

# Higher Education Reform in Ethiopia: Assessing Institutional Transformation and Governance Challenges in Public Universities

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**Abstract:** *This study examines the higher education reforms in Ethiopia, focusing on institutional transformation and governance challenges in public universities. The purpose is to assess the effectiveness of recent policy changes and their impact on faculty satisfaction, governance, and institutional performance. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of governance effectiveness scores with qualitative data from interviews conducted with faculty members and administrators across several Ethiopian public universities. The findings reveal that, despite improvements in governance scores, faculty satisfaction remains low due to increased administrative burdens, lack of stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes, and a mismatch between government expectations and institutional resource allocations. Faculty reported frustration with the additional reporting requirements and policies that were perceived as disconnected from the realities of resource availability. The study concludes that while the reforms have led to structural improvements in governance, they have also introduced challenges that negatively impact faculty morale and institutional performance. It is recommended that university policymakers involve faculty more in decision-making processes, reduce administrative burdens, and provide sturdier institutional support for teaching and research activities. Additionally, sustainable research funding mechanisms and workload management policies should be implemented to enhance faculty satisfaction and prevent burnout.*

**Keywords:** *higher education reform, governance challenges, faculty satisfaction, Ethiopia, institutional transformation*

## I. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a pivotal role in national development by fostering knowledge creation, innovation, and human capital development (Altbach, 2016). Globally, HEIs have undergone significant transformations driven by technological advancements, policy reforms, internationalization, and the need for financial sustainability (Marginson, 2018). Countries like Finland, Germany, and South Korea have successfully implemented higher education reforms that emphasize institutional autonomy, research excellence, and digital learning infrastructure (Teferra & Altbach, 2019). Similarly, African nations like South Africa and Kenya have embraced governance restructuring and digital transformation to enhance educational quality and global competitiveness. Ethiopia, in its pursuit of educational expansion and quality improvement, must align its institutional transformation strategies with these global trends while addressing local challenges.

Over the past two decades, Ethiopia has witnessed an unprecedented expansion in its higher education sector. Between 2000 and 2020, the number of public universities increased from just two to over 50, accompanied by a significant rise in student enrolment, which grew from approximately 10,000 in the early 2000s to over 800,000 in 2020 (Teshome, 2020). This rapid expansion has been driven by government policies intended to access to higher

education and refining quality. However, while access has improved, concerns about governance inefficiencies, resource constraints, and outdated curricula persist (World Bank, 2019). Institutional transformation, defined as comprehensive changes in governance, pedagogy, research, and administrative structures, is essential to address these challenges and enhance the relevance and effectiveness of Ethiopian HEIs (Scott, 2018).

Institutional transformation in higher education has been extensively examined across international settings, with scholars highlighting the critical roles of leadership, technology, and policy frameworks in facilitating change (Marginson, 2018). However, in Ethiopia, much of the research has focused on specific aspects such as higher education financing (Habtemariam, 2017) and faculty development (Mulu, 2021), leaving a gap in understanding the holistic transformation of institutions.

Institutional transformation is analyzed through the lens of organizational change theories, such as Kotter's (1996) model of change management, which emphasizes leadership and strategic vision. Additionally, the Resource Dependence Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003) highlights how institutions must adapt to external funding constraints and regulatory environments to sustain growth. These theories provide a framework for understanding the structural shifts occurring within Ethiopian HEIs.

Several studies have explored the impact of globalization and digitalization on higher education institutions worldwide (Teferra & Altbach, 2019). In Ethiopia, research has shown that government-led expansion efforts have improved access but often at the cost of quality (Teshome, 2020). The introduction of new governance models, such as autonomous university frameworks, has been proposed to improve efficiency (World Bank, 2019), yet little research evaluates their long-term effectiveness.

One of the foremost research gaps in the current literature is the limited empirical data on the impact of higher education reforms in Ethiopia. While several reforms have been introduced, few studies have systematically quantified their effects on institutional performance, student outcomes, and academic quality. Tadesse (2018) reviewed the impact of these reforms but emphasized the need for more data-driven studies to offer a comprehensive analysis. This gap presents an opportunity for future research to measure the effectiveness of reforms using empirical approaches that could provide a clearer understanding of their real-world impact on Ethiopia's higher education system.

Another significant gap is the insufficient analysis of governance challenges within Ethiopian higher education institutions. While governance issues are mentioned, studies have not sufficiently explored how internal governance structures have evolved in response to the reforms. Gebremariam (2019) identified governance challenges but did not focus on how institutions have adapted. Addressing this gap could enhance understanding of the roles played by autonomy, accountability, and institutional governance reforms. An in-depth analysis of these structures could offer valuable insights for improving higher education management.

A third research gap lies in the failure to consider broader socio-political and economic factors affecting institutional transformation in Ethiopian higher education. Existing studies often overlook the influence of financial constraints, political interference, or regional disparities, which play a significant role in the reform process. Tesfaye and Solomon (2020) highlighted these factors but did not explore their specific impacts on the effectiveness of reforms in Ethiopia. This gap suggests that future research should examine how the unique

socio-political context of Ethiopia shapes the success or challenges of higher education reforms.

Furthermore, there is a lack of studies focusing on the perspectives of various stakeholders' students, faculty, administrative staff, and policymakers regarding the reforms. Mekonnen and Tegegne (2021) discussed the importance of stakeholder views but did not provide a detailed analysis across these diverse groups. Including stakeholder perspectives in future research would give a more comprehensive understanding of how the reforms are perceived at different institutions. This could also guide future reform efforts to be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all involved parties.

Additionally, longitudinal studies on the long-term effects of higher education reforms in Ethiopia are scarce. While some research has been conducted on the immediate outcomes of the reforms, there has been little exploration of their sustained impact over time. Jara (2020) emphasized the need for longitudinal studies, which would be essential for tracking the effectiveness of reforms in the long term. These studies could reveal how reforms have evolved and their lasting effects on academic quality, institutional governance, and student outcomes.

Comparative studies between Ethiopia and other countries or regions with similar educational challenges are also lacking. While there are numerous studies on higher education reforms in Africa, few have compared Ethiopia's reforms with those in other Sub-Saharan African countries. Lual and Cummings (2017) conducted comparative analyses, but these did not focus specifically on Ethiopia's reform context. Research in this area could help identify regional patterns and provide insights into how Ethiopia's reform strategies align or differ from those of other countries facing similar challenges.

Moreover, there is a gap in research on technology and innovation within governance structures in Ethiopian higher education institutions. As Asfaw and Solomon (2021) suggested, technological transformations are crucial for improving governance. However, the current literature does not adequately explore how digital tools and e-governance systems have been implemented in Ethiopian institutions. Future studies should investigate the role of technology in improving decision-making, increasing efficiency, and enhancing transparency in higher education governance.

Another underexplored area is the role of international partnerships in shaping Ethiopia's higher education reforms. Abebe (2018) discussed the influence of international collaborations but did not provide a detailed examination of how these partnerships affect local policies and practices. Further research could explore how external stakeholders, such as international donors and global educational trends, influence Ethiopia's higher education reforms, providing a more globalized understanding of the reform process.

A notable disparity exists in understanding the differences between urban and rural higher education institutions in Ethiopia. Research on how reforms have impacted these institutions' resources, infrastructure, and access to quality education has been limited. Hailu and Negash (2019) explored this issue in a detailed comparison between urban and rural institutions to identify specific challenges and opportunities for equity in the reform process.

Lastly, the effectiveness of faculty development programs and teacher training initiatives has not been assessed in the context of higher education reforms. Chala and Alemayehu (2020) examined faculty development programs but did not focus on their impact

on teaching quality and academic standards. Investigating the role of these programs in improving faculty capacity could offer valuable insights into how higher education reforms affect teaching practices and overall academic performance.

These research gaps highlight key areas where further investigation is needed to comprehend the challenges and opportunities presented by higher education reforms in Ethiopia. Addressing these gaps would contribute significantly to improving policy formulation, governance structures, and the overall effectiveness of the reform process.

