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# The Effect of Competence, Independence, and Size of Public Accounting Firms on Audit Quality

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#### **Abstract**

Auditor requires competence and independence as well as the support from the size of public accounting firms to improve audit quality. The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of competence, independence and the size of public accounting firms on audit quality. This research subject is the auditor in Bandung, which have at least 2 years of experience in a public accounting firm. The research sample is the auditor in Bandung who have worked at least two years in a public accounting firm with total respondents of 59 people. The results showed that the competency of auditors is based on knowledge and experience and independence of an auditor that is honest, impartial, and report the findings in accordance with the evidence as well as the size of the public accounting firm that affect audit quality. To produce a qualified audit, a certified public accountant who works in an audit team is required to have the competence along with good and sufficiend independence.

**Keywords:** Competence; Independence; Public Accounting Firms; Audit Quality

#### Introduction

The financial statements are an important part of the annual report submitted by the directors or management of the corporation to its stakeholders. These stakeholders are the users of financial statements, those who are interested in the contents of the financial statements. Examination of financial statements is intended to assess the reasonableness of the financial statements based on accounting principles that apply in Indonesia (Pardede et al, 2015). The information contained in the financial statements is very useful for them in making business decisions (Purba, 2016). Financial statements that have been audited by a fair public accountant are more reliable than financial statements that are not or have not yet been audited.

Parties who can audit financial statements are public accountants who will carry out audits in accordance with the provisions of the auditing standards set by the Public Accountants Professional Association. To support its professionalism, the auditor in carrying out his audit duties must be guided by the audit standards set by the Indonesian Institute of Accountants (IAI), id est: general standards, fieldwork standards and reporting standards. General standards are a reflection of the personal quality that

an auditor must possess that requires the auditor to have sufficient technical expertise and training in carrying out audit procedures (Sari, 2011).

Audit quality is all probability where the auditor when auditing the client's financial statements can find violations that occur in the client's accounting system and report them in the audited financial statements, where in carrying out their duties the auditor is guided by auditing standards and the relevant public accountant code of ethics (Tjun et al, (2012). Good audit quality will be produced from financial statements that can be trusted as a basis for decision making (Badjuri, 2011). In addition, the AAA Financial Accounting Committee (2000) in Christiawan (2002) states that "Audit quality is determined by 2 things: competence and independence". In addition, according to DeAngelo (1981) states that the audit quality of public accountants can be seen from the size of the KAP that conducts the audit.

Competence relates to adequate education and experience owned by public accountants in the fields of auditing and accounting. In carrying out audits, public accountants must act as an expert in the field of accounting and auditing (Christiawan, 2002).

Independence can be interpreted as a mental attitude that is free from influence, is not controlled by other parties, does not depend on others, also there is honesty in the auditor in considering facts and there are impartial objectives in the auditor in formulating and expressing his opinion (Tjun et al, 2012). Independence is one of the ethical components that must be maintained by public accountants. Independent means that public accountants are not easily influenced, because they carry out work in the public interest. Public accountants are not justified in favor of anyone's interests.

The size of the Public Accounting Firm (KAP) can affect audit quality by assuming that large companies tend to prefer large KAPs because they are believed to have more competent auditor personnel. In addition, large KAP usually get audit quality is often associated with auditor scale (Firth & Liau-Tan, 1998) which is considered to have advantages in four ways, id est: (i) the large number and variety of clients handled by KAP; (ii) the variety of services offered; (iii) wide geographical coverage, including the existence of international affiliations; (iv) the large number of audit staff in a KAP. The auditor's reputation (as measured by the KAP size) is positively related to the quality of financial reporting (Nindita & Siregar, 2012). Based on these advantages, DeAngelo (1981) also Watts and Zimmerman (1986) argue that auditor size will positively influence audit quality. Thus, it is estimated that compared to small KAPs, large KAPs have better abilities in conducting audits, so as to produce higher audit quality.

# Theoretical Framework and the Development of Hypotheses

This section presents the logical framework based on theory and relevant previous study results to build three hypotheses. The first is the hypothesis to explain why competence can have the impact on audit quality. The second one is the hypothesis to explain why independence can have the impact on audit quality. The third one is the hypothesis to explain why the size of The Public Accounting Firm (KAP) can have the impact on audit quality.

