COMPANY SECRETARIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES IN MODERN IRISH CORPORATIONS: A REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES ADOPTED IN COMPANY SECRETARIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Onyinyechi Vivian Akagha¹, Julie Olajumoke Coker², Ngozi Samuel Uzougbo³, & Seun Solomon Bakare⁴

¹Independent Researcher, Ireland
²Independent Researcher, Lagos State, Nigeria
³The Ohio State University, USA
⁴Grotius Centre for International Legal Studies, Faculty of Law, Leiden University, the Netherlands

Corresponding Author: Ngozi Samuel Uzougbo
Corresponding Author Email: ngozi.uzougbo@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study embarked on a comprehensive exploration of the strategies and best practices adopted in company secretarial and administrative services within modern Irish corporations. Set against the backdrop of a rapidly evolving corporate governance landscape, the research aimed to understand the multifaceted roles of company secretaries, the economic ramifications of efficient administrative services, and their legal significance within Ireland's regulatory frameworks. A mixed-method approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, was employed to delve into the historical evolution and the contemporary challenges faced by administrative services in Irish corporations. Key findings highlighted a paradigm shift in the responsibilities of company secretaries, emphasizing their strategic
importance in governance structures. The study also underscored the significance of continuous learning, stakeholder participation, and the integration of technological advancements in enhancing administrative services. The analysis provided a holistic understanding of the challenges faced by company secretaries in Ireland and offered actionable recommendations. These recommendations advocate for a clearer understanding of reporting obligations, fostering a culture of continuous professional development, and leveraging digital solutions to streamline administrative processes. In conclusion, the research offers a roadmap for corporations, regulators, and stakeholders, guiding them towards sustainable growth, profitability, and unwavering stakeholder trust in the realm of corporate governance in Ireland.

**Keywords:** Corporate Governance, Company Secretarial Services, Irish Corporations, Stakeholder Trust.

### INTRODUCTION

**Current Landscape of Irish Corporate Governance**

The corporate governance landscape in Ireland, especially in the domain of judicial self-governance, is multifaceted and deeply influenced by both political and cultural dynamics. Historically, Ireland has been perceived as a forerunner in the adoption of judicial self-governance models during the 1990s. However, this notion can be somewhat misleading. The Irish judiciary, for instance, exercises self-governance in specific areas, such as the management of the court estate, non-judicial personnel, and public communication about the court system. Yet, pivotal aspects like discipline, promotions, and deployment largely remain under the influence of external entities, notably the government (O'Brien, 2018).

The appointment of judges in Ireland has been a significant area of discussion. The government exercises considerable discretion in this process, which has led to debates and discussions about the transparency and fairness of such appointments. The past decade has witnessed a shift towards a more corporate approach to the judiciary. This is evident in the formation of bodies like the Association of Judges of Ireland and the shadow Judges Council. Current discussions revolve around the introduction of an independent mechanism for judicial appointments and the potential establishment of a Judicial Council, which would play a pivotal role in disciplinary actions within the judiciary (O'Brien, 2018).

Furthermore, the relationship between diversity and compliance in Irish organizations has been a topic of recent research. Investigations into senior compliance professionals' perceptions in Irish entities have indicated that while diversity is acknowledged, its direct link to improved compliance is not always recognized. However, the evolving regulatory environment in the financial sector is beginning to incorporate diversity considerations into compliance programs (Hunter, 2023).

In essence, the corporate governance landscape in Ireland is evolving, with a growing recognition of the need for a more inclusive and transparent system. The interplay of political, cultural, and regulatory factors will significantly influence the country's future trajectory of corporate governance.

**Company Secretarial and Administrative Services in Ireland: An Overview**

The corporate governance landscape globally has seen a significant shift, with companies increasingly focusing on enhancing their organizational efficiency. This is evident in sectors ranging from supply management to corporate governance, with the latter being a determining
factor for administrative excellence. While some studies have focused on the corporate governance structures of firms in relation to their supply management strategies, such as the diversification of suppliers (Mendes-da-Silva & Black, 2005), the Irish context presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities.

In the realm of corporate governance, the role of company secretarial and administrative services cannot be understated. These services play a pivotal role in ensuring that companies adhere to regulatory requirements, maintain transparency, and operate efficiently. The importance of these services is further highlighted by the evolving nature of corporate governance disclosures and their association with various aspects of company performance. For instance, a study focusing on Indonesian banking companies found that while corporate governance disclosure is prevalent, its association with earnings management is not significant. This suggests that companies might be including corporate governance in their annual reports primarily to fulfill administrative requirements. The lack of stringent sanctions by regulatory bodies, such as the Indonesia Financial Services Authority, on companies listed on stock exchanges might be a contributing factor to this trend (Wijaya & Firmansyah, 2021).

Furthermore, another study from Indonesia highlighted the association between corporate governance and a company's operational and market performance. The findings suggest that while there is a negative association between corporate governance and operational performance, there isn't a significant association with the company's market performance. This underscores the need for a more robust implementation of governance practices, beyond just administrative compliance (Damayanti & Firmansyah, 2021).

While the aforementioned studies provide insights into the broader landscape of corporate governance and its implications, the Irish context, with its unique regulatory environment and corporate culture, necessitates a deeper exploration. The role of company secretarial and administrative services in Ireland, especially in the context of corporate governance, is paramount. These services not only ensure compliance with local regulations but also play a crucial role in shaping the corporate governance practices of Irish companies.

**Traditional Roles and Functions of Company Secretaries in Ireland**

The role of company secretaries in Ireland, as in many countries, has evolved over time, adapting to the changing landscape of corporate governance, regulatory requirements, and organizational needs. Historically, the company secretary was seen primarily as an administrative role, responsible for ensuring that the company complied with statutory and regulatory requirements, maintaining company records, and facilitating communication between the board of directors and shareholders.

