

Assessing Supply Chain Management Performance with Independence and Responsibility of Internal Auditor to Adapt to Effective Audit Mechanisms

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Abstract— The work performed by audit teams within different organizations has been improving over the years. Internal auditors are part of the central role in the process of providing assurance and preventing fraud within an organization. Additionally, independent internal audit personnel have the responsibility of ensuring that there is a proper audit practice that is found in the firm. This paper seeks to develop a balanced assessment approach to assess the performance of supply chain management which evaluates daily business operations in four areas: financial perspective (or shareholders), learning and growth, customers and in-company business processes. The appreciation of the duties that are performed by the internal audit teams are mainly due to the major function that they play, especially in initiating an enabling environment or financial and economic organizational support. The study sought to carry out an in-depth discussion on the independence and the overall burden of internal auditors that is related to the promotion of effective audit practices and mechanisms. Additionally, the researcher will carry out interviews to ascertain the independence of internal auditors and examine their role in promoting effective internal audit mechanisms. The researcher will carry out the research using very specific mode of statistical analysis. The researcher will carry out the analysis of the hypothesis in the analysis using the Chi-Square technique and the application of SPSS as a major statistical tool.

Keywords— *Supply Chain Management, Internal auditor independence, Audit mechanisms, Organizational management*

1. Introduction

The concepts of SCM and Internal Auditor have recently gained wide attention in business and academia. Both fields focus on allocating resources to support business activities in order to gain a competitive advantage. Although they currently represent two different research areas, we see a high synergy potential in an integrated approach.

According to Edward, the role of assuring by auditors is always based on the shared values of independence and responsibility, which they bear within an organization. The issues of freedom of auditors and its contribution to success have, therefore, attracted much research, though it has mainly been based on the role that is played by the internal auditors [1]. Recently, there has been more focus on the role of the internal audit function as a means of creating credibility and even responsibility. The increased level of outcome has mainly been informed by the need to come up with a more open and reliable management decision making process. The management teams always heavily rely on the information that is given by the team of auditors. As such, the available reports and even the recommendations form an essential part of the management decision making process. Based on their role, therefore, audit teams can enhance their position through the provision of audit assurance and even the service of management advice and direction.

The role and appreciation of any audit roles and the process of efficient corporate management are anchored on the level of reliability that is provided by an internal audit system. The internal auditor is considered one of the most significant support systems that the other employees and even the owners of an organization rely [2-6]. An internal auditor may be seen to act as a steward of the company owners, making their role central to the success of any entity. Pedneault & Davia assert that the part of the audit team and department always has the overall objective of increasing the organizational output through the creation of return on investments, reliable financial reporting standards, progressive growth, strong organizational leadership and a platform for acceptable ethical practices within the commercial arm of an entity [7, 8].

In considerations of the roles of the audit department within an organization, this analysis mainly focuses on the review on the increasing focus on auditor independence with a view of

linking the said levels of autonomy to the standards of verification department effectiveness. In assessing the value associated with the audit practice within an organization, the study focused on the recommendations that were made by Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) together with different professional bodies which are concerned with the overall field of audit [9]. The study mainly focused on improving the overall knowledge within the review filed by bringing out the most critical aspects of audit independence and even the issues surrounding objectivity in the effective audit process.

2. Research Methodology and Literature Review

2.1. Problems of the Study

Amidst the growing need for internal audit processes within different organizations, the issue of freedom of auditors has always been raised in many instances [10, 11]. Within organizations, the internal auditors have so much responsibility that is related to the upholding of organizational ethical standards and even the prevention of fraud. Auditors are expected to conduct themselves with utmost sincerity while they seek to carry out the verification of the financial statements of an entity. The question, however, that most people still find answers is related to the similarities existing between the levels of independence of the internal auditors together with how such standards may be useful in influencing the various audit roles within an organization.

