The Importance of Using Traditional and Modern Analytical Procedures at Different Stages of the External Audit Process: An Applied Study on a Sample of External Auditors in France

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Abstract: This study delves into the extent of adoption of both conventional and advanced analytical techniques by external auditors in France across different phases of the auditing process, aiming to detect discrepancies and significant inaccuracies. Results. The investigation reveals that external auditors in France extensively employ a range of analytical procedures, both elementary and sophisticated, across various stages of the auditing process. Traditional methods are particularly favored due to their straightforward implementation and pivotal role in deciphering financial data and comprehending the business operations. The study also deduces that the professional milieu within the French business sector substantially supports and facilitates the auditors' application of these analytical methods during their assignments. Scientific novelty. This study underscores the critical importance for external auditors to integrate both traditional and modern analytical methods at different stages of the auditing process. Furthermore, this research emphasizes the significance of these methodologies in risk assessment and in uncovering significant discrepancies and deviations within the financial statements. Practical value. This research accentuates the paramount importance of employing analytical procedures in the realm of external auditing. It evaluates the extent to which both traditional and contemporary methods are utilized within the French business context and their potential benefits to Algeria in enhancing the auditing profession and keeping pace with economic advancements. Moreover, the paper elucidates the evolution of these methods in the age of artificial intelligence and automated computing technologies, which have facilitated reductions in time, cost, and effort for auditors, thereby elevating the quality and efficiency of the auditing process.

Keywords: Analytical procedures; Traditional analytical procedures; Modern analytical procedures.

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1. Introduction

The role of external auditing is paramount in today's dynamic business environment, where it ensures the reliability and accuracy of financial statements, thereby fostering trust among stakeholders. These auditors are tasked with safeguarding financial reports against potential misrepresentations that could distort their true financial condition.

To uphold the quality and integrity of the external auditing process, auditors must adopt precise scientific and technical methodologies. These methodologies enable the identification of significant errors and discrepancies that could adversely affect the fairness and accuracy of the financial statements. Hence, the adoption of analytical procedures has become indispensable, serving both as a tool for audit planning and as a crucial source of information(American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, 1988). These procedures are integral, enabling the analysis and assessment of correlations between financial and non-financial data elements, which professional auditing bodies have increasingly emphasized (Najm, 2012).

According to International Auditing Standard ISA520, auditors are mandated to implement analytical procedures at various critical junctures: during the planning phase, throughout the examination stages, and prior to the completion of the audit and issuance of the final report (Siqa, 2013). These procedures are vital for evaluating the sufficiency and appropriateness of the substantive evidence gathered (Joshua Onome Imoniana, 2012).

Study Hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: The external auditor in France utilizes analytical procedures during various stages of the external auditing process.
- Hypothesis 2: The external auditor in France employs both simple and modern methods of analytical procedures while carrying out their duties.
- Hypothesis 3: The conditions for practicing the profession of external auditing in France are not conducive to the application of analytical procedure methods during performance.

Review of literature. To inform our investigation, we drew upon a broad array of Arab and international research, which provided critical insights into the focal subject of this study and its variables, while also elucidating the analytical tools employed. A seminal work by Essam Qureit (2009) explored the extent to which Syrian auditors integrate analytical procedures within their audits, the stages of their application, and their perceived importance by the auditors.

The findings indicated a marked underutilization of these procedures among Syrian auditors, stemming from a deficient awareness of their significance in the auditing process and a rudimentary grasp of the fundamentals of the international auditing standard ISA 520.

Complementing this, a study by Carlos Pedro (2013) sought to delineate the motives behind the employment of analytical procedures by external auditors during their duties. This research highlighted a significant uptick in the adoption of these procedures among Portuguese auditors, noting their efficacy in augmenting the efficiency and effectiveness of the auditing process without necessitating substantial costs. Furthermore, the transition to a new risk-based auditing methodology has necessitated the inclusion of these procedures within their operational framework.

Rose Norita Abd Samad (2014) focused on identifying the analytical procedures utilized by external auditors in Malaysia, concluding that there was a preference for judgmental techniques and basic quantitative methods over more sophisticated quantitative techniques, which were less frequently employed due to their complexity.

Study Methodology:

Our study employed a descriptive analytical approach to scrutinize the methods involved in analytical procedures, delineating their pivotal stages and the principal barriers to their application.