For instance, in the context of school-based practices, the role of professionals such as occupational therapists has been explored. Schools are primary settings for pediatric occupational therapy practice. However, there is limited knowledge about the provision of such services in many countries, including Ireland. A study aimed to explore the current school-based occupational therapy practices in Ireland revealed that therapists provided services in schools most commonly on a weekly or monthly basis. The majority of these professionals used a direct therapy approach with children, addressing sensory, hand function, or daily living needs. Interestingly, none of the respondents used a whole class or whole school approach. While collaborative practice was viewed as a strength, barriers to collaboration in schools were also identified. One of the core barriers is the difference in how services are structured across
health and education sectors, leading to differing philosophies of service provision (O'Donoghue, O'Leary & Lynch, 2021).

This example from the educational sector underscores the broader challenges professionals, including company secretaries, face in adapting their roles to the changing needs of organizations. The traditional roles of company secretaries, primarily administrative, have expanded to include more strategic responsibilities. Today, company secretaries play a crucial role in advising the board on governance matters, ensuring compliance with evolving regulatory requirements, and facilitating effective communication between various stakeholders.

Furthermore, the increasing complexity of the corporate environment, characterized by rapid technological advancements, globalization, and changing regulatory landscapes, has necessitated a more proactive and strategic role for company secretaries. They are now often involved in risk management, corporate strategy formulation, and stakeholder engagement, among other responsibilities.

**Economic Implications of Efficient Administrative Services**

Efficient administrative services play a pivotal role in the economic landscape of any country, and Ireland is no exception. The economic implications of such services are manifold, impacting not only the operational efficiency of organizations but also the broader economic environment. Efficient administrative services ensure that companies can operate seamlessly, meeting regulatory requirements, and ensuring timely communication with stakeholders. This, in turn, fosters an environment of trust and confidence, which is crucial for attracting investments and ensuring economic growth.

In the context of financial institutions, for instance, the right to information is paramount. Contracts, especially those related to credit cards, have significant economic implications. When these contracts are prepared in a manner that is skewed in favor of the financial institutions, it can lead to a violation of the clients' right to information. Such practices can have detrimental effects on the economic environment, leading to a lack of trust and confidence among consumers. The state supervisory entities must ensure that the clauses of contracts, especially those related to financial products, are transparent and do not violate the rights of the consumers (Navarro et al., 2023).

**Legal Significance and Regulatory Frameworks Surrounding Company Secretaries**

The role of company secretaries, especially in a country like Ireland, with its unique corporate culture and regulatory environment, is of paramount legal significance. Company secretaries ensure that organizations adhere to the legal and regulatory frameworks, thereby protecting all stakeholders' rights. Their role goes beyond mere administrative tasks and delves into the realm of legal advisory and compliance.

A study focusing on the role of company secretaries on contemporary Australian boards highlighted the expansion of responsibilities from administrator to strategic advisor. The company secretary's role has evolved to accommodate responsibilities that range from ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements to advising the board on strategic matters. The study also emphasized the importance of organizational dynamics and the skills necessary for the role construction of company secretaries as senior officers (McKenzie et al., 2019).

While the Australian context provides insights into the evolving role of company secretaries, the Irish context, with its unique regulatory environment, necessitates a deeper exploration. The legal significance of company secretaries in Ireland is underscored by the regulatory
frameworks that govern their roles and responsibilities. These frameworks ensure that company secretaries play a proactive role in shaping the corporate governance practices of Irish companies, ensuring legal compliance and fostering an environment of trust and transparency.

**Historical Evolution of Administrative Services in Irish Corporations**

The historical trajectory of administrative services in Irish corporations is a testament to the dynamic interplay between economic imperatives, regulatory frameworks, and corporate strategies. As corporations evolved, so did the administrative structures supporting them, reflecting broader socio-economic and political shifts.

In the broader context, despite housing only 4.2 percent of the global population, the United States accounted for 26.0 percent of confirmed Covid-19 cases and 23.1 percent of its fatalities as of July 21, 2020. This disproportionate impact underscores the significance of competent political leadership and the ability to mobilize organizational and technological capabilities in times of crisis. The primary repositories for such capabilities are government agencies and business firms. Developing, producing, and delivering countermeasures, such as personal protective equipment (PPE), ventilators, diagnostic tests, therapies, and vaccines, heavily rely on collaborations between these entities (Lazonick & Hopkins, 2020).

Drawing parallels with the Irish context, the evolution of administrative services within corporations can be seen as a reflection of the broader socio-economic environment. The ability of corporations to adapt and respond to external challenges, be it economic downturns, regulatory changes, or global pandemics, hinges on the efficiency and adaptability of their administrative structures.

A case in point is the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) in the U.S., which serves as a repository for critical medical supplies. The historical evolution of the SNS and its preparedness for pandemics can be traced back to the end of the Obama administration. The Biomedical Research and Development Authority (BARDA), operating under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), initiated collaborations with business firms in 2010 and 2014 to develop portable, user-friendly, and cost-effective ventilators for the SNS. However, the success of these collaborations was undermined when the innovative manufacturers came under the control of corporations driven by the ideology of "maximizing shareholder value" (MSV). Such corporations, prioritizing stock-market valuation over innovative performance, became unreliable partners, compromising the nation's preparedness for emergencies like the Covid-19 pandemic (Lazonick & Hopkins, 2020).