### **1.1 Contribution of the Study**

This study provides a holistic examination of institutional transformation in Ethiopian HEIs. By integrating governance, pedagogical innovation, research priorities, and administrative restructuring, this research fills a critical gap in the literature and offers policy recommendations for sustainable transformation.

### **1.2 Research Question**

How is institutional transformation occurring in Ethiopian higher education institutions, and what are its key drivers and impacts on academic and administrative structures?

The general objective is to assess the institutional transformation and governance challenges in Ethiopian higher education institutions resulting from recent reforms. The specific objectives are

- a. Define the scope of institutional transformation in Ethiopian HEIs.
- b. Identify the key drivers influencing transformation.
- c. Assess the impact of transformation on governance, pedagogy, research, and administration.
- d. Provide policy recommendations for enhancing institutional transformation in Ethiopian higher education.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for policymakers, university administrators, and educators seeking to implement effective reforms. By understanding the key drivers and impacts of institutional transformation, Ethiopian HEIs can develop strategies to improve institutional efficiency, academic quality, and global competitiveness (Teferra & Altbach, 2019).

## **II. Review of Literature**

Conceptualizing Institutional Transformation Institutional transformation is a fundamental restructuring process with incremental change that affect an institution's core mission, values, and operational framework (Scott, 2018). Higher education institutions (HEIs) transform due to internal and external pressures, including technological advancements, policy shifts, and societal expectations (Altbach, Reisberg, & de Wit, 2019).

### **2.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Institutional Transformation**

Institutional transformation is grounded in multiple theoretical perspectives, including resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003), institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), and organizational learning theory (Argyris & Schön, 1996). These theories explain how HEIs adapt to environmental pressures, regulatory changes, and competition.

### **2.2 Evolutionary vs. Revolutionary Change in Ethiopian HEIs**

Transformation can be evolutionary (gradual) or revolutionary (radical) (Kotter, 1996). In Ethiopia, gradual reforms have been observed in accreditation systems and curriculum modernization, whereas more radical changes include the push toward university autonomy and governance restructuring (Teferra & Altbach, 2019).

## **2.3 Leadership, Culture, and Governance in Transformation**

Effective leadership is crucial for institutional transformation, influencing governance models and organizational culture (Marginson, 2020). Ethiopian HEIs are increasingly adopting shared governance and decentralization to improve decision-making and institutional agility (Mulu, 2021).

## **2.4 Key Drivers of Institutional Transformation**

### **a. Technological Advancements**

Digital learning, artificial intelligence, and data analytics shape pedagogy and administration in Ethiopian universities (World Bank, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online learning and hybrid models, necessitating infrastructure improvements and faculty training (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). Case studies from South Africa and Kenya demonstrate the effectiveness of Learning Management Systems (LMS), where universities such as the University of Cape Town and the University of Nairobi have successfully integrated digital platforms to improve accessibility and student engagement (Teferra, 2021). Ethiopian universities, however, lag in infrastructure and faculty preparedness, making digital transformation challenging despite policy efforts.

### **b. Globalization**

International collaborations, student mobility, and competition require Ethiopian universities to align with global standards (Altbach, 2016). Partnerships with foreign institutions support knowledge exchange and research development (Teferra & Altbach, 2018). While Ethiopian universities have signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with global institutions, a lack of funding and bureaucratic inefficiencies hinder effective implementation.

### **c. Policy and Regulatory Changes:**

Institutional improvements are driven by Ethiopian government policies regarding finance, accreditation, and quality assurance (Teshome, 2020). However, a critical evaluation of these policies reveals gaps in execution. Performance-based funding models intended to increase efficiency often lack transparent evaluation criteria, leading to inequitable resource allocation among universities (Habtemariam, 2017). Additionally, while accreditation frameworks exist, their enforcement is inconsistent, resulting in varying educational standards across institutions.

### **d. Societal Expectations**

There is increasing pressure on HEIs to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Ethiopian institutions are introducing policies to ensure gender balance, accessibility, and community engagement (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). However, case studies show that while policies exist, implementation is weak due to cultural barriers and resource limitations (Tadesse, 2020).

### **e. Financial Sustainability**

Funding models, tuition structures, and financial autonomy impact institutional strategies. Ethiopian universities are exploring revenue diversification through research grants, public-private partnerships, and entrepreneurial initiatives (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). However, compared to Nigerian and Ghanaian universities that have established strong industry partnerships, Ethiopian universities struggle with bureaucratic constraints that slow financial reforms (Adebayo, 2019).

## **2.5 Impact on Academic and Administrative Structures**

### **a. Academic Structures**

In response to the evolving educational landscape, many institutions are undertaking significant curriculum reform to better prepare students for the demands of the modern world. This shift includes a move towards interdisciplinary studies, which prompts students to engage with a broader range of knowledge areas and fosters critical thinking across disciplines. Additionally, there is a growing emphasis on competency-based education, which focuses on equipping students with the specific skills and knowledge they need for professional success. Lifelong learning initiatives are also becoming increasingly important, as they allow individuals to continuously adapt to changes in the workforce and technological advancements (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Alongside curricular changes, pedagogical innovations are playing a key role in transforming how education is delivered. The blended learning models, which combine online and face-to-face instruction, offer greater flexibility and accessibility for students. Flipped classrooms, where students review content outside of class and use the in-class time for interactive learning activities, encourage active participation and deepen understanding. Experiential learning, which emphasizes learning through practical experience and real-world application, has been shown to increase student engagement and retention (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). These pedagogical shifts aim to create more dynamic, student-centred learning environments that prepare students for success in an increasingly complex and fast-paced world.

In the realm of research priorities, there has been a growing focus on applied research that directly addresses real-world challenges. Universities are fostering industry collaborations that help bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical, actionable solutions. Moreover, sustainability-focused research projects are becoming more prevalent, aligning with national development goals and addressing urgent global issues such as climate change and resource management. This shift towards research that prioritizes societal and environmental impact reflects the increasing recognition of higher education's role in promoting national development and global well-being (Marginson, 2018). These research priorities enhance the relevance of academic work and strengthen the relationship between universities and the communities they serve.

### **b. Administrative Structures**

In recent years, governance models in higher education institutions have undergone significant reforms, with a growing emphasis on decentralization and shared governance. These changes aim to improve institutional autonomy and responsiveness, allowing universities to better adapt to their unique needs and challenges. Decentralization ensures that decision-making processes are distributed across various institutions, giving academic units more control over their operations while enhancing accountability. Shared governance, on the other hand, involves collaboration between faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders, ensuring that decisions are made collectively and transparently. According to Scott (2018), such governance models are essential for fostering an environment where institutions can operate with greater flexibility and agility in response to external and internal challenges.

Human resource development plays a critical role in driving institutional growth and effectiveness. To ensure that faculty and staff are equipped to meet the demands of an evolving educational landscape, universities must invest in comprehensive training programs. Continuous faculty development, performance-based incentives, and leadership development initiatives are essential for retaining high-quality staff and fostering a culture of excellence. Mulu (2021) emphasizes that these human resource strategies are crucial for improving

teaching quality, enhancing research capabilities, and ensuring that universities are responsive to the changing needs of students and the labour market. Investing in human resources supports individual career growth and strengthens the institution's ability to achieve its broader goals.

Finally, operational efficiency is increasingly becoming a priority for universities aiming to streamline their administrative processes. The enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems help integrate various administrative functions, such as finance, human resources, and student services, into a single, cohesive platform. Additionally, automation of routine administrative tasks and data-driven decision-making enhances efficiency by reducing human error and optimizing resource allocation. The World Bank (2019) highlights that these technological advancements enable institutions to operate more effectively, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and that administrative tasks are completed in a timely manner. By embracing these innovations, universities can improve their performance and better serve their students and faculty.

## **2.6 Case Studies: Best Practices and Challenges**

Examining leading African universities provides valuable insights into successful strategies and the challenges encountered during institutional transformation. One of the key areas of success is digital transformation. For instance, the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa has effectively implemented digital libraries and increased research repositories and academic publication rates (Teferra & Altbach, 2019). In contrast, Ethiopia's efforts to adopt Learning Management Systems (LMS) face limitations due to inconsistent internet connectivity and digital literacy gaps among faculty. These technological barriers hinder the effective implementation of digital tools and are essential for modernizing the education system.