According to Bird, (there has been the recent spotlight in over the involvement of other audit personnel, mainly the audit committee in helping the audit personnel to achieve their functions [12]. There has been a gap in studies regarding the assistance that the other audit personnel and the management contribute towards the independence of such audit teams. Consequently, the level of performance of the internal auditors has always mainly been affected by the persons surrounding the operations of an internal audit department. This study will, therefore, also seek to come up with the analysis on the contribution of the audit committee and company management in contributing towards the independence and performance of an auditor.

2.2. Objectives of the Study

The major role of the study outcome is to come up with the ways through which the independence and responsibility of auditors help them in adapting to effective internal audit mechanisms. The other objectives of the study include:

1. Evaluation of the components of freedom of an internal auditor.
2. Explanation of the responsibility of an internal auditor.
3. Enumeration of how internal auditors achieve an effective audit process.

2.3. Hypotheses of the Study

In trying to examine the above objectives, the researcher came up with the following null hypotheses, which sought to be tested:

H1 The independence of an auditor does not influence the audit outcome.

H2 Auditors never take responsibility for ineffective internal audit mechanisms.

2.4. Literature Review

The internal audit department within an organization is always considered as one of the fundamental functions within a firm. The level of efficiency within an internal audit department is still one of the most critical components that aid in promoting and enhancing the prevention of fraud and verification of the accounting documents and processes [13-15]. Over the years, the role of an internal auditor has mostly been evolving from a just being responsible for the verification of documents to be at the core of the decision-making process within a firm. Auditors are now viewed as an essential part of the internal success of entry, mainly due to the task that they perform and which is linked directly to the successful outcome of a firm. For a proper corporate governance structure, an internal audit department has also been seen as one of the significant support systems which every firm needs to have. The department needs to exist as its role is critical in helping the directors to have an insight into the internal operations of a firm.

The functions of the audit department with an organization are always tasked with passing responsibility for overseeing effective and accurate management systems by the managers of an organization [15]. The role of the auditor is, therefore, to help to execute the efficiency of an organization as required by the directors who serve at the board and the company shareholders. Overall, an internal auditor provides critical information to the management and offers advice that is important in promoting sustainable growth, development and even success of any entity.

The process of achieving audit quality is always supported through the independence of an auditor. According to Fountain, for an effective management system, the top managers still have to agree to have an oversight body that checks and looks at their performance over time. Since the

internal auditor is tasked with that responsibility, they should be very independent and not have any form of influence in executing their duties [17]. It is for the above reason that the internal auditors are always expected to report directly to the board of management of a company, a fact which is seen to help in promoting their independence [18]. The issue of freedom of the auditors is also a fact that is covered within the audit ethics of practice. As part of their professional guidelines, internal auditors are expected to wholly operate and carry out their tasks specifically within the required laws and regulations set out by the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA). The institute goes further to define internal audit to include an aspect of their independence as a core role of the audit duties with an organization.

Working independently within an internal audit office is always one of the core factors that help in creating an atmosphere through which an auditor can wholly execute their mandate. The functions of an internal auditor may also revolve around the avoidance of any legal consequences to the actions of an organizations management [10]. The audit team must always ensure that they carry out their functions while considering the shareholders and help to promote sustainability, openness and even transparency in their operations. Additionally, the audit team must promote efficiency through the identification and prevention of the various risks that may threaten the proper functioning of a firm.

The role of internal auditors largely varies depending on the legal environment in which they operate, the organization size, complexity of the audit process and the level of experience and professionalism of the audit teams. Moeller, asserts that despite the differences that may occur within the work environment, the auditors must always ensure that they operate within the requirements that are provided by the IIA [16]. The body promotes all companies and private entities still to set up an active internal audit department that has the main role and function of executing effective management of the accounts. The body also insists that companies have to vet audits to confirm their conformity to the international audit standards and their level of professionalism and integrity. Moreover, such organizations must always provide a very conducive, open and independent environment for the auditors to perform their functions effectively.