The empirical component of the research involved designing a questionnaire and employing a survey methodology, which facilitated systematic data collection from selected participants. Additionally, a statistical approach was utilized, incorporating various measurements and statistical tests to analyze the data comprehensively.

2. Results and discussion

2.1. Theoretical framework of the study

2.1.1. Definition of Analytical Procedures

Analytical procedures have garnered significant attention among researchers and professional bodies, attributed to their multifaceted utility in the auditing sphere. Defined succinctly, analytical procedures encompass "the analysis of financial ratios and significant indicators, alongside the scrutiny of variances and relationships that diverge from other related data or deviate from expected patterns" (Jumaa, 2012–2013).

Through this definition, we understand that the analytical procedures used during the external auditing process include the following (Deniz Appelbaum, 2018):

- Comparing account balances for the current year with the same accounts for other years;
- Comparing current account balances with expected results obtained from the organization's budget estimates;
- Evaluating the relationship between current account balances and other current account balances expected to be similar to the predicted model based on the organization's experience;
- Comparing current account balances and financial ratios (ratios) with similar financial information in the industry sector of the organization;
- Studying the relationships between financial information and related non-financial information.

International Standard on Auditing (ISA) 520, as promulgated by the International Federation of Accountants, defines analytical procedures as "the systematic examination of financial information by investigating potential relationships between both financial and non-financial data. This includes probing into fluctuations and associations that diverge markedly from other pertinent financial information or deviate significantly from anticipated amounts" (James F. Sander, 2009)..

The concept of analytical procedures first emerged in the literature of the National Accounting Council (CNC) in 2017, articulated under Algerian Auditing Standard 520, paragraph 3. This standard depicts analytical procedures as a surveillance mechanism that gauges financial data by correlating it with other financial non-financial information, irrespective of its source.

These definitions collectively convey that analytical procedures constitute sophisticated techniques employed by external auditors to evaluate the plausibility of financial statement data. They are integral to the process of gathering robust and relevant audit evidence, which underpins the auditor's conclusive judgment regarding the financial statements' integrity and accuracy.

3. Stages of Applying Analytical Procedures

International Standard on Auditing (ISA) 520 elaborates that the application of analytical procedures during the auditing process should be multifaceted:

- As risk assessment procedures to gain insights into the organization and its environment;
- As substantive procedures when their application is more efficient and effective than detailed testing for reducing audit risks to an acceptable level;
- As a comprehensive review of the financial statements at the final stage of the audit process (Pinho, 2014).

3.1. Applying Analytical Procedures During the Planning Stage

The planning stage is integral to the auditing process as it enables external auditors to assess potential risks of material misstatements or distortions within the financial statements. Utilizing analytical procedures at this early phase facilitates:

- Understanding the organization's activities and identifying overarching factors that may influence its operations.
- Assessing the financial health of the organization and its sustainability as a going concern.
- Optimizing the audit approach by potentially reducing the scope of audit tests and procedures needed.
- Anticipating the methodology and selection of tools for examination.

3.2. Application of Analytical Procedures During the Audit Process

Implementing analytical procedures at the beginning of the audit process is crucial as these serve as substantive procedures aimed at assessing the risk of material misstatements at both the overall financial statement level and the specific accounts and balances level.

These procedures provide reliable and relevant audit evidence and are instrumental in determining the necessary extent of detailed tests or further substantive analytical procedures (Barac, 2017).

Influence the auditor's professional judgment regarding the efficiency and efficacy of using these procedures alone or in combination with detailed substantive tests to minimize detection risks to an acceptably low level (Carlos Pinho, 2022).

Additionally, any deviations or inconsistencies identified between the expectations developed during the planning stage and the representations made by management should prompt auditors to reconsider the assessed audit risks (Mieke Jans, 2014).

3.3. Application of Analytical Procedures in the Final Stage of the Audit:

The ultimate aim of deploying analytical procedures in the final stage of the audit is to assist the auditor in forming a conclusive assessment of the financial statements. These procedures help in:

- Validating the integrity, fairness, and credibility of the financial statements as a collective entity.
- Evaluating the organization’s ongoing viability as a going concern (Hasan Flayyeh Al Qataish, 2022).