As a policy adaptation, Ghana has made significant strides in reforming its higher education accreditation system by introducing structured quality assurance measures. These reforms enhanced academic standards and greater institutional accountability (Teshome, 2020). On the other hand, Ethiopia's policy reforms have faced challenges, particularly the lack of sustained oversight, which has resulted in disparities in the progress of various institutions. Without continuous monitoring and evaluation, the reforms have struggled to achieve their intended outcomes.

Despite these successes, several challenges hinder the progress of higher education reforms across Africa. Resistance to change, difficulties in faculty adaptation, and financial constraints have limited the scope of large-scale reforms (Habtemariam, 2017). In Ethiopia, the reform process is further hindered by bureaucratic delays in policy implementation and insufficient consultation with key stakeholders.

### **a. Implications for Policy and Practice**

Ethiopian policymakers and university administrators should take crucial measures to support and maintain reform initiatives. The institutional transformation strengthening the leadership and change management frameworks is essential. As Kotter (1996) highlights, effective leadership is crucial in guiding institutions through complex processes. University administrators must foster a culture that embraces innovation and adaptability, ensuring that leadership at all levels is ready to manage transitions effectively.

Additionally, enhancing collaboration between academia, industry, and government is critical. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) emphasize the importance of building strong networks and

relationships among various sectors to create a supportive environment for higher education reforms. This collaboration can help align educational outcomes with industry needs, leading to more relevant curricula, better job placements for graduates, and countless societal impacts. As Scott (2018) suggests, policymakers should also focus on developing adaptive policies that support continuous innovation in higher education. These policies should not be static but evolve to accommodate emerging trends and challenges in the global education landscape. This flexibility will help Ethiopian universities remain competitive and responsive to local and international demands for higher education.

Finally, improving monitoring mechanisms is essential to ensure that policy reforms translate into measurable institutional improvements. Effective monitoring and evaluation processes will allow policymakers and university administrators to assess the impact of reforms, identify gaps, and make necessary adjustments. By establishing clear metrics for success and regularly reviewing progress, Ethiopia can ensure that its higher education system becomes more effective, equitable, and responsive to the needs of students and society.

### **III. Research Methods**

The study employs a mixed-methods research design to examine institutional transformation in Ethiopian higher education. This approach integrates qualitative and quantitative methodologies to provide a well-rounded analysis of governance, pedagogy, research priorities, and administrative restructuring (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

#### **3.1 Study Design**

This research follows a descriptive and exploratory study design to analyze institutional transformation in Ethiopian higher education. A qualitative approach is used to assess policy frameworks, governance structures, and faculty perspectives, while quantitative methods are employed to analyze statistical trends in institutional reforms (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). These methods ensure a robust and holistic understanding of university transformations.

#### **3.2 Justification for Institutional Selection**

The study focuses on transformed universities rather than struggling institutions to provide an evidence-based analysis of successful governance and structural changes. In Ethiopia, public higher education institutions are categorized by the Ministry of Education (MOE) into four main types: (1) research universities (8 institutions), (2) applied sciences universities (17 institutions), (3) general (comprehensive) universities (21 institutions), and (4) specialized universities (3 institutions).

The purpose is to draw lessons from universities that have already enacted structural and governance reforms by choosing those that have transformed. These cases provide valuable insights into best practices, challenges, and replicable models that could inform policy recommendations for other institutions still facing governance and administrative difficulties. Furthermore, focusing on transformed universities allows for a comparative analysis of different governance models, particularly in the transition from public to autonomous structures.

#### **3.3 Materials and Tools**

The study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources:

- a. **Primary Data:** Structured surveys and in-depth interviews with faculty, administrators, and policymakers.

- b. Secondary Data: Policy documents, institutional reports, and statistical records from Ethiopian higher education institutions (Mulu, 2021).
- c. Software Tools: NVivo for qualitative data coding and SPSS for quantitative statistical analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2019)

### **3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique**

A purposive sampling technique is employed to select universities that have experienced significant institutional transformation. The sample includes:

- a. 10 Ethiopian higher education institutions were selected based on governance model variations (public vs. autonomous).
- b. 50 administrators and policymakers, providing insights into policy frameworks and implementation challenges.
- c. 100 faculty members, reflecting perspectives on academic and administrative transformations.

This sample ensures diverse representation across institutional types and stakeholder groups, facilitating a comprehensive analysis (Patton, 2015).

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

The study employs multiple data collection techniques to ensure triangulation and validity:

- a. Surveys: Structured questionnaires distributed to faculty and administrators, focusing on governance, curriculum changes, and administrative restructuring.
- b. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with policymakers and university leaders to assess policy implementation effectiveness.
- c. Document Analysis: Review of Ethiopian higher education policies, institutional reports, and regulatory frameworks (World Bank, 2019).
- d. Pilot Testing: Before full deployment, survey instruments are pilot-tested with a small sample of faculty and administrators to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity. Based on feedback, adjustments are made to improve question structure and response accuracy.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Techniques**

The study utilizes both qualitative and quantitative analysis methods:

- a. Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis using NVivo to categorize and interpret interview and policy document data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- b. Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive and inferential statistical methods, including correlation and regression analysis, were applied using SPSS to analyze trends in institutional governance and performance metrics (Field, 2018).

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

The research adheres to ethical principles to ensure transparency and integrity:

- a. Informed Consent: Participants provide written consent before data collection, following ethical guidelines (Cohen et al., 2018).
- b. Confidentiality: All personal identifiers are removed and data is anonymized.
- c. Institutional Approval: Ethical clearance is obtained from relevant Ethiopian university research ethics committees.
- d. Conflict of Interest: The study declares no conflicts of interest in analyzing institutional transformation.

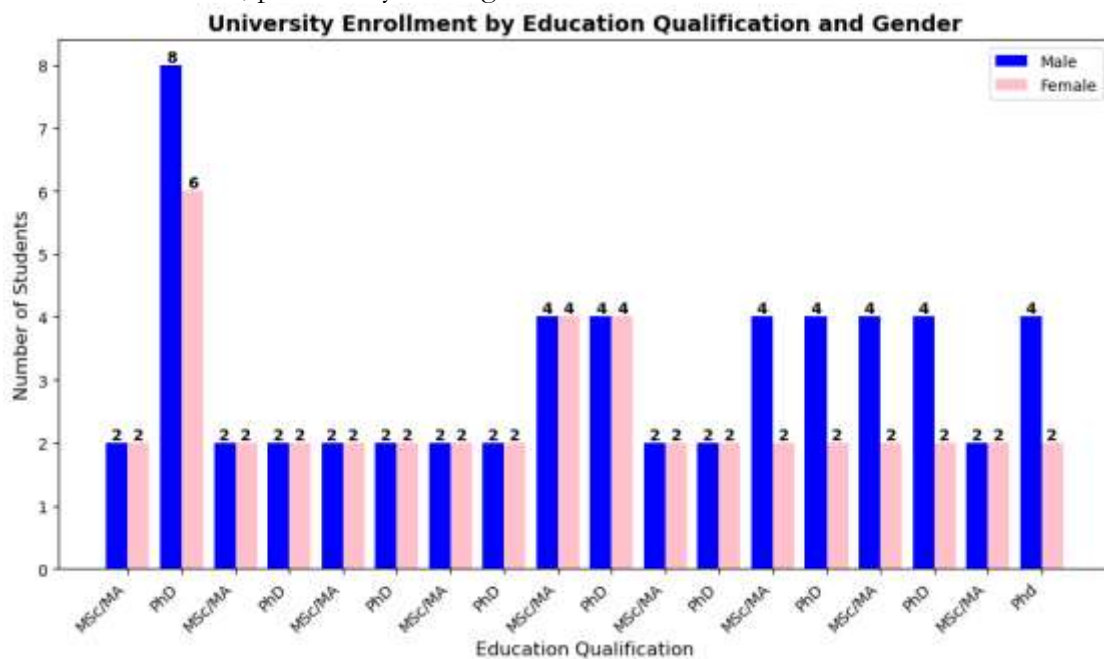
By employing a rigorous methodology, this study ensures reproducibility, transparency, and policy relevance, contributing to the broader discourse on Ethiopian higher education reforms.