This example underscores the importance of aligning corporate strategies with broader socio-economic goals. In the Irish context, the evolution of administrative services within corporations must be viewed against the backdrop of changing economic landscapes, regulatory environments, and global challenges. As corporations navigate these complexities, the role of administrative services becomes paramount, ensuring operational efficiency and strategic alignment with broader socio-economic imperatives.

**Modern Challenges and Technological Advancements Affecting the Role**

The role of company secretaries in Irish corporations has been significantly influenced by the rapid technological advancements and the challenges that accompany them. As businesses globally grapple with the transformative power of technology, the administrative backbone of corporations, represented by company secretaries, finds itself at the crossroads of tradition and innovation.
One of the most profound technological shifts impacting industries worldwide is the advent of Industry 4.0. This new paradigm, characterized by the integration of digital technologies into traditional industrial practices, has redefined operational processes and strategies. For instance, the mining industry, which has historically relied on manual and labor-intensive processes, is now exploring the potential of optimizing and automating operations through digital technology and advanced software solutions (Wajs et al., 2021). Such technological interventions necessitate a reevaluation of administrative roles, including that of company secretaries, to ensure that corporations remain compliant with evolving regulatory standards and can harness the benefits of these innovations effectively.

The integration of modern surveying techniques, such as digital photogrammetry, Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS), and laser scanning, has revolutionized industries by offering precise and accurate data acquisition methods. These technologies enable the creation of detailed maps, situational plans, and 3D visualizations, which are crucial for decision-making and strategic planning in corporations (Wajs et al., 2021). For company secretaries, this means staying abreast of these technological advancements, understanding their implications, and ensuring that the corporation's administrative processes are aligned with these new tools.

Furthermore, the rise of ground-based radar technology, especially in industries like mining, has emphasized the importance of continuous monitoring and data analysis. Such technologies are pivotal in assessing the stability of structures, measuring surface deformations, and monitoring operational progress (Wajs et al., 2021). In this context, the administrative responsibilities of company secretaries expand to include the management and interpretation of this data, ensuring compliance with safety regulations, and facilitating communication between different departments to ensure seamless operations.

**Identified Gaps in Current Research**

The role of company secretaries in Ireland, as in many jurisdictions, is multifaceted, encompassing both administrative and strategic responsibilities. While there has been a significant amount of research on various aspects of company secretaries' roles and responsibilities, there remain notable gaps in the literature, particularly in the context of the Irish corporate landscape.

One of the primary gaps in the research pertains to the evolution of the role of company secretaries in the face of rapid technological advancements. While there is a growing body of literature on the impact of technology on various business functions, there is a paucity of research specifically addressing how technological advancements are reshaping the role of company secretaries in Ireland. This is particularly relevant given the increasing digitization of corporate processes and the growing importance of data management and cybersecurity in corporate governance (Brooks & Edwards, 2006).

Another notable gap is the lack of comprehensive studies on the training and professional development needs of company secretaries in Ireland. As the role of company secretaries becomes more complex and demands a broader skill set, there is a need for research that identifies the specific training needs of company secretaries in the Irish context and evaluates the effectiveness of existing professional development programs.

Furthermore, while there is a significant amount of research on company secretaries' legal and regulatory responsibilities, there is limited literature on the challenges they face in ensuring compliance, particularly in the face of evolving regulations. This is especially relevant in the
context of global regulatory changes, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which has significant implications for data management and privacy practices in corporations (O’Brien et al., 2009).

Lastly, there is a need for more empirical studies that explore the strategic role of company secretaries in Irish corporations. While there is a recognition of the strategic importance of company secretaries in corporate governance, there is limited empirical evidence on how company secretaries in Ireland are involved in strategic decision-making processes and how they contribute to the overall strategic direction of corporations (Villarroel et al., 2019).

**Aims and Importance of the Study**

The corporate landscape in Ireland, like many other jurisdictions, is undergoing rapid transformation, influenced by technological advancements, evolving regulatory frameworks, and changing stakeholder expectations. Company secretaries, traditionally viewed as administrative backbones of corporations, find themselves at the forefront of these changes, navigating the complexities and ensuring that corporations remain compliant, efficient, and strategically aligned. This study aims to delve deeper into the multifaceted role of company secretaries in modern Irish corporations, shedding light on the challenges they face, the strategies they adopt, and the potential avenues for future development.

**Objectives**

1. To explore the historical evolution of the role of company secretaries in Irish corporations, tracing the shift from primarily administrative functions to more strategic responsibilities.
2. To assess the impact of technological advancements on the role of company secretaries, identifying the challenges and opportunities presented by digital transformation.
3. To evaluate the current regulatory frameworks governing company secretaries in Ireland, understanding the legal implications and compliance requirements.
4. To identify gaps in current research and practices, providing a roadmap for future studies and offering recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of company secretarial functions in Irish corporations.

**Parameters of the Review**

This review delves into the multifaceted roles and emerging challenges of company secretaries within modern Irish corporations, with a temporal focus on the transformative last two decades. While the primary lens is trained on the Irish corporate landscape, it is imperative to occasionally draw parallels with international practices, offering a broader perspective and insights into global best practices. The research amalgamates a rich tapestry of sources. Primary sources, such as firsthand interviews and surveys from active company secretaries in Ireland, provide a direct perspective. In contrast, secondary sources, encompassing academic articles, industry reports, and regulatory guidelines, offer a more holistic view. The methodological backbone of this review is qualitative, aiming for depth and contextual understanding. However, to ensure a balanced and comprehensive perspective, quantitative data, where available, will be interwoven to validate qualitative insights. In terms of content selection, a stringent criterion ensures the inclusion of materials that specifically dissect the role, challenges, and strategies of company secretaries in the Irish context. Broader, generic corporate governance literature without direct relevance to the Irish scenario will be sidestepped.
METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Qualitative vs. Quantitative Approach

Research design serves as the foundation of any study, delineating the blueprint for data collection, measurement, and analysis. The decision between qualitative and quantitative research methods often hinges on the research question's nature, the study's objectives, and available resources. Cotten (1999) underscores the value of a mixed-method approach, combining the depth of qualitative insights with the statistical rigor of quantitative methods. Such a hybrid approach can be especially beneficial when examining intricate phenomena, like the roles and challenges of company secretaries, where both numerical data and in-depth narratives can offer invaluable insights.