By applying these procedures toward the audit's culmination, the external auditor is better positioned to ascertain if the adjusted financial statements are reasonable based on the evidence accumulated throughout the audit process. This stage involves a detailed review of all unexpected relationships uncovered during earlier phases (D. Eric Hirst, 1996).

Both International Auditing Standard ISA 520 and French Auditing Standard NEP 520 mandate the application of analytical procedures in this final stage, underscoring their critical role at this pivotal phase of the audit.

4. Techniques and Methods of Analytical Procedures

Historically, the deployment of analytical procedures in auditing was confined to simple methods, predominantly chosen by external auditors for their straightforward application and the clarity in interpreting their outcomes.

However, with the progression of technology, the advent of computing capabilities, and the integration of artificial intelligence, the landscape of analytical methods has transformed significantly. This evolution has ushered in a suite of more intricate mathematical and statistical methodologies (Ana Jezovita, 2018).

From this repertoire, analytical procedure methods can be categorized into three primary groups:

- Non-quantitative (Descriptive) Procedures;
- Simple Quantitative Procedures;
- Advanced Quantitative Procedures.

4.1. Non-Quantitative (Descriptive) Procedures

These procedures primarily hinge on the auditor's critical examination of significant and noticeable disparities between the account balances of the current audit year and those from previous periods. Employing this approach, auditors rely heavily on their personal judgment, which is shaped by professional experience and informed estimates.

This assessment process might involve engaging with previous auditors, interfacing with management, or reviewing prior work papers, board meeting minutes, and annual management reports. Moreover, understanding the operational policies of the company and gaining insights into the broader industry conditions are also integral to this process.

4.2. Traditional Quantitative Procedures

This category encompasses a variety of methods that form the bedrock of traditional quantitative analysis in auditing:

4.2.1. Financial Ratio Analysis:

This technique is premised on the understanding that examining any singular figure from financial statements in isolation seldom yields substantial insights or valuable information. It gains relevance and utility only when these figures are juxtaposed against other numbers or corresponding ratios (Wahid Mahmoud Derm, 2010).

A financial ratio is articulated as a quantitative relationship between two economically related elements, connected through a correlation. Typically, this ratio is composed of a numerator and a denominator, which do not necessarily move in tandem; their interrelation is often expressed as a percentage, providing a clear and concise metric for analysis (Lochard, 2008, p. 31).

Employed extensively by auditors, financial ratio analysis is a prevalent analytical procedure incorporated during both the planning phase and the final examination stages of financial statement audits. This method furnishes a comprehensive understanding of prevailing financial conditions and events, and facilitates the examination of financial statements from the perspective of the user (Alvin Arens, 2002, p. 264).

In practice, auditors compute various ratios related to the elements or items under review to draw pertinent conclusions and track related changes. Such comparisons typically involve (Lotfi, 2005, p. 311):

- Comparing actual ratios of the current year with those of the previous year.
- Relating actual ratios of the current year to ratios predicted through budget forecasts, although access to such forecasts is seldom available to external users.
- Measuring financial ratios against those of competitors or the industry benchmarks, where industry statistics are sourced from diverse repositories.

4.2.2. Horizontal Analysis:

Referred to alternatively as historical analysis, this approach aids in the interpretation of financial trends across different periods, providing a longitudinal view of financial health (Madani Ben Belghith, 2011).

Horizontal analysis involves the comparison of financial indicators from the current period against those from prior periods to track their development, such as analyzing the trend of net profit over several years (Turumova Didora Abdumannonovna, 2024). This analytical method is invaluable in helping external auditors detect any significant deviations or unusual errors in the financial statements, enabling timely rectifications (Jarboua, 2005).

4.2.3. Vertical Analysis (Component Analysis):

Auditors may employ vertical analysis in deviation analysis, which entails comparing an organization's financial data against predetermined acceptable levels. This helps to identify deviations from these benchmarks and to delve into the causes of these discrepancies.

Despite its straightforward application, traditional analytical procedures such as vertical analysis face criticism. For instance, some financial ratios may blend historical and current data within the same ratio, potentially skewing the results.

Moreover, comparisons across different years can be misleading if not adjusted for varying conditions that may affect the data comparability. These issues require auditors to carefully evaluate their analytical findings, critically assessing the nature of changes revealed by the analysis to grasp the actual underlying reasons.