### The Impact of Competence on Audit Quality

Competency is an important factor influencing audit quality. The auditor must have the ability, expertise, and also have sufficient experience in understanding the criteria to determine the evidence that can support to determine the decision to be taken. Competence is related to expertise, knowledge, and experience so that a competent auditor is an auditor who has sufficient knowledge, training, skills and

experience in order to successfully complete his audit work (Tandiontong, 2015). Auditors are required to have sufficient competence and technical training in auditing. Audit auditors are also required to uphold and adhere to professional code of ethics while carrying out their professional duties. Auditors must be competent to achieve good audit quality. Saiffudin (2004) defines that people who are competent are people with the skills to do work easily, quickly, intuitively, very rarely or never make mistakes. Based on these theories, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows: H<sub>1</sub>: Competence has a positive impact on Audit Quality.

# The Impact of Independence on Audit Quality

According to the Professional Accountant Standards Standard 220.1 (SPAP 02: 2001) states that the Auditor must be independent, meaning that he is not easily influenced because the Auditor carries out his work in the public interest. Thus, the Auditor is not justified in favor of the interests of anyone, because after all the perfect technical expertise that the Auditor has, will lose the impartiality which is actually very important to maintain freedom of opinion. However, the independence in the statement (SPAP 02: 2001) does not mean the attitude of a claimant in a court case, but rather can be equated with the attitude of impartiality of a judge. Independence according to Arens (2008) can be interpreted to take an unbiased perspective. The auditor must not only be independent in fact, but must also be independent in appearance. Independence in fact exists when the auditor is truly able to maintain an unbiased attitude throughout the audit, while independence in appearance is the result of other interpretations of this independence. Based on these theories, the second hypothesis is formulated as follows: H<sub>2</sub>: Independence has a positive impact on Audit Quality.

# The Impact of the Size of the Public Accounting Firm (KAP) on Audit Quality

KAP size can be measured through the number of partners, number of auditors, number of clients, and total revenue. According to Halim (2008) the organizational staff hierarchy of Public Accounting Firms in general is as follows: (1) Partner is a top legal client relationship; (2) Managers; (3) Senior accountants; (4) Junior accountants. The size of the public accounting firm has an influence on the quality of audits produced. A public accounting firm can survive because it has won the trust of its clients. A large public accounting firm has a larger number of clients, users of financial statements must assume a higher quality audit produced by the public accounting firm. In accordance with the statement of Onwuchekwa et al., (2012) which explains that audit quality increases with the size of the accounting firm. Riyatno (2007) uses KAP size indicators as a proxy for quality by differentiating KAP into large KAP (Big Four Accounting Firms) and small KAP (Non Big Four Accounting Firms). The KAP size indicator is based on the number of clients served by a KAP, the number of partners or members who joined, and the total income earned. Based on these theories, the third hypothesis is formulated as follows: H<sub>3</sub>: The size of the Public Accounting Firm has a positive impact on Audit Quality.

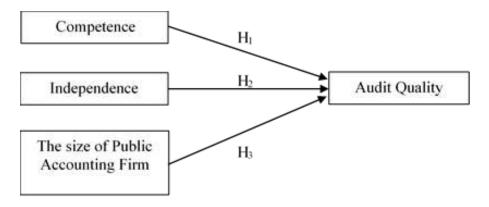


Figure 1. Conceptual model

#### Research Methodology

This section describes some points: (1) the type of research; (2) population and sample; (3) method of sampling; (4) the method of data analysis.

#### The Type of Research

The research conducted is to use a quantitative research approach because it uses measurement of research variables with numbers and analyzes data in this study using statistics. Based on the research objectives, this type of research is causal. Causal is a variable affecting other variables (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). Explanatory Research is research that aims to explain the relationship between variables and phenomena (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). Thus, causal explanatory is explaining the relationship between variables and testing hypotheses that have been previously formulated and aims to explain various events and research phenomena.

#### **Population and Sample**

The population of this research is all auditors in Bandung who have experience working in public accounting firms. The sample of this study is the Auditor who has experience working in a Public Accounting Firm for at least two years.