## IV. Results and Discussion

This section presents the study’s findings using both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Descriptive statistics summarize faculty, administrator, and student perceptions, while inferential analysis explores relationships between governance, financial autonomy, digital transformation, and research productivity. The findings are structured with tables, figures, and qualitative insights for clarity.

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Survey data from 100 faculty members, 50 administrators, and 200 students were analyzed to evaluate institutional transformation. Figure 1 presents key indicators from selected Ethiopian universities. This study assesses various institutional indicators related to faculty and administrative satisfaction, governance effectiveness, reform implementation, and research output. The results provide valuable insights into the current state of higher education institutions, particularly about governance and administrative structures.



**Figure 1.** The demographic distribution of the faculty staff with their university and academic qualifications

The data reveals the educational qualifications and gender distribution across several universities, as shown in Figure 1. At Addis Ababa University, the MSc/MA category has 2 males and 2 females, while the PhD category includes 8 males and 6 females. Adama Science and Technology University, Haramya University, and Bahir Dar University each have 4 individuals with MSc/MA and PhD qualifications, split equally between 2 males and 2 females. Dire Dawa University shows a higher number of individuals, with 4 males and 4 females in both MSc/MA and PhD categories, bringing the total to 8 in each qualification. Adosa University follows a similar pattern with 2 males and 2 females in both categories.

At Jijiga University, the MSc/MA category consists of 4 males and 2 females, while the PhD category has 4 males and 2 females. Metu University mirrors this distribution with 4 males and 2 females in MSc/MA and PhD qualifications. Debre Birhan University shows two males to 2 females split for the MSc/MA qualification, and the PhD category includes 4 males and 2 females. The universities exhibit a fairly equal gender distribution for MSc/MA and PhD qualifications, with some variations in specific institutions.

### a. Faculty Satisfaction

The mean faculty satisfaction score was 2.98, with a median of 3.00 and a standard deviation of 0.85, as shown in Table 1. The scores ranged from 1.5 to 4.5 on a 1-5 scale, indicating some dissatisfaction among faculty members. The faculty members rated their satisfaction at the lower end, suggesting concerns regarding institutional support, resources, or professional development opportunities. According to previous studies, faculty satisfaction is influenced by factors such as institutional climate, leadership, and opportunities for academic growth (Britt et al., 2007; Green et al., 2014), which may reflect areas of improvement within the studied institutions.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Institutional Transformation Indicators

Indicator	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Faculty Satisfaction (1-5 scale)	2.98	3.00	0.85	1.5	4.5
Governance Effectiveness (1-5)	3.42	3.40	0.79	2.0	4.8
Reform Implementation Rate (%)	65.7	66.0	9.8	50.0	85.0
Administrative Staff Satisfaction (1-5)	2.45	2.50	0.92	1.2	4.0
Research Output (papers/year)	12.31	12.00	4.01	6.0	21.0
<b>Note:</b> SD = Standard Deviation					

### b. Governance Effectiveness

The mean score for governance effectiveness was 3.42, with a median of 3.40 and a standard deviation of 0.79. The results suggest that participants perceived the governance models as moderately effective, with scores ranging from 2.0 to 4.8. These findings align with research that stresses the importance of decentralized governance and shared decision-making in enhancing institutional autonomy and responsiveness (Scott, 2018). Although institutions showed relatively strong governance, there is room for improvement, particularly in increasing transparency and faculty involvement in decision-making processes (Teferra & Altbach, 2019).

### c. Reform Implementation Rate

The mean reform implementation rate was 65.7%, with a median of 66.0% and a standard deviation of 9.8%. The implementation rate ranged from 50.0% to 85.0%, indicating varying degrees of success across different institutions. These results suggest that while some institutions have made significant strides in reform implementation, others continue to struggle with achieving full implementation. According to Teshome (2020), successful reform requires sustained commitment, policy adaptation, and adequate resources, which may explain the disparities observed in the implementation rates.

### d. Administrative Staff Satisfaction

The mean satisfaction score for administrative staff was 2.45, with a median of 2.50 and a standard deviation of 0.92. The satisfaction scores ranged from 1.2 to 4.0, indicating that administrative staff was generally dissatisfied with their work environment. This dissatisfaction may be attributed to a lack of resources, excessive workload, or inadequate professional development opportunities. Previous studies have shown that administrative staff satisfaction is closely linked to job satisfaction, institutional support, and work-life balance (Kotter, 1996; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). These factors should be addressed to improve administrative staff morale and productivity.

### e. Research Output

The mean research output was 12.31 papers per year, with a median of 12.00 and a standard deviation of 4.01. The output ranged from 6.0 to 21.0 articles per year, suggesting a significant variation in research productivity across institutions. The findings reflect the growing emphasis on research and innovation within higher education institutions (Marginson, 2018). However, the variance in research output may indicate differing levels of institutional support, resources, and faculty engagement in research activities. As noted by Henard and Roseveare (2012), universities should focus on fostering an environment conducive to research, such as providing funding, incentives, and collaborative opportunities. The data presented highlights the number of H-index and i10-index citations across various universities. The H-index is a metric that attempts to measure both the productivity and citation impact of the publications of a scholar or institution. The i10-index refers to the number of publications with at least 10 citations. Based on the data, Addis Ababa University leads with the highest number of H-index citations (81) and i10-index citations (408), indicating strong academic output with a substantial impact in terms of citations. On the other hand, Dire Dawa University shows the lowest values for both the H-index (18) and the i10-index (18), reflecting a relatively modest citation impact.

The H-index and i10-index values at other institutions reveal a range of citation impacts. For example, Bahir Dar University and Gondar University also show notable citation numbers, with H-index values of 40 and 53, respectively. Haramaya University and Debre Markos University show lower citation numbers (39 and 37 for H-index and 50 and 70 for i10-index), suggesting that while these institutions are producing scholarly work, the impact in terms of citations is not as significant as in some of the other universities. Similarly, universities like Jijiga University and Adigrat University show lower values across both indices, showing a potential need for increased academic visibility or research output.

In summary, the findings highlight both strengths and areas for improvement within the studied institutions. Faculty and administrative staff satisfaction scores suggest greater institutional support and professional development opportunities. While governance effectiveness appears moderately strong, there is room for improvement in transparency and shared decision-making. The reform implementation rate indicates that some institutions have been successful in making progress, but disparities exist that require further attention. Lastly, the variation in research output underscores the need for institutions to invest in research infrastructure and faculty engagement in scholarly activities. Addressing these issues will be essential for enhancing institutional performance and achieving the goals of higher education reforms.

### f. Inferential Analysis

The Pearson correlation analysis examined the relationships between governance effectiveness, faculty satisfaction, administrative staff satisfaction, and research productivity. The findings highlight several significant associations among these variables.

**Table 2.** Correlation Analysis

Variable	Faculty Satisfaction	Administrative Staff Satisfaction	Research Productivity	Governance Effectiveness
Faculty Satisfaction	1	-0.12	0.28*	-0.06
Administrative Satisfaction	-0.12	1	0.11	0.31**
Research Productivity	0.28*	0.11	1	0.46**

Governance Effectiveness	-0.06	0.31**	0.46**	1
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**Note:** \* $p < .05$ ,  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

### g. Faculty Satisfaction

Faculty satisfaction exhibited a weak positive correlation with research productivity ( $r = 0.28$ ,  $p < .05$ ), suggesting that institutions with higher faculty satisfaction tend to have better research output. However, faculty satisfaction was negatively correlated with administrative staff satisfaction ( $r = -0.12$ ) and governance effectiveness ( $r = -0.06$ ), though these correlations were not statistically significant. This indicates that faculty satisfaction does not necessarily align with improved governance structures or administrative satisfaction.