Criteria for Data Collection and Sources Selection

The systematic process of data collection is pivotal in gathering information pertinent to the research objectives. The choice of data sources and the techniques employed can profoundly influence the research findings' validity and reliability. Gray (2004) emphasizes the importance of a judicious mix of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources, such as firsthand interviews, provide direct insights, ensuring relevance and accuracy. Conversely, secondary sources, including academic articles and regulatory guidelines, offer a broader context and historical perspective. Neuman (2007) work on social research methods further accentuates the need for a balanced approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques to ensure comprehensive and reliable findings.

Compilation of Company Secretarial and Administrative Practices Over the Years

The compilation of company secretarial and administrative practices necessitates a systematic approach to gather, categorize, and analyze data. With the increasing demand for green buildings and sustainable products, there's a growing need for effective computer-aided decision support systems in various industries, including housing construction (Yang & Ogunkah, 2013). Similar to the selection process, identifying and defining viable low-cost green building materials and components is inherently subjective. Given the myriad of variables to consider, evaluating such products can be intricate. The existing modes of selection and management, especially when dealing with vast information associated with their impacts, often constrain decision-makers. This leads to trade-off analyses that might not always guarantee the most environmentally preferable or efficient outcome.

Analytical Techniques for Evaluating Best Practices

The development of a multi-criteria decision support system (DSS) has been proposed to address these challenges. Such a system aims to enhance the understanding of best practices associated with the impacts of specific materials or practices, such as low-cost green building materials and components (Yang & Ogunkah, 2013). The DSS provides designers with valuable and explicit information, aiding informed decision-making. A prototype of such a system, termed MSDSS, leverages macro-in-excel, a recent database management technique. This technique integrates data from multiple, often extensive, databases and other information sources. The DSS design emphasizes the development of a material selection data schema and the application of the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) to material selection problems. This approach ensures a comprehensive evaluation, considering both qualitative and quantitative factors.
FINDINGS
Overview of Current Company Secretarial and Administrative Trends in Ireland
In recent years, Ireland has witnessed significant shifts in its administrative landscape, particularly concerning company secretarial practices. The global trend towards port reformation has had its ripple effects in Ireland, leading to a comprehensive review and subsequent reform of the administration of Irish ports. As a result of legislative changes, eight key ports in Ireland transitioned from being administered by large Boards to becoming commercial harbor companies, enhancing their ability to operate more commercially (Mangan & Furlong, 1998). This transformation underscores a broader trend in Ireland towards modernizing and streamlining administrative practices to align with global standards and best practices.

Furthermore, the labor market in Ireland has also undergone notable changes, with certain sectors experiencing growth, while others face challenges. For instance, the BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) sector has seen rapid expansion in India, with India being a preferred choice for outsourcing due to its skilled yet cost-effective workforce. Such global trends can have implications for administrative roles in Ireland, especially in sectors that interact or compete with industries in countries like India (Jayanthi & Venkatramaraju, 2009).

Moreover, the economic backdrop of Ireland, being geographically peripheral, has necessitated innovative administrative strategies to ensure competitiveness on a global scale. The emphasis has been on adopting best practices, leveraging technological advancements, and ensuring that administrative roles, including company secretaries, are equipped to navigate the evolving business landscape.

Strategies and Mechanisms Adopted by Company Secretaries
The role of company secretaries in Ireland, as in many jurisdictions, has evolved significantly over the years. This evolution reflects the changing business landscape and is a testament to the proactive strategies and mechanisms adopted by these professionals to remain relevant and effective in their roles.

One of the significant shifts observed in the realm of company secretarial practices is the move towards a more integrated approach to governance. As highlighted by Taylor (1992), the development of the European Community's single market, primarily intended as an economic measure, has the potential to bring about considerable changes in the differing medical cultures of the EC's member states. This development underscores the importance of a unified approach to governance and administration, which company secretaries in Ireland have been keen to adopt. By aligning their practices with broader European standards, company secretaries ensure that their organizations remain compliant and competitive in a more integrated European market.

Furthermore, the emphasis on research and development, as evidenced by the spending patterns across European countries, suggests that company secretaries are increasingly involved in strategic decision-making processes that have long-term implications for their organizations (Taylor, 1992). This involvement is not limited to compliance and governance but extends to areas like innovation, product development, and market expansion. By actively participating in these strategic initiatives, company secretaries in Ireland are redefining their roles from mere administrative functionaries to strategic partners in their organizations.
Moreover, the challenges posed by globalization and the increasing interconnectedness of markets necessitate that company secretaries adopt mechanisms that allow for flexibility and adaptability. The adoption of digital solutions, automation of routine tasks, and continuous professional development are some of the strategies that have been embraced by company secretaries in Ireland to ensure that they remain at the forefront of governance and administrative practices.

**Corporate Governance and Compliance Tools Adopted by Company Secretaries**

In the realm of corporate governance, the role of company secretaries is paramount. Their responsibilities encompass ensuring that organizations adhere to the highest standards of accountability, transparency, and ethical conduct. The evolving business landscape and regulatory environment, especially in countries like Ireland, have necessitated the adoption of robust corporate governance mechanisms and compliance tools by company secretaries.

