accounting into strategic decision-making, risk oversight, and organizational planning processes, rather than treating it as a compliance-oriented function. Strengthening this strategic integration should be prioritized because it enhances the practical utility of governance systems, particularly in reinforcing accountability, internal control, and organizational oversight. Boards, audit committees, and management teams should therefore actively utilize governance-generated information to identify emerging risks, evaluate the adequacy of risk responses, and reinforce organizational resilience in a more proactive and anticipatory manner. Even in contexts where governance accounting does not demonstrate a statistically significant independent effect on risk management, NGOs should continue strengthening governance systems because they remain foundational to effective accountability and control structures. This study further recommends that future research work should examine the mechanisms through which governance accounting influences risk management outcomes within NGOs, given that the observed relationship, though positive, was statistically insignificant. The high level of adoption of governance accounting, contrasted with its weak direct statistical effect, suggests the presence of other indirect pathways. Future studies should therefore explore potential mediating and moderating variables such as organizational culture, leadership effectiveness, institutional capacity, board effectiveness, and donor accountability requirements. In addition, longitudinal research designs are recommended to provide deeper and more dynamic insights into how governance systems shape risk management over time. The use of advanced analytical techniques such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) would also be valuable in uncovering indirect, latent, and synergistic relationships. Finally, comparative studies across sectors and geographical contexts are encouraged to better understand the contextual conditions under which governance accounting more effectively strengthens organizational resilience and risk governance.

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