4.3. Advanced Quantitative Procedures:

This category encompasses more sophisticated statistical and mathematical techniques that leverage quantitative data and mathematical formulations based on historical information. Included in this suite are methods like regression analysis, financial planning models, cash flow forecasting, and time series analysis.

4.3.1. Regression Analysis:

Positioned within the realm of multivariate analysis, linear regression deals with quantitative variables. It is a technique used to examine observational or experimental data with the primary aim of uncovering a linear relationship between one or multiple quantitative variables.

4.3.2. Financial Planning Model:

Financial planning is a strategic process aimed at preparing for future developments, whether they are internal and controllable, or external and beyond control. It involves making informed decisions to proactively address potential scenarios (Ziad Ramadan, 2013, p. 192).

External auditors utilize the financial planning model to forecast the future financial requirements of an organization well before the actual need for funds materializes, thus

providing ample preparation time to manage financial resources effectively (Mohamed Saleh Al-Hanawi, 2008, p. 126).

4.3.3. Cash Flow Model:

Defined as a forecast grounded on rational and credible assumptions, cash flow modeling predicts the timing and amount of cash inflows and outflows within a specified future period.

This model is crucial as it provides insights into when the cash transactions will occur, informs about the volume and type of financing required by the organization, and facilitates precise timing for these financial needs. Moreover, it enables meticulous control over available resources and continuous monitoring of the organization's liquidity (Aql, 2009, p. 431).

Utilized by external auditors, the cash flow model serves to project the future cash flows of an audited entity. This projection is vital for assessing the organization's potential to sustain positive cash flows and foresee financial instability. Research has consistently shown that metrics derived from cash flow statements provide more reliable liquidity indicators than those extracted from other financial documents (Dahdouh, 2008).

4.3.4. Time Series Analysis:

Time series analysis deals with data collected at regular and successive intervals, examining variables that manifest over time. Such data, known as time series, involves sequential measurements that reflect the activities or characteristics of a given phenomenon (Grais, 1998, p. 345).

The essence of time series analysis lies in its ability to study the dependencies between observations collected at different times. This method is particularly effective in exploring the relationships between current and historical values, analyzing how variables interact over time (F.X. Diebold, 2006, p. 04).

In practice, time series analysis involves comparing the current financial indicators and balances under scrutiny against those predicted from the historical data trends of similar balances. Auditors utilize this analysis to spot deviations between expected and actual figures, investigating these discrepancies to determine their validity and impact on the financial assessment.

5. Practical Framework

The study employed a descriptive analytical methodology, utilizing a questionnaire aimed at a random sample of external auditors in France, numbering approximately 50 participants. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather insights on the auditors' perspectives regarding the use of analytical procedures in external audit processes. Data collected were subsequently analyzed using statistical software (SPSS, version 19).

The questionnaire was structured based on the Likert scale to appropriately categorize the responses as illustrated in the table below:

Table 01. Answer Suggestions According to the Likert Scale

Answer	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Coding	5	4	3	2	1
Weighted Average	(4.2-5)	(3.4-4.2)	(2.6-3.4)	(1.8-2.6)	(1-1.8)

The source: (Al-Serafi, 2006, p. 115).

5.1. Processing the Questionnaire Results

Following data collection and tabulation, Excel 2007 was utilized to analyze and describe the demographic variables of the sample. In-depth analysis of the three axes of the questionnaire was conducted using SPSS 19 to test the study's hypotheses. This included the calculation of arithmetic means, standard deviations, and the application of the "t-test" for a single sample.

5.1.1. Description of the Study Sample Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the study sample are detailed in the following table:

Table 02. Description of Study Sample Characteristics

Variables	Levels	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	50	100%
	Female	0	-
Age	Less than 35 years	7	14%
	(35-50) years	23	46%
	More than 50 years	20	40%
Academic Qualification	License	0	-
	Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting and Auditing	39	78%
	Postgraduate Studies	11	22%
Professional Qualification	Accountant	50	100%
	Accounting Expert	0	-
Professional Experience	Less than 10 years	12	24%
	(10-20) years	22	44%
	More than 20 years	16	32%

The source: Prepared by the researchers based on Excel results.

The gender distribution of the respondents was exclusively male (100%), reflecting a gender-specific demographic within the study's external auditor sample in France. The age distribution indicates a substantial representation across various career stages, particularly those aged between 35 to 50 years, suggesting a sustained interest in the auditing profession across these age groups.

