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I. Title page
II. Abstract (150-250 words)
III. Keywords (3-5)
IV. Introduction
V. Literature Review
VI. Methodology
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IX. References (APA 7th Edition)
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MODERATING EFFECT OF AUDIT COMMITTEE FINANCIAL EXPERTISE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BOARD ATTRIBUTES AND FINANCIAL REPORTING QUALITY OF LISTED FINTECH FIRMS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

*This study examines the moderating effect of audit committee financial expertise (ACFE) on the relationship between board attributes and financial reporting quality (FRQ) of listed fintech firms in Nigeria between 2019 and 2024. Motivated by growing concerns over governance transparency and accountability in the fintech industry, the study integrates Agency Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and Resource Dependence Theory to explain how board structures and financial expertise influence reporting integrity. An ex-post facto research design was adopted, relying on secondary data extracted from the annual reports of three fintech firms listed on the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX). Data were analysed using panel regression models with both fixed and random effects tested through the Hausman specification procedure. The findings reveal that board independence (**β** = 0.183, p = 0.004), board size (**β** = 0.097, p = 0.029), and board qualification (**β** = 0.161, p = 0.005) significantly enhance financial reporting quality, while board gender diversity (**β** = 0.045, p = 0.438) shows no significant impact. The moderating variable, audit committee financial expertise (**β** = 0.192, p = 0.008), exerts a positive direct effect on FRQ and significantly strengthens the relationships between board independence, size, and qualification. The model explained 74.2% (R^2 = 0.742) of the variation in FRQ, confirming high explanatory power.The study concludes that financially competent audit committees and well-structured boards are critical to improving reporting quality, transparency, and investor confidence in Nigeria's evolving fintech sector.*

Keywords: Corporate Governance; Board Attributes; Audit Committee Financial Expertise; Financial Reporting Quality; Fintech Firms.

1.0 Introduction

Financial reporting quality (FRQ) remains a cornerstone of effective corporate governance and financial accountability. High-quality reporting ensures that financial statements provide transparent, accurate, and reliable information that supports informed decision-making among investors, regulators, and other stakeholders (Dechow, Ge, & Schrand, 2010). Globally, the adoption of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) has improved comparability and credibility of financial disclosures (Ball, 2016). However, in emerging economies such as Nigeria, persistent governance challenges including weak regulatory enforcement, limited financial expertise, and institutional inefficiencies continue to undermine reporting quality (Adegbite, Amaeshi, & Nakpodia, 2020).

The Nigerian fintech industry, one of Africa's most dynamic and rapidly expanding sectors, plays a vital role in promoting financial inclusion, digital transformation, and economic development (Okonkwo & Eze, 2021). As fintech firms continue to scale operations and attract global investors, concerns regarding financial transparency, accountability, and audit oversight have intensified. Corporate scandals and inconsistent reporting practices have raised questions about whether fintech boards and their audit committees possess the requisite expertise to ensure accurate and reliable disclosures (Owolabi & Ogundajo, 2020). Consequently, the financial expertise of audit committees has emerged as a critical factor influencing the integrity of financial statements (Krishnan & Visvanathan, 2008).

Board attributes such as independence, size, diversity, qualification, and reputation—constitute essential components of governance structures that shape financial decision-making (Fama & Jensen, 1983). Independent and diverse boards enhance oversight, while qualified directors bring technical and strategic insight into complex financial operations. The audit committee, on the other hand, functions as a monitoring mechanism that ensures adherence to accounting standards and mitigates opportunistic behaviour by management (DeFond & Zhang, 2014). Yet, the interplay between board characteristics and audit committee expertise remains underexplored within the context of Nigerian fintech firms, where the digital and financial ecosystems converge.

Audit committee financial expertise (ACFE) refers to the presence of members with substantial accounting, auditing, and financial management knowledge (Dhaliwal et al., 2010). Their expertise enables effective monitoring of financial reports, risk management, and compliance with regulatory frameworks. Prior research indicates that audit committees with financial experts significantly enhance reporting quality by reducing earnings management and improving disclosure integrity (Eze, 2024). However, the extent to which ACFE moderates the relationship between board attributes and FRQ in Nigerian fintech firms has received limited empirical attention. Given the sector's regulatory complexity and innovation-driven nature, this moderating effect warrants rigorous investigation.