A study focusing on companies listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange, which were included in the KOMPAS100 Index from 2014 to 2018, sought to analyze the effect of good corporate governance on stock prices (Christian et al., 2020). The research utilized a purposive sampling technique and employed a panel data regression method with a fixed-effect model. The findings revealed that certain governance measures, such as the number of board of commissioner meetings, return on assets, earnings per share, and price to book value, had significant positive effects on stock prices. Interestingly, the study introduced the variable of company secretary as an indicator of corporate governance, emphasizing the pivotal role these professionals play in the corporate governance framework.

The importance of corporate governance is further highlighted by the fact that crises, such as those in 1997-1998 and 2008, were attributed to a lack of understanding and weak corporate governance regulations and practices in various countries, including Indonesia (Erkens et al., 2012; Repon & Islam, 2016). Addressing these governance issues is essential to restore both international and domestic investor confidence. The ASEAN Capital Market Forum’s ACGS assessment, participated in by several ASEAN member countries, underscores the regional emphasis on strengthening corporate governance practices.

In the context of Ireland, the role of company secretaries in ensuring adherence to corporate governance standards is even more critical. Given the country’s dynamic business environment and integration within the European Union, company secretaries must be well-versed with local and international governance standards. They play a crucial role in bridging the gap between regulatory requirements and organizational practices, ensuring that companies not only comply with the law but also adopt best practices that enhance shareholder value and stakeholder trust.

**Implementation of Digital Solutions and E-Governance**

The digital age has brought about a paradigm shift in how businesses operate, and company secretaries are at the forefront of this transformation. With the increasing complexity of regulatory environments and the rapid pace of technological advancements, company secretaries in Ireland and globally are leveraging digital solutions and e-governance tools to enhance their roles and contribute more effectively to their organizations.

One of the most significant advancements in recent years has been the development and adoption of contact tracing applications, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Ireland, a national survey was conducted to examine the barriers and levers to the use of a contact tracing app (O’Callaghan et al., 2020). The study revealed that a significant proportion
of the Irish population was willing to download a public health-backed app to augment contact tracing. The primary reasons for downloading such an app included the potential to help family members and friends and a sense of responsibility to the wider community. However, concerns regarding privacy and data security were also highlighted, emphasizing the need for company secretaries to be vigilant about data protection and governance when implementing such digital solutions.

In the broader context of Industry 4.0, the integration of big data technologies and advanced analytics tools offers companies new avenues for digital transformation (Gröger, 2018). Company secretaries play a pivotal role in ensuring that these digital solutions are implemented in line with corporate governance standards. They are responsible for ensuring that data is managed ethically, that privacy regulations are adhered to, and that the organization remains compliant with all relevant laws and standards.

Furthermore, the global e-business landscape presents its own set of challenges and opportunities. The fusion of IT and business to develop an e-business model requires a rethinking of traditional IT governance structures (Patel, 2002). Company secretaries, with their unique position at the intersection of business and governance, are well-placed to guide their organizations through this digital transformation. They can ensure that e-business strategies are aligned with organizational goals, that digital solutions are implemented effectively, and that governance structures are robust enough to handle the complexities of the digital age.

**Handling Discrepancies, Disputes, and Resolutions in the Corporate World**

In the intricate web of corporate operations, discrepancies and disputes are inevitable. The manner in which these are addressed can significantly impact the reputation, financial health, and overall success of an organization. Company secretaries, given their pivotal role in governance and compliance, are often at the forefront of managing such challenges, ensuring that resolutions are reached to uphold the organization's integrity and values.

The rise of global entrepreneurial ventures has brought about unique challenges in governance. Such ventures, often termed as 'born globals', internationalize their operations from inception, presenting both opportunities for growth and challenges in governance (Zahra, 2014). These firms encounter distinct problems centered on free riding and management of intellectual property. Public governance establishes the essential framework that can guide the resolution of these issues. Corporate governance systems interact with public governance to harmonize the interests of different claimants, especially in disputes that arise across national borders. These systems not only ensure effective monitoring of owner-managers but define their actions in a highly globalized environment. The study underscores the importance of both public and corporate governance systems in determining the fate of global new ventures.

Moreover, the growth of the Islamic finance industry has necessitated a framework for managing corporate disputes arising from internal differences and contractual relationships, especially in banker-customer relationships (Oseni et al., 2012). The study emphasizes the need to revive the administrative dispute resolution office of muhtasib (ombudsman) within the framework of Islamic financial institutions. Such an office, serving the purpose of corporate self-regulation integrated into the corporate structure, can promote sustainable excellence by resolving claims amicably without unnecessary escalation into full-blown disputes.

In the context of Ireland, with its dynamic business landscape and stringent regulatory environment, the role of company secretaries in handling discrepancies and disputes is even
more pronounced. They are tasked with navigating the complexities of both local and international laws, mediating between conflicting parties, and ensuring that resolutions are reached in a manner that is both legally compliant and in the best interest of the organization. The role of company secretaries in handling discrepancies, disputes, and resolutions is of paramount importance in the corporate world. Their expertise in governance, combined with their understanding of the intricacies of business operations, positions them as key players in ensuring that disputes are managed effectively, upholding the reputation and integrity of the organization.

**Best Practices in Company Administration**

In the dynamic world of corporate governance, best practices in company administration have emerged as a cornerstone for ensuring organizational resilience and prosperity. These practices not only offer a blueprint for streamlined operations but also act as a shield against potential challenges, particularly in areas susceptible to discrepancies and disputes.