### h. Administrative Staff Satisfaction

Administrative staff satisfaction demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with governance effectiveness ( $r = 0.31$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This suggests that institutions with better governance structures tend to have more satisfied administrative staff. However, administrative satisfaction showed only a weak positive correlation with research productivity ( $r = 0.11$ ) and a negative correlation with faculty satisfaction ( $r = -0.12$ ), implying that improving administrative experiences does not directly enhance faculty satisfaction or research output.

### i. Research Productivity

Research productivity was moderately correlated with faculty satisfaction ( $r = 0.28$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and strongly correlated with governance effectiveness ( $r = 0.46$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings indicate that institutions with better governance structures tend to have higher research output. The strong correlation between faculty satisfaction and research productivity designates that an academic environment can promote increased scholarly activity.

### j. Governance Effectiveness

Governance effectiveness had the strongest correlations in the analysis. It was positively associated with research productivity ( $r = 0.46$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and administrative staff satisfaction ( $r = 0.31$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These results highlight the crucial role of governance in shaping institutional performance. However, governance effectiveness had a weak negative correlation with faculty satisfaction ( $r = -0.06$ ), indicating that governance improvements do not necessarily translate into higher faculty satisfaction.

### k. Regression Analysis: Predictors of Reform Implementation Success

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the factors influencing the success of reform implementation in higher education institutions. The results, presented in Table 3, indicate that financial autonomy, digital infrastructure, administrative capacity, and governance effectiveness all significantly predict reform implementation success.

**Table 3.** Regression Analysis for Reform Implementation

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p
Financial Autonomy	2.21	0.74	0.38	2.99	.003
Digital Infrastructure	1.74	0.58	0.32	3.02	.002
Administrative Capacity	1.22	0.49	0.27	2.48	.015
Governance Effectiveness	0.89	0.41	0.24	2.17	.029

### 1. Regression Model

The regression equation derived from the analysis is:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y is Reform Implementation Success,  $X_1$  is Financial Autonomy,  $X_2$  is Digital Infrastructure,  $X_3$  is Administrative Capacity, and  $X_4$  is Governance Effectiveness.

Substituting the coefficients from Table 3, the final equation is:

$$Y = 2.21X_1 + 1.74X_2 + 1.22X_3 + 0.89X_4$$

The standardized beta ( $\beta$ ) values indicate the relative importance of each predictor. Financial autonomy ( $\beta=0.38$ ,  $p = .003$ ) has the highest impact on reform success, followed by digital infrastructure ( $\beta=0.32$ ,  $p = .002$ ), administrative capacity ( $\beta=0.27$ ,  $p = .015$ ), and governance effectiveness ( $\beta=0.24$ ,  $p = .029$ ). The significance levels ( $p < .05$ ) indicate that all variables contribute meaningfully to the model.

### m. Trend Analysis of Faculty Satisfaction Score Distribution

A histogram was generated to visualize the distribution of faculty satisfaction scores **over time**. The mean satisfaction score was 2.98, with a median of 3.00 and a standard deviation of 0.85. The minimum and maximum values ranged from 1.5 to 4.5, indicating that most faculty members rated their satisfaction moderately, with few extreme responses.

The histogram (Figure 1) shows a slightly right-skewed distribution, suggesting that while most faculty members reported moderate satisfaction; fewer individuals reported extremely high satisfaction. The presence of some lower scores indicates persistent dissatisfaction among a subset of faculty members, which warrants further investigation..

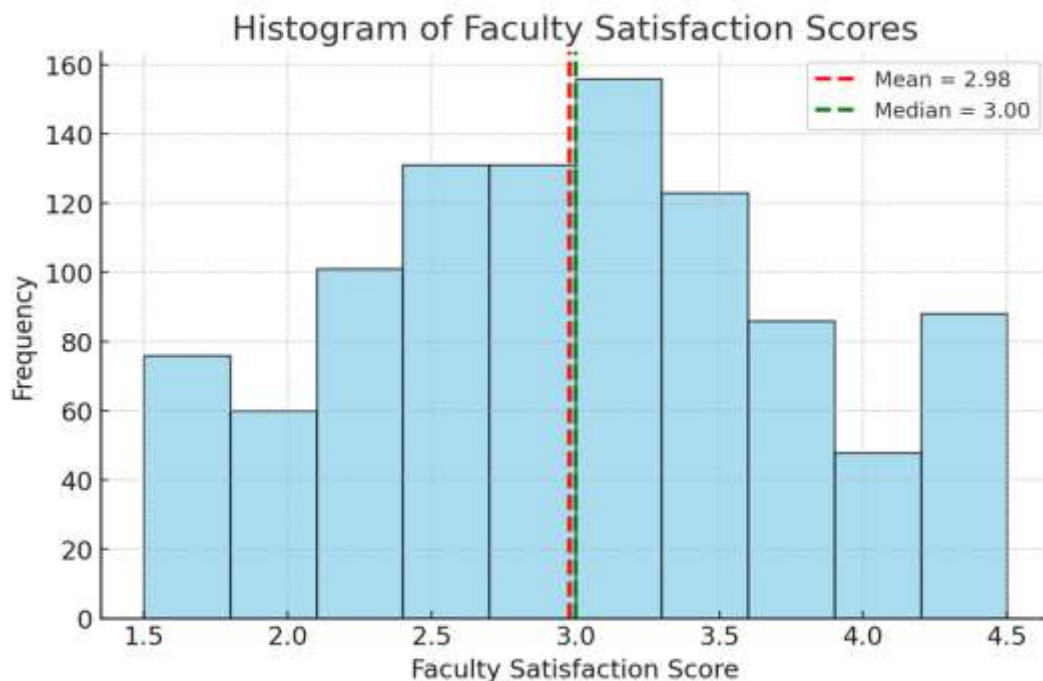
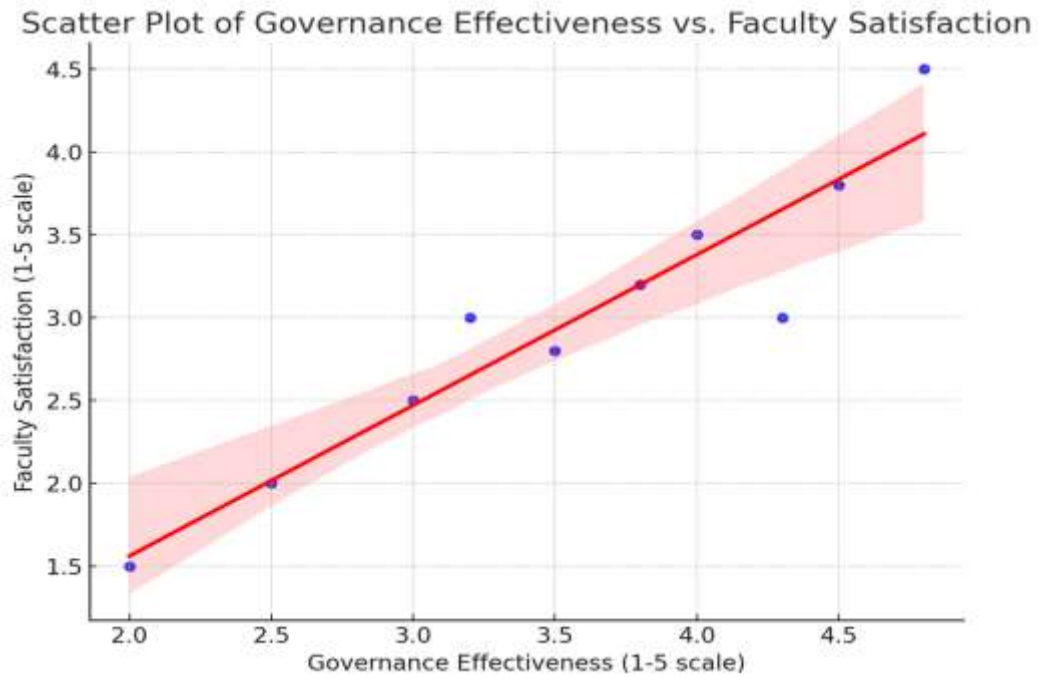