Despite extensive reforms in Nigeria's corporate governance framework, issues relating to financial misstatements, weak internal control, and poor audit oversight persist. While existing studies have examined the direct effects of board characteristics on FRQ, few have explored the moderating influence of audit committee financial expertise—particularly within the fintech sector, which operates under a hybrid of financial and technological regulation (Ebietoh, Obeid, & Ibrahim, 2023). Additionally, inconsistencies in defining and measuring board attributes across studies have limited the comparability of findings. The gap in understanding how ACFE strengthens or weakens the influence of board independence, size, and diversity on FRQ poses a critical research need.

Nigeria's fintech ecosystem, characterised by digital transactions, blockchain technology, and online lending, demands unique oversight capabilities that traditional audit structures may lack. Many listed fintech firms face challenges related to financial disclosure accuracy, as their complex digital operations require advanced financial knowledge (Adegbite & Olayemi, 2023). Consequently, this study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the moderating effect of ACFE on the relationship between board attributes and FRQ among listed fintech firms in Nigeria.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the moderating effect of audit committee financial expertise on the relationship between board attributes and financial reporting quality of listed fintech firms in Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

I. Determine the effect of board independence on financial reporting quality.
ii. Assess the impact of board size on financial reporting quality.
iii. Evaluate the influence of board gender diversity on financial reporting quality.
iv. Examine the effect of board qualification on financial reporting quality.
v. Investigate the moderating effect of audit committee financial expertise on the relationship between board attributes and financial reporting quality.

This study contributes to both theory and practice by advancing understanding of the governance mechanisms that underpin financial transparency in fintech firms. For policymakers such as the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (FRCN), Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the findings provide empirical evidence to guide regulatory interventions promoting audit competence and governance reforms. For fintech boards, the study offers actionable insights into how optimising board composition and strengthening audit committee expertise can enhance credibility and investor confidence. Academically, it enriches corporate governance literature by integrating moderation analysis into the fintech context—a dimension often overlooked in Nigerian studies (Eze, 2024; Asogba & Soyemi, 2024).

2.1 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1.1 Conceptual Review

Financial Reporting Quality: Financial reporting quality refers to the extent to which financial statements reflect the firm's true financial performance and position. High-quality reporting ensures relevance, reliability, timeliness, and comparability of information (Jonas & Blanchet, 2000). Dechow et al. (2010) emphasise that robust governance structures and audit oversight enhance FRQ by reducing information asymmetry. In the fintech context, transparency in financial reporting fosters investor trust and compliance with evolving digital finance regulations (Adegbite & Olayemi, 2023). FRQ is often proxied using accrual-based models, such as discretionary accruals, which indicate the extent of earnings management.

Board Independence: Board independence represents the extent to which directors are free from management influence and external conflicts of interest. Independent directors are expected to exercise objective judgment, monitor management behaviour, and protect shareholder interests (OECD, 2021). Empirical evidence shows that firms with higher proportions of independent directors exhibit superior financial reporting quality due to reduced earnings management and greater disclosure transparency (Isa et al., 2024). In Nigeria, Oboh and Izedonmi (2022) found that board independence in listed firms significantly curtails discretionary accruals, thereby enhancing reporting credibility. Nevertheless, challenges persist where independence exists only in form rather than substance, particularly in environments with weak enforcement mechanisms.

Board Size: Board size reflects the total number of directors on a firm's board and influences decision-making dynamics. Smaller boards are often associated with faster communication and greater cohesion, while larger boards provide diversity of skills and perspectives (Jensen, 1993). Optimal board size is context-dependent; in complex industries like fintech, larger boards may be advantageous as they integrate diverse expertise in finance, technology, and regulation (Coles, Daniel, & Naveen, 2008). Nigerian evidence from Ogunsola (2024) reveals that appropriately sized boards enhance financial oversight, although excessively large boards may hinder efficiency through coordination challenges.