Corporate governance practices are instrumental in determining the extent of tax evasion, especially in settings marked by pronounced book-tax conformity. A study centered on Greek listed companies unveiled that tax evasion is notably lower when the chairman of the board doubles as the owner of the company (Kourdoumpalou, 2016). Additionally, a pronounced negative correlation was identified between tax evasion and the proportion of stock held by the owner and their family members. This relationship underscores the intricate balance of power and responsibility in corporate governance. On the flip side, when board members also served as employees of the company, a rise in tax evasion was observed. These insights challenge prevailing international codes on corporate governance practices, suggesting a nuanced approach might be necessary, especially for public firms with a high concentration of ownership.

The separation of ownership from control in sizable corporations has historically necessitated the evolution of corporate governance practices to safeguard the interests of minority shareholders. In such environments, decision-making is often the prerogative of managers, potentially leading to the "agency problem" where the economic repercussions of decisions aren't fully borne by those making them (Means, 2017). While much of historical discourse has revolved around fraudulent financial reporting, recent corporate scandals have pivoted attention towards tax evasion and its ramifications. It is posited that while tax evasion can bolster a firm's cash flows and market value, this advantage is ephemeral if the evasion is detected by tax authorities, leading to potential repercussions for shareholders (Hanlon & Slemrod, 2009).

The importance of best practices in company administration cannot be overstated in the intricate realm of corporate governance. These practices not only ensure operational efficiency but also serve as a bulwark against potential pitfalls, especially in contentious areas like tax evasion. As the corporate world continues its relentless evolution, the onus is on organizations to perpetually reassess and refine their governance strategies to remain relevant and effective.

**Innovations vs. Traditional Administrative Practices**

In the rapidly evolving landscape of corporate governance, the juxtaposition of innovations against traditional administrative practices offers a unique lens through which the adaptability and resilience of organizations can be gauged. As companies grapple with the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization, technological advancements, and shifting socio-
economic dynamics, navigating the interplay between established practices and innovative strategies becomes pivotal. A striking illustration of this dynamic can be observed in the Niger Delta’s approach to the distribution and privatization of wealth derived from its oil and gas resources. The primary channels of wealth distribution have historically been skewed in favor of office holders, international entrepreneurs, and their contractors. This has left the broader population, particularly the less privileged majority, to seek alternative avenues to access their share of the wealth, sometimes even resorting to violent insurgencies. However, amidst this challenging backdrop, certain communities have showcased remarkable ingenuity in sustaining their access to the oil wealth. An ethnographic study of Egbema, an Igbo community, revealed that the locals adapted their traditional practices to ensure a continuous flow of oil wealth. This adaptability was most evident when the community transformed a fishing festival, traditionally celebrated in exclusivity, into a public fish bazaar. This innovative shift was driven by the community’s desire to retain the compensation they received for land expropriated for oil extraction by the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC). Such practices underscore the profound implications for corporate governance, especially concerning the relationship between companies and various stakeholders (Nwaigwe, 2022).

Another dimension to consider is the evolving nature of corporate governance reporting. Historically, corporate governance reporting has been a cornerstone for the external assessment of companies, supplementing financial accounting with its disclosure instruments. The quality of such reporting is often influenced by myriad factors, including the legal framework, historical context, and socio-economic conditions of a given region. For instance, in Greece, the corporate governance legal framework was deemed outdated until recent times. The emergence of scandals in the Greek capital market highlighted the regulatory gaps in the internal and external control mechanisms employed by listed companies, necessitating significant reforms. The introduction of new laws, such as Law 4706/2020, and the adoption of new codes aimed at enhancing corporate governance practices, reflect the ongoing efforts to strike a balance between innovation and tradition. However, the adaptation to these governance principles remains a challenge for many traditional Greek firms rooted in family ties, especially in the face of economic adversities like the financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic (Kontogeorga et al., 2020).

In conclusion, the interplay between innovations and traditional administrative practices in corporate governance is a testament to the adaptability and resilience of organizations. Whether it’s the creative strategies employed by communities in the Niger Delta or the evolving corporate governance frameworks in countries like Greece, the continuous refinement of practices in response to changing circumstances remains a hallmark of effective governance.

Collaboration with Other Corporate Departments for Seamless Functioning

In the modern corporate landscape, collaboration between various departments is paramount for achieving organizational goals and ensuring seamless functioning. The integration of departments and the fostering of a collaborative environment have been identified as key drivers for enhancing corporate performance and sustainability (Camilleri, 2017). As corporations evolve and adapt to the dynamic business environment, the need for inter-departmental collaboration becomes even more pronounced. This is particularly true in the context of
corporate governance, where the alignment of objectives and the sharing of resources can lead to more informed decision-making processes. One of the primary benefits of fostering collaboration between corporate departments is the pooling of expertise and knowledge. Different departments within an organization possess unique insights and perspectives that, when combined, can lead to more comprehensive and holistic strategies. For instance, the finance department's understanding of budgetary constraints can be complemented by the marketing department's insights into consumer behavior, leading to strategies that are both cost-effective and market-oriented. Furthermore, in the age of digital transformation, the role of technology in facilitating collaboration cannot be understated. Digital platforms and tools have made it easier for departments to communicate and collaborate in real-time, breaking down traditional silos and fostering a culture of openness and transparency. This is especially relevant in the context of corporate governance, where timely and accurate communication is crucial for ensuring compliance and mitigating risks.