### **Method of Sampling**

Method of sampling used is a survey method using a questionnaire. The results of the survey method with questionnaire data collection techniques are primary data.

### The Method of Data Analysis

The method of data analysis used in this study is multiple linear regression analysis. Purbayu & Santoso (2005) suggests that multiple correlation is the correlation of several independent variables with one dependent variable. If a dependent variable depends on more than one independent variable, the

correlation between the two variables is called multiple regression analysis (Sulaiman, 2004). The multiple linear regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + e.$$
 (1)

#### Results

Respondents in this study amounted to 59 respondents and researchers grouped respondents based on length of work. The length of work is divided into two parts, i.e. <2 years and  $\geq 2$  years. Respondents who have worked less than two years are 19 respondents (32.2,%). While respondents who have worked more than or equal to two years are 40 respondents (67.8%). This shows that the number of respondents who have worked longer is / is equal to two years more.

Respondents in this study amounted to 59 respondents and researchers grouped by position, namely associates, junior auditors, accountants, senior auditors and partners. Respondents who work as associates are 2 respondents (3.4%), as junior auditors are 38 respondents (64.4%), as accountants are 1 respondent (1.7%), as senior auditors are 1 respondent (1.7%) and as a partner were 17 respondents (28.8%). This shows that the majority of respondents work as junior auditors.

Respondents in this study amounted to 59 respondents and researchers based on the size of the KAP big four (EY, KPMG, PWC, and Deloitte) and non-big four. Respondents who have mininal experience of working for two years in the Big Four Public Accounting Firm are 24 respondents (40.7%) and those who work in a non big four Public Accountant office for a minimum of two years are 35 respondents (59.3%). This shows that respondents who have worked in non big four public accounting firms for at least two years more than those who have worked in the big four.

### The Test Results of Classical Assumptions

# 1. Normality Test Result

**Table 1. Normality Test Results** 

#### Unstandardized Residual 59 Normal Parameters<sup>a</sup> Mean .0000000 Std. Deviation 4.74720003 Most Extreme Differences Absolute .263 Positive .149 Negative -.263 Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z 2.017 Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) .877

# One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Test distribution is Normal.

Based on Table 1, it can be concluded that all the data are normally distributed because the data meets the assumption of normality, namely the Asymp Sig. above the significance value. The data for this research has a significance value of 0.877 which is greater than the significance set at 0.05.

#### 2. Multicollinearity Detection Result

**Table 2. Multicollinearity Test Results** 

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |                             |            |                           |        |      |            |               |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|------------|---------------|
|                           | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients |        |      | Collineari | ty Statistics |
| Model                     | В                           | Std. Error | Beta                      | t      | Sig. | Tolerance  | VIF           |
| 1 (Constant)              | 23.737                      | 6.626      |                           | 3.582  | .001 |            |               |
| Total_i                   | 396                         | .242       | 215                       | -1.637 | .107 | .981       | 1.020         |
| Total_k                   | .126                        | .188       | .087                      | .670   | .505 | .997       | 1.003         |
| Ukuran_KAP                | -2.442                      | 2.275      | 141                       | -1.073 | .288 | .983       | 1.018         |

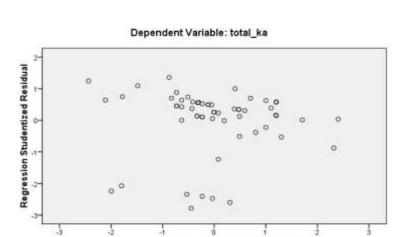
a. Dependent Variable: total ka

Based on Table 2, it can be concluded that there is no multicollinearity problem. The following description:

- a. In the Competency Variable  $(X_1)$ , the value of Variance Influence Factor (VIF) of 1,003 is less than ten and the tolerance value of 0,997 is greater than 0.05.
- b. In the Independence Variable  $(X_2)$ , the value of Variance Influence Factor (VIF) is 1,020 less than ten and the tolerance value of 0.981 is greater than 0.05.
- c. In KAP Variable Size  $(X_3)$ , the Variance Influence Factor (VIF) value of 1,018 is less than ten and the tolerance value of 0.983 is greater than 0.05.