The academic and professional qualifications of the sample predominantly include individuals with a postgraduate diploma in accounting and auditing, comprising 78% of the sample. This qualification level enhances their capabilities in detecting and addressing financial discrepancies effectively. All participants are classified professionally as accountants, underscoring a uniform professional background among the respondents.

5.1.2. Analysis and Discussion of the First Axis of the Questionnaire

This section of the study explores the extent to which analytical procedures are implemented across different stages of the external auditing process. The data gathered through the questionnaire was rigorously analyzed to provide insights into this application. Below, Table (03) illustrates the arithmetic means, standard deviations, and results of the "t-test" for a single sample reflecting the responses of external auditors in France.

Table 03. Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, and T-test Values for the Application of Analytical Procedures by External Auditors in France During Various Stages of the External Auditing Process.

Statements	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	T-test Value	Significance Level (SIG)
1. Analytical procedures are applied in the planning stage to understand the activity of the audited entity	4.460	0.578	17.834	0.000
2. Analytical procedures are used to reduce problems and gaps associated with the auditing process	4.520	0.504	21.297	0.000
3. External auditors use analytical procedures during their task to determine the scope, nature, and timing of audit procedures	4.400	0.638	15.495	0.000
4. Analytical procedures enable external auditors to reduce detailed tests for the balances constituting the financial statements	4.020	0.514	14.013	0.000
5. Analytical procedures are used in the stage of examination and basic tests to design the audit program	4.100	0.543	14.299	0.000
6. Analytical procedures are applied in the final inspection stage to judge the correctness of the financial statements and the adequacy of disclosure therein	4.160	0.548	14.965	0.000

The source: Prepared by the researchers based on the questionnaire and SPSS V19 software.

The planning phase is the foundational stage that enables the external auditor to determine the nature and timing of the auditing tasks they will undertake. By analyzing the responses from external auditors in France to statements (1) and (2), it is evident that analytical procedures are applied during the planning phase to understand the nature of the audited entity's activities and to uncover significant problems and unusual relationships that may exist among the financial statement components.

Analytical procedures are employed by external auditors in France during the execution of the audit process to reduce the extent of detailed testing, particularly for balances that do not require additional scrutiny. The application of these procedures at this stage proves to be more efficient and effective, and more economical in terms of time compared to detailed testing.

The responses from professionals in France to statement (5), which had an average score of 4.100, indicate that analytical procedures are used by external auditors during the execution phase of the audit to determine the audit program and the volume of evidence necessary to investigate the reasons for deviations in the financial statement balances.

The results from the previous table show that analytical procedures are implemented by professionals in France in the final stage of the auditing process, where the average score for statement (6) reached 4.160.

To corroborate these findings, the "T-test" was used, which indicated that at a 95% confidence level, the significance level of the T-value is 0.000 for all statements in this section, which is lower than the significance level of α=0.05. This confirms the initial hypothesis about the extensive use of analytical procedures by external auditors in France throughout the various stages of the external audit process.

5.1.3. Analysis and Discussion of the Second Section of the Questionnaire:

This section aims to assess the extent to which the external auditor in France utilizes both simple and modern methods of analytical procedures during their tasks. The following table summarizes the arithmetic means, standard deviations, and T-test results for the responses of professionals to the questions in this section.

Table 04. Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, and T-test Values for the Use of Simple and Advanced Analytical Procedures by External Auditors in France

Statements	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	T-test Value	Significance Level (SIG)
7. External auditors compare financial indicators of the current period with information from previous periods of the audited entity.	4.220	0.464	18.565	0.000
8. External auditors compare financial information of the entity with expected outcomes such as budget forecasts.	4.240	0.555	15.784	0.000
9. The use of financial analysis by external auditors helps in understanding the financial position of the entity.	4.140	0.495	16.276	0.000
10. External auditors utilize vertical analysis to discover unusual relationships between the accounts of the financial statements.	4.040	0.570	12.902	0.000
11. External auditors use modern statistical methods for analytical procedures to predict future account balances and identify potential deviations.	4.200	0.534	15.875	0.000

The source: Developed by the researchers based on the questionnaire and SPSS V19 software.

The diversity of analytical procedures used by external auditors has been validated through responses obtained from external auditors in France, indicating their application of both simple and sophisticated analytical methods. Simple methods are particularly favored due to their ease of use and straightforward interpretation of results.