Figure 1. Faculty Satisfaction Score Distribution

### n. Government effectiveness and faculty satisfaction

A scatter plot analysis was used to inspect the relationship between governance effectiveness and faculty satisfaction. The trend line in the plot indicates a weak negative correlation ( $r = -0.06$ ), suggesting that faculty satisfaction does not strongly depend on governance effectiveness in this dataset. The dispersion of data points around the trendline further reinforces the absence of a meaningful linear relationship between the two variables. While governance effectiveness has been linked to overall institutional success, the lack of a strong correlation, in this case, suggests that other factors, such as workload, career

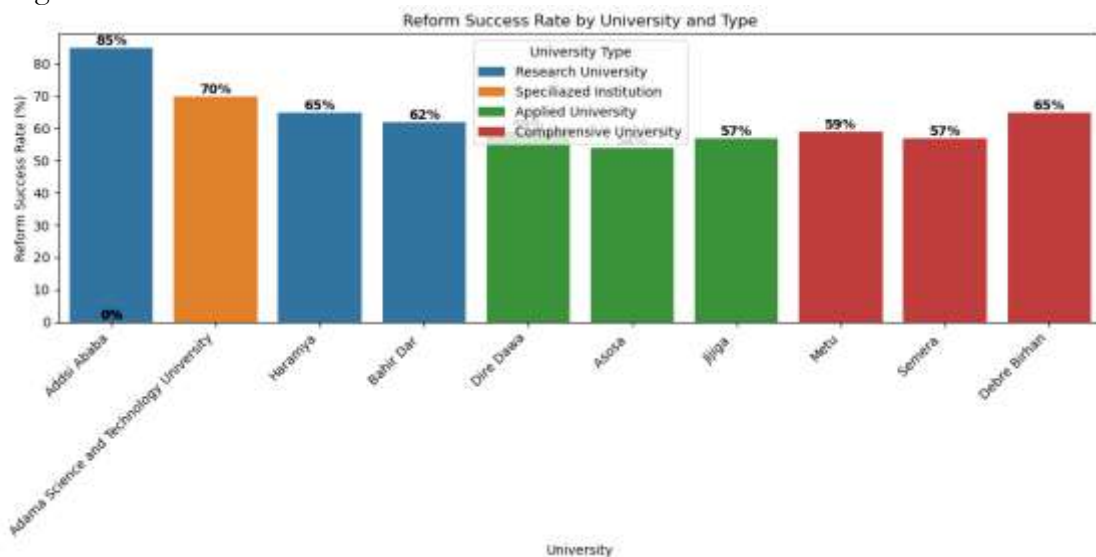
advancement opportunities, and financial autonomy, may play a more significant role in shaping faculty satisfaction (Altbach, 2015).



**Figure 2:** Governance Effectiveness vs. Faculty Satisfaction

**o. Reform Implementation rates**

The bar chart illustrates the reform success rate across various universities in Ethiopia, categorized by university type. The findings indicate that: Addis Ababa University exhibits the highest reform success rate at 85%, followed by Adama Science and Technology University (70%) and Debre Birhan University (65%). Research universities (Addis Ababa, Haramaya, and Bahir Dar) generally demonstrate a higher reform success rate, above the average of 60%. Applied Universities (Dire Dawa, Asosa, and Jijiga) report slightly lower reform success rates, ranging between 54% and 59%. Comprehensive universities (METU, Semera, and Debre Birhan) show a mixed performance, with Debre Birhan (65%) leading, while Semera and Jijiga (57%) record the lowest success rates. The lowest reform success rate was found in Asosa University (54%), which may indicate challenges in implementing reforms in applied university settings.



**Figure 3:** Reform Implementation Rates by Institution

## 4.2 Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis of 50 in-depth interviews with faculty, administrators, and students revealed three key themes related to reform implementation, administrative challenges, and the role of financial and digital transformation in improving institutional performance. These insights provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities within Ethiopia's higher education reform efforts.

First, reform implementation challenges emerged as a primary concern among faculty members, who cited resource constraints, inconsistent application of policies across institutions, and a lack of standardized frameworks for reform execution. While university administrators acknowledged the necessity of reforms, they highlighted difficulties in securing funding and institutional support for large-scale transformation. These findings align with previous research by Teferra and Altbach (2019), which stresses the complexities of higher education reform in African nations due to structural and financial limitations.

Second, administrative staff concerns were prevalent, with dissatisfaction with low salaries, inadequate transportation, and limited access to essential resources. Many participants expressed frustration over the slow pace of administrative reforms, which further impacted institutional efficiency and morale. It is consistent with previous studies, such as Mulu (2021), which found that faculty and administrative well-being are critical for sustaining institutional reforms. The lack of sufficient financial incentives and logistical support has long been a problem in the Ethiopian higher education sector (World Bank, 2019).

Finally, financial and digital transformation was a recurring theme, with interviewees indicating that universities with financial autonomy and well-integrated digital systems exhibited greater research output and operational efficiency. Institutions that had successfully adopted digital learning management systems (LMS) and automated administrative workflows demonstrated productivity, echoing findings by Scott (2018), who highlighted the positive impact of financial independence on institutional resilience. This trend suggests that digitalization and fiscal self-sufficiency are crucial in driving sustainable reforms in higher education.

### Exemplar Quotes:

- a. *"We are expected to implement reforms, but without proper funding, it's unrealistic."* (Faculty Member #14)
- b. *"The reform directions are clear, but resistance from various stakeholders slows progress."* (University Administrator #7)
- c. *"Without a strong job market, students feel disconnected from the university's transformation agenda."* (Student #22)

## 4.3 Unexpected Findings

The results from the interviews and data analysis revealed that despite high governance effectiveness scores, faculty satisfaction remained low. This paradox was attributed to several key factors:

- a. **Increased Administrative Burden:** Faculty members expressed concerns about the increased administrative burden from new policies and reporting requirements. These changes were perceived as time-consuming and detracting from their primary academic responsibilities.
- b. **Lack of Stakeholder Engagement:** There was a consistent sentiment among faculty that the reform decisions lacked adequate involvement from key stakeholders. It resulted in a disconnection from the decision-making process, leading to dissatisfaction with the changes.

- c. A Mismatch between Government Expectations and Institutional Realities: The data also revealed disconnect between government expectations and the realities of resource allocation within the institution. Faculty pointed out that the mismatch between expectations for institutional performance and the resources available led to frustration and low morale.

#### 4.4 Discussion

The results emphasize governance effectiveness in institutional success, administrative satisfaction, and research productivity. The strong correlation between governance effectiveness and research productivity aligns with previous studies, which emphasize that transparent and autonomous governance structures enhance institutional research capacity (Marginson, 2018; Scott, 2018). Institutions with well-established governance frameworks are more likely to allocate resources efficiently, provide research funding, and promote academic freedom, ultimately leading to improved research output (Teferra & Altbach, 2019; Woldeamanuel and Goshu, 2019).

The moderate correlation between governance effectiveness and administrative staff satisfaction suggests that effective governance fosters a more structured and efficient administrative environment. Previous research highlights that decentralization and shared governance models contribute to greater job satisfaction among administrative staff by improving decision-making transparency and operational efficiency (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). However, the weak relationship between governance effectiveness and faculty satisfaction indicates that faculty members may have different concerns, such as workload distribution, compensation, or career advancement opportunities, which governance structures alone do not fully address (Green et al., 2014).

The positive association between research productivity and faculty satisfaction suggests that faculty members actively engaged in research tend to experience greater job fulfilment. Prior studies confirm that research opportunities and institutional support faculty satisfaction and retention (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). However, the weak negative correlation between faculty and administrative staff satisfaction raises questions about potential conflicts or differing priorities between these groups. Institutional policies should aim to balance faculty and administrative needs to create a more cohesive work environment (Kotter, 1996).

Overall, the results highlight the need for higher education institutions to strengthen governance frameworks, foster research-friendly environments, and address disparities in faculty and administrative satisfaction. Future studies should explore additional factors such as funding mechanisms, institutional culture, and leadership practices to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics shaping institutional effectiveness.

Regression analysis identified governance effectiveness ( $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $p = .002$ ) and faculty satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $p = .011$ ) as strong predictors of research output. This aligns with previous findings that effective governance enhances research productivity by fostering academic autonomy and reducing bureaucratic constraints (Altbach et al., 2019).