The risk assessment role of the internal audit department within organizations also forms a critical part of the success of such an entity [13]. After coming up with an internal risk assessment report, an internal audit team is always expected to provide several recommendations in cases where such a risk may be too high for an organization to

contain [18]. The risk assessment role should be accompanied by the proper ethical considerations, evaluation of the alternative process of prevention any form of risk and even the appropriate channels of communication of the said risks to the firm leadership and the board of the firm. All the above methods are always aimed at improving and promoting effective and efficient governing processes within a firm.

One other component of independence of an audit department within an organization should be based on the level of financing [19, 20]. The financial resources of an internal audit department should always be set aside and approved by the board of management to make them not rely on the organizational management for support [9]. The audit department always sets up their budget and the allocation should ever be made to aid in their operations for specific periods of time. The finances should be approved by the board to prevent any incidences of conflicting interest were the internal managers of the organization to make the above improvements [21-23]. Proper, adequate but reasonable budget allocations should be made to help in executing the audit functions mainly because the audit functions help a firm to realize its long terms goals of financial performance and success.

The communication of audit information has also been found to constitute an essential part of audit effectiveness and independence. After carrying out through analysis and verification process, the internal audit teams must always use the available channels to present the board of management and directors with their findings [19]. Additionally, the communication process should also contain other aspects of the audit requirements such as the necessary resource requirements, the planned activities of the audit teams and any other issues that they may need the attention of the different stakeholders. Klein, noted that reporting should, on the other hand, contain the various recommendations on the various governance issues that may arise, the various risks that the organization faces and the preventive measures and recommendations that may be implemented to help in the reduction of such threats [15].

In the current research we try to

- The independence of an internal auditor influences the audit outcome
- The internal auditor has the major role of assurance and verification.
- Internal audit achieve effectiveness by following all the ethical standards.
- The internal auditors are as important as the external auditors to a firm's success.

Apart from the above steps, the researcher also expected to have very accurate and reliable results related to the outcome of the synthesis. Some of the significant expected results that were imminent included the fact on whether the independence of an auditor influences the level of audit outcome and if the audit personnel within an organization have to take any form of responsibility for cases of an ineffective internal audit process and mechanisms.

2.5. Research Originality and Uniqueness

One of the significant differences between this synthesis and other past ones that resulted to the need to carry out was related to the specific need for the researcher to come out and make clarifications on the relationship of an independent audit body and the resultant influence on the level of income [2]. Further, the researcher cemented the above point by carrying out an analysis that sought to prove or disapprove the high end. What is unique on the above findings is that the researcher employed the use of advanced statistical measures and tools such as the use of SPSS and the Chi-square to try and verify the results of the data that had been gathered by the researcher while conducting the study [7]. The uniqueness was also reflected in the results which the researchers got from the survey which explained the above relationships but in a more scientific way.

Another major difference that was noted in the above study was related to the approach that the researcher used in the analysis of the issue of independence and responsibility of an internal auditor. The study, unlike past research, focused on effective internal audit based on responsibility of the organization's auditor [1]. Past studies, according to research, shows that much has always been based on the main function of the external auditors in executing audit roles. Additionally, the conclusion also laid much emphasis on the initiation of audit success through the implementation of standard procedures for the internal audit departments. The study sought to raise more awareness on the need to have more regulatory frameworks that would initiate uniformity in the discharge of duties, especially for the internal audit personnel.

Lastly, the uniqueness of the outcome also focused on the ability of the researcher to keenly link the achievements of internal audit performance to the issues of responsibility and indigence [4]. In most organizations, the researcher realized that the issue of independence had become of so much concern mainly due to the deficiency of focus and appreciation of the internal audit offices within organizations. The researcher mainly asserted that the success of any organization mainly relies on the roles and functions of internal audit personnel. The researcher also sought to point out that the various management functions and decision-making processes are supported through the roles of the internal audit teams.