**Engagement with Regulatory and Compliance Entities**

Engaging with regulatory and compliance entities is a critical aspect of corporate governance. In the heavily regulated credit industry, for instance, the role and responsibilities of the compliance function are clearly defined, and there is an inherent need for organizations to ensure that their operations align with regulatory requirements (Meissner, 2017). Non-compliance can lead to legal repercussions, financial penalties, and reputational damage, making engagement with regulatory entities a top priority for corporations. One of the primary challenges in this regard is the constantly evolving regulatory landscape. As governments and regulatory bodies respond to changes in the global business environment, corporations must stay abreast of these changes and adapt their operations accordingly. This requires a proactive approach to engagement, where organizations actively seek out information, participate in regulatory discussions, and collaborate with compliance entities to ensure alignment.

Moreover, the rise of social media and digital platforms has added another layer of complexity to the regulatory landscape. As corporations expand their digital footprint, they must be wary of their online activities' legal and regulatory implications. For instance, the use of social media for business purposes, while offering numerous benefits, also presents challenges in terms of compliance with affiliate codes of conduct, SEC regulations, and other compliance issues (Elefant, 2011).

As corporations navigate the intricate web of regulatory and compliance requirements, active engagement with relevant entities becomes crucial. By fostering a culture of collaboration and open communication, corporations can ensure that they remain compliant while also leveraging opportunities for growth and innovation.

**ANALYSIS**

**Assessing the Effectiveness of Adopted Strategies and Best Practices**

The effectiveness of corporate governance (CG) practices is a topic of considerable interest and debate in both academic and industry circles. Corporate governance, as a system of rules, practices, and processes by which a company is directed and controlled, plays a pivotal role in influencing a company's objectives and the means to attain those objectives (Al-Janadi et al., 2016). One of the primary facets of corporate governance is the voluntary disclosure (VD) of...
information. Al-Janadi et al. (2016) examined the moderating effect of government ownership on the association between corporate governance and voluntary disclosure. Their findings suggest that government ownership has a negative impact on the effectiveness of corporate governance, especially in the context of voluntary disclosure.

Emerging markets, such as India and the Gulf countries, have been at the forefront of adopting and adapting to evolving corporate governance practices. A comparative study by Al-ahdal et al. (2023) analyzed the impact of corporate governance practices on the performance of listed firms from these regions. Their findings indicate that Indian companies outperform their counterparts in the Gulf countries in terms of corporate governance practices. Moreover, certain corporate governance practices, such as board structure, have a negative impact on firm performance, while others, like transparency and disclosure, have a positive correlation.

The relationship between sustainability reporting and corporate governance has also garnered attention in recent years. Pasko et al. (2022) provided a comprehensive overview of this relationship by analyzing a vast number of articles published between 2009 and 2021. Their study underscores the increasing convergence between sustainability reporting and corporate governance in academic literature. They also highlight the need for a robust corporate governance framework to foster genuine and impactful sustainability reporting practices.

The effectiveness of adopted strategies and best practices in corporate governance is contingent upon various factors, including government ownership, regional differences, and the evolving relationship between sustainability reporting and corporate governance.

**Challenges and Limitations Faced by Company Secretaries in Ireland**

The role of company secretaries in corporate governance is pivotal, acting as a bridge between the board and the management, ensuring compliance, and facilitating effective communication. However, in the evolving landscape of corporate governance, company secretaries face a myriad of challenges and limitations.

One of the primary challenges is the increasing complexity of regulatory frameworks. As corporate governance practices evolve, so do the regulations that govern them. For instance, the study by Duppati et al. (2019) on the relevance of boards in driving firm performance highlighted the impact of board size on performance, suggesting that larger boards might not always be beneficial. This finding poses a challenge for company secretaries in Ireland, who must ensure that the board's composition aligns with regulatory requirements while also considering the potential implications for firm performance (Duppati et al., 2019).

Another significant challenge is the "comply or explain" principle, which is central to many corporate governance codes, including the UK's Combined Code on Corporate Governance. Moore (2009) critically assessed this principle, highlighting the increased prescriptiveness of the Code over the years and the inclination of boards to produce generic corporate governance statements. Such challenges underscore the need for company secretaries to strike a balance between compliance and the provision of meaningful, company-specific information.

Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on board diversity poses both opportunities and challenges. While diversity, particularly in terms of gender and ethnicity, is recognized as a tool for enhancing firm performance, achieving it in practice can be challenging. Goyal et al. (2019) explored the perspective of board members on board diversity, emphasizing the importance of functional experience for board effectiveness. Their findings suggest that while gender and
ethnic diversity are essential, functional diversity is equally crucial for effective corporate governance. Company secretaries in Ireland, like their counterparts globally, navigate a complex landscape of evolving regulations, expectations, and best practices. Their role is not just about compliance but also about facilitating effective governance that aligns with the firm's objectives and stakeholder expectations.

**Potential Impacts on the Overall Corporate Landscape in Ireland**

The corporate landscape in Ireland, like many other jurisdictions, is undergoing significant transformation due to evolving corporate governance practices. These practices, driven by both internal and external factors, have the potential to reshape the way businesses operate, interact with stakeholders, and contribute to the broader economic ecosystem.

One of the most profound impacts on the corporate landscape is the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in governance structures. As highlighted by Eleanore and Petrin (2020), AI is set to revolutionize many aspects of the corporate world, including governance. While AI promises efficiencies and improvements, it also brings forth challenges such as potential harmful impacts on third parties, discriminatory practices, and data breaches. The European Union's 'The Expert Group’s Policy and Investment Recommendations for Trustworthy AI' offers guidelines to address these challenges. These guidelines emphasize a human-centric approach, promoting stakeholder-oriented corporate purposes, diversity, and fairness. However, the general nature of these guidelines leaves room for interpretation, necessitating more specific frameworks that align with company law rules and governance principles (Eleanore & Petrin, 2020).