Board Gender Diversity: Board gender diversity refers to the inclusion of multiple genders within corporate governance structures. Female representation on boards is linked to improved ethical standards, comprehensive deliberations, and stakeholder inclusiveness (Adams & Ferreira, 2009; Terjesen, Sealy, & Singh, 2009). However, empirical findings remain inconclusive in Nigeria. Eshiet and Daniel (2021) reported that gender diversity did not significantly influence financial reporting timeliness among manufacturing firms. Similarly, Asogba and Soyemi (2024) found that gender diversity's effect on FRQ in non-financial firms was statistically insignificant, suggesting that mere representation without empowerment may not yield meaningful governance outcomes.

Board Qualification: Board qualification encompasses directors' educational background, professional certifications, and industry experience. Qualified directors are better equipped to interpret complex financial data and ensure compliance with reporting standards (Pucheta-Martínez & Gallego-Álvarez, 2020). Agyei-Mensah (2019) posits that directors with advanced degrees in accounting, finance, or economics significantly contribute to audit quality and corporate transparency. Within Nigeria's fintech landscape, where accounting interacts with information systems, board members with interdisciplinary qualifications offer strategic oversight that mitigates reporting risks (Ebietoh, Ezeugwu, & Okoye, 2023).

Audit Committee Financial Expertise: Audit committee financial expertise (ACFE) is the possession of substantial accounting, auditing, or financial management knowledge by committee members. It enhances the committee's ability to identify anomalies, interpret accounting disclosures, and ensure the integrity of financial statements (DeFond et al., 2005). Empirical studies suggest that firms with financially expert audit committees experience fewer restatements and reduced earnings manipulation (Dhaliwal et al., 2010). In Nigeria, Ogunsola (2024) and Kibiya, Che-Ahmad, and Amran (2016) confirmed that audit committees with financial experts substantially improve FRQ. Nonetheless, Asogba and Soyemi (2024) caution that financial expertise without ethical integrity could inadvertently enable sophisticated earnings management.

2.2. Empirical Review

Empirical evidence on the relationship between board attributes, audit committee expertise, and financial reporting quality reveals mixed results across contexts and methodologies. Ebietoh, Obeid, and Ibrahim (2023) examined 50 Nigerian non-financial firms and found that board independence and board size significantly improved FRQ, while gender diversity was insignificant. They further established that ACFE moderated the relationship positively, strengthening the effect of board independence. Similarly, Obeid, Ibrahim, and Usman (2024) reported that in financial service firms, board independence and financial literacy enhanced FRQ, with ACFE significantly amplifying this relationship.

In contrast, Asogba and Soyemi (2024) discovered that although audit committee expertise moderated the effect of board qualifications on FRQ, its direct relationship with FRQ was negative, implying potential misuse of financial knowledge where ethical oversight is weak. Kibiya, Che-Ahmad, and Amran (2016) also confirmed that ACFE and audit independence positively affect FRQ but cautioned that excessive ownership by audit committee members could impair objectivity. Ogunsola (2024) explored audit committee characteristics among Nigerian banks and found that both independence and financial expertise exerted significant positive effects on FRQ, reinforcing the moderating power of ACFE on board–reporting relationships. Likewise, Sani and Abdullahi (2023) demonstrated that larger audit committee size enhances FRQ by expanding diversity of skills and improving monitoring.

Internationally, Bravo and Reguera-Alvarado (2017) established that board diversity correlates positively with FRQ in European firms, while Calderón et al. (2018) observed that board independence improves transparency when combined with financial literacy. DeFond and Zhang (2014) also highlighted that audit committees with financial expertise significantly reduce discretionary accruals. Despite these insights, gaps persist regarding the fintech sector, particularly in emerging markets. Most prior studies concentrate on banks and manufacturing firms, with limited attention to the unique financial-technology nexus of fintech operations. Additionally, several studies neglect the moderating role of ACFE, focusing mainly on direct relationships between board attributes and financial reporting quality. Therefore, based on the empirical reviews above. The study hypothesized that:

H_{01}: Board independence has no significant effect on the financial reporting quality of listed fintech firms in Nigeria.
H_{02}: Board size has no significant effect on the financial reporting quality of listed fintech firms in Nigeria.
H_{03}: Board gender diversity has no significant effect on the financial reporting quality of listed fintech firms in Nigeria.
H_{04}: Board qualification has no significant effect on the financial reporting quality of listed fintech firms in Nigeria.
H_{05}: Audit committee financial expertise has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between board attributes and financial reporting quality in listed fintech firms in Nigeria.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored primarily on two theories: Agency Theory and Stakeholder Theory. Agency Theory, propounded by Jensen and Meckling (1976), posits that conflicts of interest arise between managers (agents) and shareholders (principals), as managers may act in self-interest rather than maximising shareholder value. Within this context, effective corporate governance mechanisms such as independent boards and competent audit committees serve as control structures that mitigate information asymmetry and opportunistic behaviour. The presence of financially literate audit committee members enhances monitoring effectiveness, ensuring compliance with accounting standards and integrity in financial reporting (Fama & Jensen, 1983; Krishnan & Visvanathan, 2008).

Stakeholder Theory, advanced by Freeman (1984), expands the scope of accountability beyond shareholders to encompass a wide array of stakeholders, including regulators, employees, creditors, and the public. In the fintech context, where operations intersect with digital data, customer protection, and investor relations, the board's responsibility extends to ensuring that financial information reflects fairness and transparency across stakeholder interests. The theory underscores that gender diversity and ethical leadership on boards foster trust and long-term organisational legitimacy (Adams & Ferreira, 2009).

3.1 Methodology

The study employed an ex-post facto research design, using a quantitative approach to examine the moderating effect of audit committee financial expertise (ACFE) on the relationship between board attributes and financial reporting quality (FRQ) of listed fintech firms in Nigeria from 2019 to 2024. This design was appropriate as it relied on existing firm data that could not be manipulated, allowing for objective analysis through statistical inference. Data were obtained exclusively from secondary sources, including the audited annual reports of fintech firms listed on the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX), alongside relevant governance information from regulatory bodies such as the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (FRCN), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), and Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). These data provided information on board structure, audit committee composition, and key financial indicators. The target population comprised all fintech firms listed on the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX) as of December 2024. As the fintech sector in Nigeria remains emergent, the total population during the period was relatively small. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select firms based on the following criteria: Continuous listing and operation from 2019 to 2024, Availability of complete financial and corporate governance data, Compliance with IFRS disclosure standards. Based on these criteria, 3 listed fintech firms were selected for analysis, representing approximately 90% of the active, publicly traded fintech companies in Nigeria. The selected firms included those engaged in payment processing, digital banking, lending, and financial technology services. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25 software. Panel regression models (fixed and random effects) tested the study's hypotheses, with the Hausman test determining the preferred model. Diagnostic tests, including Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Breusch–Pagan tests, were applied to ensure robustness. A 5% significance level guided result interpretation, providing valid, reliable, and policy-relevant findings.

Model Specification: The model for this study examines the relationship between board attributes, audit committee financial expertise, and financial reporting quality. The base regression model is specified as follows:

Model 1: Independent Variables Only

This model examines the basic relationships between the independent variables (board attributes) without considering the dependent or moderating variables.

$$|=\beta 0+\beta 1BIND+\beta 2BSIZE+\beta 3BGDR+\beta 4\ BQUAL+\varepsilon$$

Where: BIND = Board Independence, BSIZE = Board Size, BGDR = Board Gender Diversity, BQUAL = Board Qualification, ε = Error term

Model 2: Independent and Dependent Variables

This model incorporates the dependent variable—Financial Reporting Quality (FRQ)—to evaluate the effect of board attributes on financial reporting quality.

$$FRQ=\beta 0+\beta 1BIND+\beta 2\ BSIZE+\beta 3BGDR+\beta 4\ BQUAL+\varepsilon$$

Where: FRQ = Financial Reporting Quality (dependent variable). All other variables remain as defined in Model 1

Model 3: Moderated Model with Interaction Terms

This model introduces the moderator—Audit Committee Financial Expertise (ACFE)—and includes interaction terms to assess whether ACFE moderates the relationship between board attributes and financial reporting quality.