# 1) Heteroskedasticity Test Result

Based on the scatterplot output Figure 2, it can be seen that the points spread and do not form certain clear patterns. So, it can be concluded that there is no heterokedasticity problem.



Scatterplot

Figure 2. Heteroscedasticity Test Results

Regression Standardized Predicted Value

#### The Estimation Result of the Regression Model

1. Simultaneously (Test F)

Table 3. Simultaneous Testing Results ANOVA<sup>b</sup>

|              | Model Sum of Squares |          | df | Mean Square | F     | Sig.  |
|--------------|----------------------|----------|----|-------------|-------|-------|
| 1 Regression |                      | 93.289   | 3  | 31.096      | 1.336 | .000a |
| •            | Residual             | 1280.270 | 55 | 23.278      |       |       |
|              | Total                | 1373.559 | 58 |             |       |       |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ukuran\_KAP, Total\_k, Total\_i

b. Dependent Variable: total\_ka

Based on Table 3, it can be seen in the Sig. that the value of p value  $\leq \alpha = .000a \leq 0.05$  (H<sub>0</sub> is rejected) so that it can be concluded that simultaneous competence, independence, and the size of the public accounting firm influence simultaneously on audit quality. The results of this study support the research that in order to produce quality audits, a public accountant who works in an audit team is required to have sufficient competence and good independence (Elfarini, 2007). While independence according to Christiawan (2002) means that public accountants are not easily influenced. A large public accounting firm has a larger number of clients, users of financial statements must assume a higher quality audit produced by the public accounting firm. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the competence, independence, and size of public accounting firms affect audit quality.

### 2. Partially (t Test)

Table 4. Partial Testing Results
Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

| Model        | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | 4     | C:~  |
|--------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| Model        | В                           | Std. Error | Beta                      | l     | Sig. |
| 1 (Constant) | 23.737                      | 6.626      |                           | 3.582 | .001 |
| Total_i      | .396                        | .242       | .215                      | 1.637 | .002 |
| Total_k      | .126                        | .188       | .087                      | .670  | .004 |
| Ukuran_KAP   | 2.442                       | 2.275      | .141                      | 1.073 | .028 |

a. Dependent Variable: total\_kaSource: Modified output of SPSS 16

Based on the above table it can be concluded:

- a. Competency variable: P value  $(0.004) < \alpha(0.05)$  then  $H_0$  is rejected. Then partially competence affects audit quality.
- b. Independence variable: P value (0.002)  $<\alpha$  (0.05) then  $H_0$  is rejected. Then partially independence affects the audit quality.
- c. Variable size of public accounting firm: P value  $(0.028) < \alpha (0.05)$  then  $H_0$  is rejected. Then partially the size of the public accounting firm influences audit quality.

#### 3. Regression Test

Table 5. Regression test result Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

|             |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients |       |      |
|-------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| Mode        | el         | В                           | Std. Error | Beta                      | t     | Sig. |
| 1 (Constant | <u>;</u> ) | 23.737                      | 6.626      |                           | 3.582 | .001 |
| Total_i     |            | .396                        | .242       | .215                      | 1.637 | .002 |
| Total_k     |            | .126                        | .188       | .087                      | .670  | .004 |
| Ukuran_I    | KAP        | 2.442                       | 2.275      | .141                      | 1.073 | .028 |

a. Dependent Variable: total\_ka

### Regression Equation:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + e...$$

$$Y = 23.737 + 0.126 X_1 + 0.396 X_2 + 2.442 X_3 + e...$$
(2)

### Interpretation:

- $\alpha = 23.737$ , meaning that if the competency, independence, and size of a public accounting firm are 0, the audit quality tends to be 23.737.
- $\beta_1$  = 0.126, meaning that if competence tends to increase by 1 unit then the audit quality tends to increase by 0.126.
- $\beta_2$  = 0.396, meaning that if independence tends to increase by 1 unit then the tendency for audit quality increases by 0.396.
- $\beta_3$  = 2.442, meaning that if the KAP size tends to increase by 1 unit then the audit quality tends to increase by 2.442.
- Y: Audit Quality
- X<sub>1</sub>: Auditor Competency
- X<sub>2</sub>: Auditor Independence
- X<sub>3</sub>: Size of the Public Accounting Firm
- e: error