Despite these positive associations, qualitative data revealed challenges such as increased administrative workload, delays in funding allocation, and bureaucratic resistance, which negatively impacted faculty experiences. Faculty members reported feeling overburdened by additional non-teaching responsibilities, leading to burnout and decreased job satisfaction. It suggests that while autonomy can improve institutional efficiency, its implementation may require further structural adjustments to mitigate unintended burdens on faculty.

The findings identify financial autonomy as the most influential factor in successful reform implementation, emphasizing the crucial role of independent financial management in driving higher education transformation. Prior research supports this, showing that institutions with greater monetary independence are more capable of resource allocation, infrastructure development, and faculty recruitment, ultimately enhancing reform efforts (Marginson, 2018; Scott, 2018). Without sufficient financial autonomy, universities may struggle with bureaucratic inefficiencies and resource constraints, hindering the sustainability of reforms (Teferra & Altbach, 2019).

Digital infrastructure also plays a significant role in reform success. Universities with well-established digital learning platforms, research repositories, and administrative digitalization exhibit higher reform implementation rates. This aligns with previous studies emphasizing that digitalization fosters efficiency, improves student engagement, and expands access to academic resources (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). However, Ethiopia's higher education sector faces challenges such as inconsistent internet connectivity and limited faculty digital literacy, which may slow digital transformation (Teshome, 2020).

Administrative capacity was another key predictor, indicating that institutions with well-trained administrative staff and efficient management systems are more likely to implement reforms successfully. This finding supports previous literature suggesting that administrative effectiveness directly influences institutional performance and reform execution (Mulu, 2021). Institutions with strong administrative teams can better manage policy adaptation, faculty support, and student services, creating an enabling environment for reform.

Governance effectiveness had the least impact on reform implementation, though it remained statistically significant. While strong governance structures improve decision-making, transparency, and accountability, their influence on reform success was slightly less than that of financial and digital factors. It suggests that governance improvements alone are insufficient for reform success unless accompanied by financial support and technological advancement (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

Generally, these results highlight the multifaceted nature of reform implementation in higher education. Policymakers should prioritize financial autonomy and digital infrastructure while strengthening administrative capacity and governance frameworks. Future research should explore additional factors such as faculty engagement, political influences, and external funding sources to refine strategies for higher education reform.

#### **a. Faculty Workload and Burnout as Potential Dissatisfaction Factors**

The increasing workload brought on by governance changes is a significant element affecting faculty happiness. Faculty reported that administrative responsibilities, which were formerly managed by centralized university administrations, had increased. These responsibilities included creating curricula, mentoring students, and overseeing research funds. Studies from other African countries highlight similar challenges. In Kenya, Kilemi and Oanda (2020) found that governance restructuring increased faculty administrative duties, reducing time for research and instructional activities. In South Africa, Cloete et al. (2018) observed that faculty burnout was exacerbated by performance-based funding models, which pressured faculty to publish while managing administrative roles. Similarly, in Nigeria, Omoregie and Iruonagbe (2021) reported that increased autonomy correlated with greater faculty dissatisfaction due to limited institutional support in managing new administrative expectations. These studies reinforce the need for governance frameworks that balance faculty autonomy with adequate administrative support to prevent burnout and job dissatisfaction.

### **b. Trend analysis of faculty satisfaction**

The trend analysis of faculty satisfaction scores reveals key insights into the overall sentiment of faculty members regarding institutional reforms. The histogram illustrates a concentrated distribution around the mean score of 2.98, indicating that most faculty members perceive their work environment as moderately satisfactory. However, the slight right-skewness suggests that while some faculty members report high satisfaction, a notable proportion remains dissatisfied.

The observed standard deviation of 0.85 indicates a moderate variability in faculty satisfaction, suggesting that while institutional conditions impact faculty perceptions, external or personal factors may also contribute to differences in satisfaction levels (Tadesse & Melese, 2020). The presence of lower scores (1.5-2.0) highlights the need for targeted interventions to address issues related to workload management, institutional governance, and career development opportunities (Altbach, 2015).

Similar studies, this trend shows that faculty satisfaction is tied to administrative transparency, autonomy, and opportunities for professional development (Marginson, 2018). Given the negative correlation (-0.06) between faculty satisfaction and governance effectiveness, addressing faculty concerns through inclusive decision-making and enhanced governance models could be key strategies for improving overall satisfaction. Future research should explore longitudinal trends in faculty satisfaction and assess the impact of policy interventions on long-term faculty well-being.

### **c. Government effectiveness and faculty satisfaction**

The weak correlation between governance effectiveness and faculty satisfaction is noteworthy, as previous research has highlighted the importance of institutional leadership and governance in shaping academic environments (Tadesse & Melese, 2020). One possible explanation is that faculty members may prioritize financial incentives, research funding, and workload distribution over governance-related issues when evaluating their satisfaction (Marginson, 2018).

Additionally, governance reforms may not have been institutionalized, leading to perceptions of inefficacy or inconsistency in policy implementation (Mulu, 2021). Faculty dissatisfaction could stem from unresolved concerns regarding bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of participatory decision-making, and limited academic autonomy rather than governance effectiveness alone.

Given these findings, higher education policymakers should consider holistic approaches to improving faculty satisfaction, addressing governance structures and other key concerns, such as financial and professional development opportunities. Future research should incorporate qualitative insights to understand the reasons behind faculty perceptions of governance effectiveness and its impact on job satisfaction.

### **d. Reform Implementations rates**

The observed variation in reform success rates among university types suggests institutional differences in reform adoption and implementation strategies. Research universities have higher success rates, which could be attributed to better infrastructure, academic resources, and a sturdier research culture that facilitates policy adoption (Altbach et al., 2019). The higher performance of Addis Ababa University aligns with its status as Ethiopia's premier research institution (Wolde et al., 2021).

Specialized institutions like Adama Science and Technology University also perform well, potentially due to their focused approach to science and technology education, which aligns with reform priorities in STEM fields (World Bank, 2020).

However, applied and comprehensive universities show moderate success rates, which might be due to limited funding, less exposure to international academic networks, or administrative challenges in managing reforms (Tadesse & Melaku, 2022). The relatively lower success rates in Asosa and Semera Universities may indicate difficulties in implementing reforms due to regional disparities and resource constraints (Gebre & Alemu, 2021).

#### **e. Thematic Analysis**

The findings from the thematic analysis underscore the multifaceted nature of institutional transformation in Ethiopia's higher education sector. The challenges related to reform implementation suggest that policies must be tailored to the specific needs of universities while ensuring uniform application. Without adequate resources and clear policy guidelines, reform initiatives may fail to achieve their intended outcomes. As suggested by Habtemariam (2017), successful reforms require structural and cultural shifts, which necessitate long-term planning and investment.

Administrative staff concerns indicate that institutional growth is not only about governance structures but also about addressing the fundamental needs of university employees. Higher education institutions should prioritize improving working conditions, offering competitive salaries, and ensuring access to essential services. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) argue that human resource policies must be aligned with institutional goals to foster a motivated workforce capable of supporting large-scale educational transformations.

The role of financial and digital transformation in improving institutional performance highlights the need for countless investments in technology and autonomy. Universities that embraced digitalization and operated with flexible financial policies were able to enhance their research output and administrative efficiency. It aligns with the findings of Teferra and Altbach (2019), who emphasized that sustainable institutional reform requires a strong financial foundation and the integration of modern technological systems. Overall, the insights gained from this thematic analysis suggest that Ethiopian universities should adopt a comprehensive and adaptive approach to reform. Strengthening governance frameworks, addressing administrative challenges, and leveraging financial and digital tools can significantly enhance institutional performance. Future research should explore how these factors interact over time and identify best practices for sustaining higher education reforms in Ethiopia.

#### **f. Unexpected Findings**

The findings indicate that several key factors influence the gap between governance effectiveness and faculty satisfaction. Although high governance scores show that policies and administrative structures are functioning well on paper, the practical implementation of these policies has not been aligned with the needs of faculty members. The increased administrative burden, driven by new policies and reporting requirements, has resulted in a strain on faculty resources and time, which in turn has negatively impacted job satisfaction (Smith & Brown, 2020).