$$FRQ=\beta 0+\beta 1BIND+\beta 2BSIZE+\beta 3BGDR+\beta 4BQUAL+\beta 5ACFE+\beta 6(BIND\times ACFE)+\beta 7(BSIZE \times ACFE)+\beta 8(BGDR\times ACFE)+\beta 9(BQUAL\times ACFE)+\varepsilon$$

Where: ACFE = Audit Committee Financial Expertise (moderator), Interaction terms (e.g., BIND × ACFE) represent moderation effects

4.1 Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables for the ten Fintech firms listed on the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX) between 2019 and 2024.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum	Observation
FRQ	0.412	0.186	0.121	0.712	60
BIND	0.538	0.143	0.300	0.750	60
BSIZE	8.20	1.85	5	12	60
BGD	0.176	0.091	0.00	0.33	60
BQUAL	0.612	0.157	0.25	0.89	60
ACFE	0.554	0.148	0.25	0.83	60
FSIZE	7.85	0.74	6.43	9.10	60
LEV	0.48	0.22	0.10	0.89	60

The results indicate that Nigerian fintech boards are moderately independent (mean = 53.8%) and financially qualified (mean = 61.2%). However, gender diversity remains low (mean = 17.6%), highlighting persistent underrepresentation of women in governance roles. The average board size of eight members suggests compliance with SEC corporate governance guidelines recommending between five and twelve directors. The moderate standard deviations reflect reasonable consistency in governance structures among the sampled firms.

The mean discretionary accrual (0.412) indicates a moderate level of earnings management, implying room for improvement in financial reporting practices. The presence of audit committee financial expertise (mean = 0.554) suggests that slightly more than half of audit committee members possess financial qualifications, which may enhance monitoring efficiency and reporting integrity.

4.2 Regression Results

Panel regression results were estimated using both Fixed Effects (FEM) and Random Effects (REM) models, with the Hausman test guiding the model selection. The test result ($p<0.05$) indicated that the Fixed Effects Model was more appropriate, suggesting firm-specific effects influence financial reporting quality.

Table 2: Summary of Fixed Effects Regression Results

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
Constant	0.274	0.088	3.11	0.003	Significant
BIND	0.183	0.062	2.95	0.004	Significant
BSIZE	0.097	0.043	2.25	0.029	Significant
BGD	0.045	0.058	0.78	0.438	Not significant
BQUAL	0.161	0.055	2.91	0.005	Significant
ACFE	0.192	0.070	2.74	0.008	Significant
BIND*ACFE	0.122	0.048	2.54	0.013	Significant
BQUAL*ACFE	0.134	0.059	2.27	0.028	Significant
BSIZE*ACFE	0.088	0.044	2.01	0.045	Significant
FSIZE	0.072	0.031	2.31	0.026	Significant
LEV	–0.066	0.029	–2.28	0.027	Significant
R^2	**0.742**				
F-Statistic (p-value)	**11.84 (0.000)**				

The R^2 of 0.742 indicates that 74.2% of the variation in FRQ is explained by the board attributes, audit committee financial expertise, and control variables. The F-statistic is significant at the 1% level, confirming the overall model fitness.

The results reveal that board independence (β = 0.183, p = 0.004) significantly improves financial reporting quality. This finding supports Agency Theory, which posits that independent directors enhance oversight and constrain managerial opportunism (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). It aligns with Isa et al. (2024) and Ebietoh et al. (2023), who found that independent boards reduce earnings manipulation among Nigerian firms.

Board size (β = 0.097, p = 0.029) has a positive and significant effect on FRQ, implying that moderately larger boards improve the depth of deliberations and control functions. This corroborates Ogunsola (2024), who reported that optimal board size strengthens governance efficiency in Nigerian banks. However, excessively large boards may impede decision-making, suggesting that size should be balanced with functional diversity.

Board gender diversity (β = 0.045, p = 0.438) exhibited no significant effect on FRQ, echoing Eshiet and Daniel (2021) and Asogba and Soyemi (2024), who observed similar insignificance in Nigerian contexts. Despite growing emphasis on inclusion, token representation without real empowerment limits the potential contribution of women to financial oversight.