3. Results

The researcher used different techniques in coming up with valid and reliable data on the topic. The study adopted an approach that allowed the researcher to test for various hypotheses before coming up with a final remark on the outcome of the study. The analysis focused on an interviewed through which the persons within the audit departments were interviewed to give their opinion on various issues regarding the hypothesis. The results that the researcher received from the respondents forced the primary basis of the analysis and thus formed part of the SPSS analysis components that the researcher ported to use. In carrying out the study, the researchers mainly used the Chi-Square techniques to carry out the tests and come up with conclusive results. The use of SPSS tool was a significant accompaniment in completing the data analysis process for the research. The independence and responsibility of an auditor is the major basis through which a company may establish a strong and reliable internal control system. The effectiveness of an organization will heavily look up to the ability of the auditor to come up with procedures within the organization that may help to reduce cases of fraud and loss of financial assists. Figure 1 below represents a typical example of such a line of responsibility:

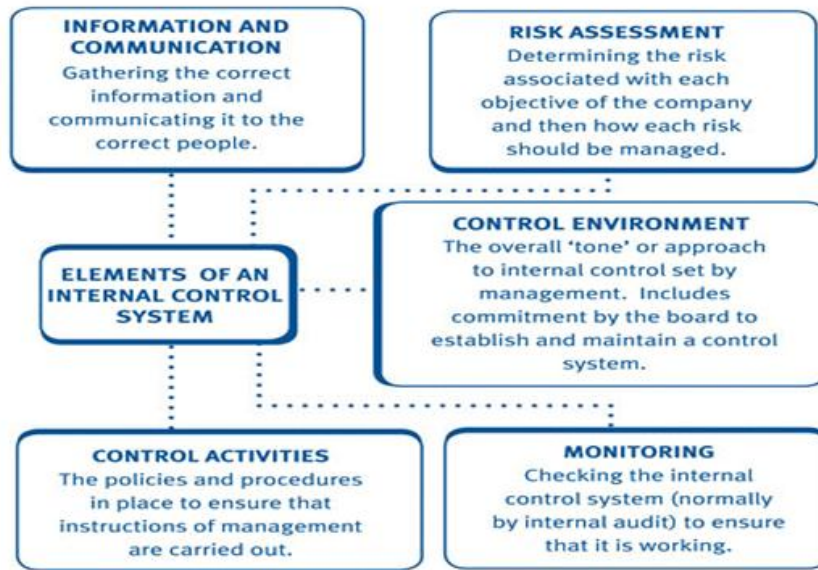


Figure 1. Various Elements of Internal Control

All the above five components of internal control for a crucial part of the internal audit function in a bid to assess their role in promoting efficiency and effectiveness within an organizational setup.

3.1. Supply Chain Management

Through effective management of the supply chain, an organization adds value to customers and various other stakeholders in terms of providing quality and efficiency in products and services. SCM has originated in the manufacturing industry and has since been implemented in various industries, including services such as retail [15]. SCM research has examined a number of problems, challenges, and opportunities to improve and even optimize functions and systems ranging from

procurement of raw materials, assembly of components, to delivery of finished products to distribution centers and end customers.

The researcher also found out that the other major component of internal audit risk is the process of carrying out risk evaluation. There are standardized procedures through which a proper risk evaluation may be done to help a firm in reducing losses and cases of fraud. Effective risk evaluation, through a part of an internal audit function, must always be carried out within an environment of independence. To achieve active audit roles, the researcher found out that the audit team must always follow a concrete audit risk assessment plan. The figure below shows a typical risk assessment plan for the internal audit function.



Figure 2. Components of risk evaluation

3.2. Data Analysis and Hypotheses Testing

The findings had provided for two null hypotheses, H_1 and H_2 . The researcher sought to come up with a detailed analysis that provided an answer to the above tests. Each hypothesis was tested independently and a conclusion drawn from the results of the research.

3.2.1. Testing the First Hypothesis

H_1 The independence of an auditor does not influence the audit outcome.