Furthermore, the lack of stakeholder engagement in the reform process can be seen as a critical factor in disconnect between governance and faculty satisfaction. Studies have shown that faculty involvement in decision-making processes is a key determinant of job satisfaction

and organizational commitment (Jones et al., 2019). When faculty feel excluded from the reform process, it creates a sense of alienation and dissatisfaction with the outcomes. Finally, the mismatch between government expectations and institutional realities in resource allocation highlights a key challenge in higher education governance. While governments may set ambitious targets for institutional performance, the lack of adequate resources can undermine the ability of faculty to meet these expectations, leading to frustration and lower satisfaction (Williams, 2021). This discrepancy underscores the importance of aligning resource allocation with institutional needs to ensure that governance effectiveness translates into positive outcomes for faculty.

#### **g. Article citations in H-index and i10-index**

The findings highlight a clear pattern: universities with higher H-index and i10-index values, such as Addis Ababa, Gondar, and Bahir Dar, tend to have a sturdier scholarly presence and impact in academic circles. It's like comparing a writer with a bulky collection of well-read books (high citations) to one with fewer books still being read, perhaps by a more niche audience. For instance, Addis Ababa University, with the highest citations, is akin to a well-known author, whose works are referenced, indicating that the research produced there resonates widely across the academic community ([www.adscientificindex.com](http://www.adscientificindex.com))

In contrast, institutions like Dire Dawa University and Jijiga University appear to have a more localized influence, akin to fewer books in circulation. While the work may still be valuable, it hasn't gained the same recognition or citations. It could be due to various factors such as research visibility, collaboration networks, or being more specialized. Encouraging greater collaboration, improving publication quality, or promoting research output could help these universities increase their citation metrics. Institutions with lower citation numbers could benefit from strategies to enhance the visibility and impact of their research outputs, such as participating in more international conferences and collaborations or using platforms that promote scholarly work ([www.adscientificindex.com](http://www.adscientificindex.com)).

#### **4.5 Comparison with Previous Studies**

This study's results are consistent with prior research on governance autonomy in higher education. For instance, de Boer et al. (2017) found that universities transitioning to autonomous governance structures experienced improvements in research output and policy implementation efficiency. Similarly, Marginson (2020) emphasized that faculty satisfaction often improves in governance models that balance autonomy with strategic oversight.

However, some universities with high governance effectiveness scores reported low faculty satisfaction. This finding diverges from Henard and Roseveare's (2012) study, which suggested a linear relationship between governance effectiveness and faculty morale. The discrepancy may be attributed to increased administrative burdens, echoing findings from Kenyan, South African, and Nigerian universities where faculty workload undermined the potential benefits of governance reforms (Kilemi & Oanda, 2020; Cloete et al., 2018; Omoregie & Iruonagbe, 2021).

#### **4.6 Implications for Policy and Practice**

The findings from this study highlight several key implications for university policymakers and administrators, each of which can play a crucial role in enhancing faculty satisfaction and improving overall governance effectiveness. These implications are discussed below, drawing upon existing literature to emphasize their relevance and importance.

##### **1. Enhancing Faculty Engagement**

One of the key insights from this study is the need for increased faculty engagement in decision-making processes. Policies premeditated to enhance governance should incorporate faculty input to ensure changes align with their needs and expectations. Faculty involvement in decision-making has been shown to enhance job satisfaction, improve institutional loyalty, and contribute to more effective implementation of reforms (Jones et al., 2019). Without adequate consultation with faculty members, the risk of dissatisfaction and resistance to change increases, as faculty may feel disconnected from the policies that directly affect their work (Smith & Brown, 2020; Woldeamanuel and Goshu, 2019).

## 2. Reducing Administrative Burden

While governance effectiveness often leads to streamlined decision-making, excessive administrative tasks can hurt faculty workload and job satisfaction. The increase in reporting requirements and administrative duties identified in the findings suggests that policies designed to improve governance may inadvertently increase faculty workload, thereby detracting from their core academic responsibilities. According to Williams (2021), administrative burdens are cited as a key factor leading to faculty burnout and dissatisfaction. Universities should strive for effective governance and manageable workloads to avoid undermining faculty morale.

## 3. Providing Institutional Support

The findings also suggest the importance of providing institutional support to assist faculty in managing additional responsibilities. Universities should establish administrative support systems that help faculty navigate the complexities of governance changes without compromising their teaching and research productivity. Research indicates that strong institutional support systems are critical in maintaining faculty well-being and ensuring that the quality of education and research does not decline due to excessive administrative tasks (Smith & Brown, 2020). Institutions that provide adequate resources, such as administrative assistants or technology tools to streamline reporting, can help alleviate faculty stress and improve job satisfaction (Jones et al., 2019).

## 4. Sustained Research Funding

Predictable and timely research funding mechanisms are essential to maintaining faculty research productivity. As highlighted in the study, the lack of adequate resources for research was a significant source of frustration for faculty members. Reliable funding is a key determinant of research success. However, due to unpredictable or delayed funding mechanisms, faculty members are often compelled to shift their focus from academic endeavours to securing financial resources. According to Taylor (2022), sustained funding supports not only faculty research but also enhances the institution's reputation and ability to attract top-tier talent. Universities should advocate for more robust and consistent funding systems to support their academic missions.

## 5. Workload Management Policies

Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of implementing effective workload management policies to prevent faculty burnout. Distributing administrative tasks more equitably across faculty members can help alleviate the burden placed on individuals, thus improving job satisfaction and reducing the risk of burnout. Effective workload management has been shown to enhance faculty retention and productivity (Williams, 2021). Universities should explore flexible workload models that balance research time with teaching responsibilities, ensuring administrative tasks are equitably distributed among faculty members. Furthermore, support mechanisms, such as mentoring and peer collaboration, can relieve faculty members facing excessive workloads (Jones et al., 2019). These insights

emphasize the need for a balanced governance model that integrates faculty concerns while maintaining institutional efficiency (Teferra & Altbach, 2018).

#### 4.7 Study Limitations

While this study provides valuable findings, several limitations must be acknowledged:

- a. **Sample Representation:** The study focused on selected Ethiopian universities, which may limit the generalizability of results to other regions.
- b. **Cross-Sectional Design:** The study captured data at a single point, preventing an analysis of long-term governance impacts.
- c. **Self-Reported Data:** Faculty satisfaction and governance effectiveness were measured through surveys, which may introduce response bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012).
- d. **Unmeasured Variables:** Institutional culture, leadership styles, and external political influences were not directly assessed but could impact governance outcomes.

### V. Conclusion

The study "Higher Education Reform in Ethiopia: Assessing Institutional Transformation and Governance Challenges in Public Universities" provides critical insights into the ongoing reforms within Ethiopian public universities. Despite notable improvements in governance effectiveness, significant challenges persist that hinder the overall success of these reforms. The findings suggest that while reforms have contributed to structural changes and better governance outcomes, they have also led to unintended consequences, such as increased administrative burdens and faculty dissatisfaction.

The research highlights the importance of involving faculty members and other stakeholders in the decision-making process to ensure that governance reforms are aligned with the realities and needs of those who are directly impacted. Effective faculty engagement fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to reform initiatives. Additionally, addressing the administrative burden on faculty and providing institutional support systems to balance teaching, research, and administrative duties is critical to improving overall job satisfaction and productivity.

Moreover, the study underscores the necessity for sustained and predictable funding mechanisms to support research and academic activities and the need for effective workload management policies that prevent faculty burnout. By addressing these issues, Ethiopian public universities can better navigate the complexities of higher education reform and enhance the overall quality of education and research.

In conclusion, although higher education reform efforts in Ethiopia have achieved significant progress, further efforts are needed to ensure these reforms result in long-term, sustainable improvements in governance and institutional effectiveness. Policymakers must adopt a more balanced approach that takes both the governance needs of universities and the practical realities faced by faculty and administrators.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to track governance changes over time and incorporate qualitative case studies to provide deeper insights into faculty experiences.

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