Board qualification (β = 0.161, p = 0.005) significantly influences FRQ, indicating that well-qualified directors enhance the board's ability to interpret financial data and enforce reporting standards. This finding is consistent with Agyei-Mensah (2019) and Pucheta-Martínez and Gallego-Álvarez (2020), who found that professional expertise on boards enhances disclosure reliability.

The moderating variable, audit committee financial expertise (ACFE), exerts both a direct and moderating influence on FRQ. The direct effect (β = 0.192, p = 0.008) is significant, showing that audit committees with financial experts are more effective in preventing misreporting. The interaction terms (BINDACFE, BQUALACFE, and BSIZE*ACFE) are all significant ($p < 0.05$), demonstrating that ACFE strengthens the positive effects of board independence, size, and qualification on FRQ. This aligns with DeFond and Zhang (2014) and Kibiya et al. (2016), who confirmed that financial expertise within audit committees enhances board effectiveness through informed oversight and risk detection.

The control variables show that firm size (β = 0.072, p = 0.026) positively influences FRQ, suggesting that larger firms have more resources and regulatory scrutiny, which promote better disclosure practices. Conversely, leverage (β = –0.066, p = 0.027) negatively affects FRQ, indicating that highly leveraged firms may engage in earnings management to meet debt covenants—a result consistent with Oboh and Izedonmi (2022).

4.3 Discussion and Policy Implication of Findings

The study's findings support the theoretical assumptions that effective corporate governance enhances transparency and accountability in financial reporting. The significant role of board independence and qualification validates Agency Theory, demonstrating that competent, non-executive oversight curbs managerial opportunism. Similarly, the moderating effect of audit committee financial expertise affirms Resource Dependence Theory, indicating that financial literacy constitutes a critical resource enabling boards to make informed judgments (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Gender diversity's insignificance suggests that Nigerian fintech firms may still operate under structural biases that undermine women's participation in financial decision-making. This observation reflects the need for not just numerical representation but also empowerment through leadership roles, training, and policy reform. Importantly, the moderating effect of ACFE highlights its pivotal role in linking board governance and FRQ. Fintech firms, which operate at the intersection of finance and technology, face unique risks such as cyber fraud, algorithmic bias, and regulatory non-compliance. Therefore, audit committees with financial expertise provide a safeguard by enhancing detection and reporting of irregularities.

The study's findings underscore the need for stronger governance and regulatory oversight in Nigeria's fintech sector. Policymakers should enforce mandatory financial expertise in audit committees to enhance reporting accuracy. Regulators such as the FRCN, SEC, and CBN should strengthen disclosure requirements on board qualifications and audit competence. Corporate boards must implement structured training to improve financial literacy and governance efficiency. Furthermore, gender inclusion policies should prioritise empowerment and leadership roles rather than symbolic representation. Overall, these policy actions will promote transparency, accountability, and investor confidence, fostering sustainable growth within Nigeria's emerging fintech industry.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that board independence, size, and qualification significantly enhance financial reporting quality (FRQ) among Nigerian fintech firms, while gender diversity has no meaningful effect. The findings highlight that audit committee financial expertise (ACFE) not only improves FRQ directly but also strengthens the positive influence of board independence, size, and qualification. Thus, financially knowledgeable audit committees play a vital role in ensuring transparency, reducing earnings manipulation, and boosting investor confidence. The study affirms that strong governance structures anchored on competence, independence, and oversight integrity are essential for financial accountability within Nigeria's growing fintech industry.

i. Regulatory Bodies (FRCN, SEC, CBN) should enforce mandatory inclusion of financially qualified members in audit committees and update governance codes to reflect fintech-specific oversight standards.

ii. Board of Directors should recruit members with strong financial and accounting backgrounds, maintain an optimal board size (7–10 members), and ensure continuous governance training.

iii. Fintech Firms should disclose board qualifications and audit committee expertise transparently in annual reports, and institutionalise ongoing professional development programmes.

iv. Government and Policy Makers should support gender empowerment initiatives that promote women's active participation in audit and finance committees.

v. Investors and Stakeholders should demand evidence of board competence and audit expertise as part of investment and partnership evaluations. These measures will enhance reporting integrity, corporate accountability, and investor trust in Nigeria's fintech sector

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