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has also had a profound impact on corporate governance. Zattoni and Pugliese (2021) argue that the pandemic provides a unique opportunity to advance research on how various corporate governance mechanisms shape firms' decision-making and survival. The crisis will likely lead to structural changes in governance mechanisms, preparing firms for similar future events. The pandemic has also emphasized the importance of resilience, long-term orientation, and the need for corporations to be integrated into networks, whether through core shareholders, state ownership, or bank lending.

Another significant trend is the resurgence of nationalism in corporate governance. Gelter and Puaschunder (2021) note that the COVID-19 pandemic might lead to increased nationalist policies in corporate law to ensure that foreign ownership and interconnected supply chains do not jeopardize national security. This trend could have implications for international corporations operating in Ireland and their governance structures.

Lastly, the debate between shareholder primacy and stakeholder models of corporate governance continues to shape the corporate landscape. Karpoff (2021) argues for the traditional governance model based on shareholder interests but allows for deviations in circumstances where external impacts on other stakeholders are significant. Such deviations should be justified with a new type of double bottom line reporting, which combines traditional financial reporting with a statement of the social benefits of any deviations from shareholder value maximization.

The corporate landscape in Ireland is at an inflection point, with potential impacts from evolving corporate governance practices set to reshape the business environment. Companies, regulators,
and stakeholders must collaborate to navigate these changes effectively, ensuring that the corporate landscape remains robust, resilient, and conducive to sustainable growth.

**Recommendations for Improving Company Secretarial and Administrative Services**

The corporate governance landscape has undergone significant transformations over the years, with the role of Company Secretaries (CS) evolving in tandem. As corporations grapple with the complexities of modern business environments, the CS's role has become pivotal in ensuring ethical operations, safeguarding stakeholder interests, and facilitating effective governance mechanisms. This section delves into recommendations for enhancing the role of CS and administrative services, drawing insights from contemporary research.

Firstly, understanding the corporation’s reporting obligations is paramount. As highlighted by Okpara and Idowu, (2013) the CS's role has transitioned from a purely ministerial and administrative capacity to one that is deeply intertwined with managerial functions. This shift necessitates that CSs be well-versed with the intricacies of corporate reporting, ensuring transparency and adherence to regulatory standards. While the CS's role has historically been perceived as administrative, it is essential to dispel this notion and emphasize their strategic importance in governance structures.

Secondly, fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional development is crucial. The rapidly changing corporate landscape, marked by regulatory reforms, technological advancements, and shifting stakeholder expectations, requires CSs to be at the forefront of knowledge. Maci and D’Apolito's study (2021) on pension funds underscores the importance of staying abreast with new rules on corporate governance and investment strategies. By doing so, CSs can provide informed guidance to boards, ensuring that governance practices align with contemporary standards and best practices.

Furthermore, enhancing stakeholder participation in governance processes can significantly improve administrative services. As Solomon (2020) posits, corporate governance is instrumental in ensuring ethical operations and safeguarding stakeholder interests. By actively involving stakeholders in decision-making processes, corporations can foster trust, enhance transparency, and ensure that governance practices resonate with stakeholder values and expectations.

Moreover, the differentiation between professional managers and management arising from ownership has been a topic of debate. De Bono & van der Heijden (2008) emphasized the accountability of owner managers for controlling the enterprise and managing the business. They highlighted that managers with a higher degree of ownership tend to focus on strategic functions, while those more remotely attached to ownership lean towards operational functional areas. This distinction underscores the need for a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities, ensuring that the CS's role aligns with the strategic vision of the corporation.

Lastly, leveraging technological advancements can streamline administrative processes and bolster governance mechanisms. The digital revolution offers a plethora of tools and platforms that can be harnessed to enhance efficiency, improve communication, and facilitate real-time monitoring of governance practices. Embracing digital solutions not only augments administrative capabilities but also positions corporations to navigate the complexities of the modern business environment effectively.

The role of Company Secretaries and administrative services is pivotal in shaping the corporate governance landscape. Corporations can bolster their governance practices by understanding
reporting obligations, fostering continuous learning, enhancing stakeholder participation, and leveraging technological advancements, ensuring sustainability, profitability, and stakeholder trust.

CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this study was to critically examine the strategies and best practices adopted in company secretarial and administrative services in modern Irish corporations. Through a meticulous exploration of the current landscape of Irish corporate governance, the study shed light on the evolving roles of company secretaries, the economic implications of efficient administrative services, and the legal significance of these roles within the regulatory frameworks.

Utilizing a blend of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, the study delved deep into the historical evolution of administrative services in Irish corporations, juxtaposing it with the modern challenges and technological advancements affecting the role. The findings revealed a paradigm shift in the responsibilities of company secretaries, emphasizing their strategic importance in governance structures. The research also underscored the significance of continuous learning, stakeholder participation, and the integration of technological advancements in enhancing administrative services.

The analysis of the findings provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by company secretaries in Ireland, the potential impacts on the overall corporate landscape, and actionable recommendations for improvement. These recommendations, rooted in empirical evidence, advocate for a clearer understanding of reporting obligations, fostering a culture of continuous professional development, and leveraging digital solutions to streamline administrative processes.

In conclusion, this study has successfully achieved its objectives by offering a holistic view of the company secretarial and administrative services landscape in Ireland. The insights gleaned provide a roadmap for corporations, regulators, and stakeholders to navigate the complexities of the modern business environment, ensuring robust governance practices that resonate with stakeholder values and expectations. The recommendations put forth serve as a beacon for future endeavors, guiding corporations towards sustainable growth, profitability, and unwavering stakeholder trust.

Reference


**Conflict of Interest**
The authors want to confirm that they do not have any conflicts of interest to report.