The above hypothesis was meant to test whether the independence of an auditor influences the level of audit results and outcome. To come up with conclusive responses on the above subject matter, the researcher interviewed audit personnel to come up with definitive answers and opinions. The researcher then represented the reactions in a tabular form which is given below. The tabular representation formed the basis of the analysis that was undertaken by the researcher to prove or disapprove the null hypothesis, which had been given earlier in this research.

Table 1. Does the independence of an auditor influence the audit outcome?

Officeholders	Response		Total
	Support	Do not support	
Senior audit personnel	79	148	227
Other employees	9	152	161
Column total value	88	300	388

The total value, n is given by:

$$N = 388$$

The above data represents a two by 2 Chi-Square calculator. To carry out the calculation, the researcher chose a significance level of 0.5.

Table 2. Responses from respondents

Rank		Support	Do not support	Total
	Count	79	148	227
	Expected count	135.1	91.9	227.0
	Residual	-56.1	56.1	-
Rank		Support	Do not support	Total
	Count	9	152	161
	Expected	65.1	95.9	161.0
	Residual	-56.1	56.1	-
Total	count	88	300	388
	Expected count	200.2	187.8	388

Therefore, the value of the test for independence or the degree of freedom of (df) is given by:

$$df = (r - 1) \times (c - a)$$

$$(1)$$

$$= (2 - 1) \times (2 - a) = 1$$

The value of the test statistics is 138.9. additionally, the value of the count (c) and that of the standards residual value (r) are given as shown below:

$$R=2; C=2$$

Table 3. Pearson chi-square test

Statistical Method	Figure	Df	Asymp sig.	Probability
Pearson Chi-square	138.9 ^a	1	0	0
Ration of likelihood	160.9	1	0	0
Linear association	18.5 ^b	1	0	0
^a Expected minimum value count.				
^b The relationships between the various correlations.				

Based on the value of the above data, it is clear that the count that is expected is less than (5). The results also show that the expected number is 65.1. Since the value of probability is less than the cost of 0.05, which is the standard of measure, it can be conclusively concluded that the null hypothesis has been rejected. Based on the results, we can, therefore, find that the independence of an auditor has so much influence on the audit outcome.

H2 Auditors never take responsibility for ineffective internal audit mechanisms.

The above hypothesis was meant to show whether auditors take responsibility for any faults that take place while pursuing their audit tasks. The results are as shown in Table 4 below:

3.2.2. Testing the Second Hypothesis

Table 4. Do auditors never take responsibility for ineffective internal audit mechanisms?

Officeholders	Response		Total
	Support	Do not support	
Senior audit personnel	83	144	227
Other employees	12	149	161
Column total value	95	293	388

N= 388

The researcher chose a significance level of 0.5.

Table 5. Responses from Respondents

Rank		Support	Do not support	Total
	Senior audit personnel	Count	83	144
Expected count		141.2	85.3	227.0
Residual		-53.1	53.1	-
Other employees	Count	12	149	161
	Expected	68.4	92.6	161.0
	Residual	-56.1	56.1	-
Total	count	95	293	388
	Expected count	209.6	178.4	388

Table 6. Pearson chi-square test

Statistical Method	Figure	Df	Asymp sig.	Probability
Pearson Chi-square	125.7 ^a	1	0	0
Ration of likelihood	166.9	1	0	0
Linear association	17.5 ^b	1	0	0

Based on the above results, the value of probability is less than of 0.05. The study, therefore, concludes that auditors always take responsibility for ineffective internal audit mechanisms

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, the researcher realized that audit outcome is influenced by so many factors. The independence of an auditor is one of the most important factors that will have an outcome on an audit. The researcher also found out that the top management is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that the body of auditors is fully independent and performs their tasks diligently. The outcome also found out that the in charge of the internal audit processes oversee the functions of an audit team and provide them with the correct environment to carry out their tasks.

The researcher also examined and found out that the responsibility of internal auditors includes the role of providing assurance of the financial statements through proper verification of financial documents. In addition, the researcher realized that the internal auditor should carry out their tasks within the provisions and ethical standards that guide the audit profession and work.