Based on the regression equation above, it can be concluded that:

- a. Auditor competency has a t value of (0.670), a coefficient value of B of (0.126), and a significant level of 0.002. This indicates that the variable coefficient  $(X_1)$  of auditor competence has a positive influence of (0.126) on audit quality (Y), but with a significant level of 0.002. This means that the higher the auditor's competence, the higher the audit quality.
- b. Auditor independence has a t value of 1.637, a coefficient value of B is 0.395, and a significant level of 0.0004. This indicates that the variable coefficient (X<sub>2</sub>) auditor independence has a positive (direct) effect on audit quality (Y) with a significant level of 0.002. This means that the higher the auditor independence, the higher the audit quality.
- c. The size of the Public Accounting Firm has a t value of 1.073, a coefficient value of B 2.442, and a significant level of 0.028. This indicates that the variable coefficient (X<sub>3</sub>) the size of the public accounting firm has a positive (direct) effect on audit quality (Y) with a significant level of 0.028. This means that the greater the size of a public accounting firm that is assessed based on bigfour or nonbigfour, the higher the audit quality.
- d. A constant of 23,737 means that an auditor can still have an audit quality of a constant even though the independent variable is free (zero).

#### 4. Coefficient of Determination

**Table 6. Determination Test Results Model Summary**<sup>b</sup>

| Model | R     | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .818a | .669     | .641              | 4.825                      |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ukuran\_KAP, Total\_k, Total\_i

b. Dependent Variable: total\_ka

Based on Table 6, it can be seen that the Adjusted R Square value is 0.641, which means that variations in audit quality can be explained by variables of competence, independence, and the size of public accounting firms by 64.1% while the remaining 35.9% is explained by other causes outside the study. this. The correlation coefficient (R) in the above table of 0.818 shows that the relationship between competence, independence, and the size of a public accounting firm to audit quality is strong.

#### **Discussion**

# The Impact of Competence on Audit Quality

The results of testing this hypothesis indicate that competence influences audit quality seen by the value of sig. 0.004 (less than  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The results of the regression analysis showed that the competency variable had a regression coefficient of 0.126 units, which means that if the competence of the auditors rose by one unit, it would improve audit quality by 0.126 units. This means that audit quality can be achieved if the auditor has good competence. The competence consists of two sub-variables, namely experience and knowledge. The auditor as the spearhead of carrying out the audit task must indeed always increase the knowledge already possessed so that the application of knowledge can be maximized in practice. Maximum application of knowledge will certainly be in line with the increasing experience possessed (Alim et al., 2007).

In accordance with general standards that auditors are required to have sufficient work experience in the profession they occupy, and are required to meet technical qualifications and experience in the field of industry in which their clients work (Arens, 2008). Experience will also have an impact on every decision taken in conducting an audit so that it is expected that each decision taken is the right decision. This indicates that the longer the working period of the auditor, the better the quality of the auditors produced (Alim et al., 2007). The results of this study are in accordance with Elfarini (2007), Alim et al., (2007) and Castellani (2008) that competence influences audit quality. The results of this study are also in accordance with Indah (2010) that the auditor's experience and knowledge have a positive effect on audit quality. In this study, the auditor's experience and knowledge is a subvariable of competence.

#### The Impact of Independence on Audit Quality

In the second hypothesis  $(H_2)$  the independence variable has a significance value of 0.002 which is smaller than the alpha value of 0.05, which means that independence has a positive and significant effect on audit quality. Also based on the regression analysis shows that the coefficient of the independence variable is positive 0.396. The results show that if independence increases by one unit, the tendency for audit quality will increase by 0.396. Independence means acting honestly, impartially, and reporting findings based only on the evidence obtained. The results of this study are also consistent with

Sari (2011) and Wiratama & Budiartha (2015) research which states that independence has a positive effect on audit quality and Agusti & Pertiwi (2013) which provides evidence that the independence variable has a positive effect on audit quality. So the higher the independence of an auditor at the same time the audit quality will be better.