In ascertaining the hypothesis, the researcher carried out a test which found out that the independence of an auditor has so much influence on the audit outcome. The above results were found after a conclusive and detailed analysis using the Chi-Square method and the overall analysis consisting of the use of SPSS. Additionally, the researcher found out that there are different ways and means through which the team of internal audit personnel achieve effectiveness in the internal audit process. The above process was successful mainly because the researcher used various means such as interview processes to ascertain the above process. Lastly, the researcher also concluded that auditors always take responsibility for ineffective internal audit mechanisms. The above fact was also based on the test conducted on the second hypothesis.

The researcher also came up with two hypothesis which he sought to test to prove their viability or if they were not true. The theory which

the researcher hoped to check was whether the independence of an auditor did not influence the audit outcome and if auditors never take responsibility for ineffective internal audit mechanisms. In carrying out the above test, the researcher was to use various statistical tools such as SPSS and also employ the use of a Chi-Square test. The researcher also identified the gap which the study was seeking to fill by coming up with the relevant problems related to the study. The researcher also came up with different objectives which revolved around the promotion of useful of the internal audit through the creation of independence and responsibility channels.

The researcher also formulated a detailed literature review which formed a substantial part of the study. The survey consisted of past findings that related directly to the internal audit areas under the investigation. The researcher specifically sought to look into the various modes of promoting the independence of internal auditors and how the above factors influenced their performance. The researcher presented the results through the actual analysis process which revealed that both hypotheses were rejected. Further, the research came up with some implications for gap areas from where more study could be conducted. Lastly, the researcher presented a raft of recommendations that was aimed at helping in the improvement of the internal audit roles enhancing the promotion of independence and responsibility.

5. Implications

There were several obvious implications that the researcher presented in his study. First, the researcher realized that there was a gap in the study area that related to the relationships that exist between the independence of auditors and the level of organizational influence on the level of autonomy. The researcher relied that despite the general knowledge that the management was responsible for enhancing auditors independence, the experience on the execution of the above process was mostly lacking. Additionally, the researcher also realized a gap within the area of the values and ethical standards of auditors and how they influence the level of audit responsibility. Despite the existence of various ethical standards for auditors, the researcher realized that there was

minimal outcome that was related to the level of such independence and the overall outcome that relates to freedom. The researchers also failed to explore how various audit bodies have successfully interpreted ethics to promote standards.

The researcher also realized that there was a significant gap that was related to the enforcement strategies, especially for the independence and execution of all the various audit roles. The researcher concluded that the difference in the level of enforcement was mainly influenced by the ethics and operational guidelines despite there being a gap in various researches to support the researcher's assertions.

6. Recommendations

The researcher, after carrying out an extensive study to find out whether there is a possibility of the independence and responsibility of an auditor to adapt to an effective audit was viable, came up with some recommendations. The recommendations were as a result of the gap in the study that the researcher identified. One major proposal that was put forward by the researcher was that there was a need to implement more regulatory frameworks that would enable the implementation of an auditor's independence. Unlike the external auditors, the researcher realized that there were minimal regulations that could be seen to influence the level of auditors to work through independent means. Thus, the internal audit function was to reduce the risk based on the adverse audit outcome that resulted from the lack of independence.

Another primary recommendation that the researcher also put forward was related to the need to make audit personnel more responsible for various audit queries and negligence which happens in the course of the audit process. The researcher realized that there was a gap regarding the legal requirements that made auditors responsible for their actions and mistakes. The study also revealed that the process of implementing a regulatory framework for holding internal auditors accountable for their efforts was an internal management affair. There were no standards procedures on how the process would be managed and implemented, a method which created a massive gap in the audit field. The researcher, therefore, noted that there was also need to come up with a comprehensive and elaborate process of making all audit work and processes uniform across the industry. The above need was based on the fact that uniformity would enable the various professional within audit departments to have a platform through which they may enhance their practice and promote audit rules of engagement.

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