On the other hand this research contradicts research conducted by Tjun et al., (2012) which proves that independence has no significant effect on audit quality. Based on the explanation above it can be concluded that independence can affect audit quality so that independence can be used as a variable in determining audit quality.

#### The Impact of the Size of Public Accounting Firm on Audit Quality

From the analysis of statistical data it can be seen that the KAP size variable has a significance value of 0.028 which is smaller than alpha 0.05. This means that KAP size can affect audit quality. There are four advantages of auditor scale according to Wibowo & Rossieta (2009) id est: (i) the large number and variety of clients handled by KAP; (ii) the variety of services offered; (iii) wide geographical coverage, including international affiliations; (iv) the large number of audit staff in a KAP. Based on these advantages, DeAngelo (1981), also Watts & Zimmerman (1986) argue that auditor size will have a positive effect on audit quality.

The size of the public accounting firm has an influence on the quality of audits produced. A public accounting firm can survive because it has won the trust of its clients. A large public accounting firm has a larger number of clients, users of financial statements must assume a higher quality audit produced by the public accounting firm.

The results of this study support research conducted by Francis & Yu (2009), finding the greater the size of the KAP, the quality of the resulting audit will be higher. Research Choi et al., (2010) also found consistent results.

On the other hand the research contradicts Pratiwi (2010) and Pardede et al., (2010) findings and Nidita and Siregar (2012) research which proves that the KAP size or KAP type represented by Big 4 and Non-Big 4 has no effect on audit quality. In addition, research conducted by Febriyanti and Mertha (2014); Utami and Sirajuddin (2014) also concluded that KAP size had no significant effect on audit quality. Based on the explanation above it can be concluded that the size of a public accounting firm can affect audit quality so that the size of a public accounting firm can be used as a variable in determining audit quality.

#### **Conclusion**

The results of testing this hypothesis indicate that competence influences audit quality seen by the value of sig. 0.004 (less than  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). This means that audit quality can be achieved if the auditor has good competence. The competence consists of two sub-variables, namely experience and knowledge. The auditor as the spearhead of carrying out the audit task must indeed always increase the knowledge already possessed so that the application of knowledge can be maximized in practice. Maximum application of knowledge will certainly be in line with the increasing experience possessed (Alim et al., 2007).

In the second hypothesis  $(H_2)$  the independence variable has a significance value of 0.002 (smaller than an alpha value of 0.05) this means that independence has a positive and significant effect on audit quality. In addition, based on regression analysis shows that the coefficient of independence variable is

positive 0.396. Independence means acting honestly, impartially, and reporting findings based only on evidence obtained.

From the results of statistical data analysis, it can be seen that the KAP size variable has a significance value of 0.028 (smaller than alpha 0.05). This means that KAP size can affect audit quality so that the size of a public accounting firm can be used as a variable in determining audit quality. The results of testing this hypothesis indicate that the competence and independence and size of public accounting firms have an influence on audit quality simultaneously, can be seen from the value of sig. 0,000 (less than  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The results of this study support the research that in order to produce quality audits, a public accountant who works in an audit team is required to have sufficient competence and good independence (Elfarini, 2007).

#### **Recommendation**

The results of this study show that the auditor's experience and knowledge are positive about audit quality. An audit should be carried out by an experienced auditor and deemed to have adequate knowledge. This can be done by a senior auditor or partner. Audits can also be given to junior auditors but must be accompanied by a minimum of senior auditors. This pattern of assignment is an effort to maintain audit quality so that the credibility of audit results in the eyes of users of financial statement information can be maintained. It also can provide opportunities for junior auditors to increase their experience and knowledge as an auditor. In addition, an examination of the results of the auditor's examination must be carried out to ensure that the inspection is carried out in accordance with applicable professional standards and quality,

The results of this study also showed that the relationship of the client and the pressure from the client had a positive effect on audit quality. These results also have implications for the auditor's assignment pattern, so that an auditor is not involved for too long and is close to a particular client. In an effort to maintain auditor independence, which affects the credibility of the audit results so that in carrying out its audit tasks are truly objective and can produce quality audits.

To improve audit quality, it is necessary to increase the competence of auditors, namely by providing training and giving opportunities to auditors to take courses or improve professional education.

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