For instance, financial analysis is a prominent method with an arithmetic mean of 4.140 for statement (9), and simple comparisons, which allow auditors to track the evolution of an entity's performance over several years, achieved a mean of 4.220 for statement (7). Additionally, comparisons between actual balances and auditor's expectations achieved a mean of 4.240 for statement (8).

Moreover, the use of financial ratios, which facilitates understanding of the entity's sector and overall financial health, reached a mean of 4.040 for statement (10). As for the use of modern statistical methods in analytical procedures, the mean score was 4.200 for statement (11), affirming their effectiveness in detecting significant risks and errors, especially when there is a substantial discrepancy between predicted and actual figures in the financial statements.

Furthermore, the results indicated that at a 95% confidence level, the significance level for the T-test values is 0.000 for all statements in this axis, which is lower than the significance level of α=0.05. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, confirming that external auditors in France utilize both simple and advanced methods of analytical procedures during their tasks.

5.1.4. Analysis and Discussion of the Third Section of the Questionnaire

This section of the questionnaire is designed to evaluate whether the conditions for practicing external auditing in France are conducive to the application of analytical procedures by auditors. The data from this section is summarized in the following table, which presents the mean values, standard deviations, and T-test results for the responses provided by the professionals:

Table 05. Mean Values, Standard Deviations, and T-test Results on the Suitability of External Auditing Conditions in France for the Use of Analytical Procedures.

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-test Value	Significance Level (SIG)
12. Lack of professional competence and experience hinders the application of analytical procedures.	1.900	0.707	-11.00	0.000
13. Lack of regulatory bodies to monitor the adherence of external auditors to applying analytical procedures in risk assessment.	1.620	0.635	-12.322	0.000
14. External auditors' lack of knowledge in statistical methods for analytical procedures.	1.620	0.635	-15.359	0.000
15. Lack of training programs enabling external auditors to use analytical procedures.	1.840	0.618	-14.009	0.000
16. Weak internal control systems and accounting procedures at the entity level.	1.980	0.714	-13.271	0.000
17. Lack of adequate financial and non-financial data provided by the audited entity.	1.720	0.572	-15.800	0.000

The source: Compiled by the researchers using the questionnaire and SPSS.V19 software.

the National Association of Accountants in France actively sets and enforces fieldwork standards. This body diligently monitors compliance among practicing auditors, particularly

during the preparation of their final audit reports, to ensure the identification and rectification of significant risk errors.

The responses also highlight the proactive efforts by professional bodies to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field and to facilitate comprehensive training programs that teach auditors contemporary methods of applying analytical procedures.

Management's role is also critically examined in the responses. Effective collaboration between management and external auditors is essential, as it significantly facilitates the auditors' tasks. Management is expected to provide all necessary financial and non-financial information that auditors require to effectively examine the interrelations among various data points and to identify anomalies in balances that could potentially compromise the fairness and credibility of the financial statements.

According to the responses from professionals in France, there is a strong commitment from management to ensure full transparency and disclosure of all pertinent information to the stakeholders of the financial statements, particularly to external auditors, who are tasked with safeguarding the interests of these parties.

In terms of empirical data, the analysis of responses indicates a notable finding. The T-value reported for all statements in this section was negative, suggesting a lack of statistical significance. This leads to the rejection of the alternative hypothesis which posited that the conditions for practicing external auditing in France are not conducive to the effective application of analytical procedures at various stages of the auditing process.

6. Conclusion

This research underscores the critical importance of analytical procedures as modern tools extensively utilized by external auditors during various phases of the audit process. The findings of the study elucidate several key aspects:

- Analytical procedures are applied by external auditors at various stages of the audit process, with the planning stage being the most utilized to understand the nature of the audited entity's activities.
- Analytical procedures are crucial for increasing accuracy and clarity in the data and information related to the audit process, reflecting on the integrity of its execution.
- Effective application of analytical procedures requires the external auditor to possess the necessary professional competence and requires management cooperation in providing all information needed during the execution of their tasks.

From the empirical data gathered, the study further confirms:

- The study confirmed the application of analytical procedures by external auditors in France during the planning and execution phases of the audit, as well as at the final stage when forming a professional opinion about the fairness and reliability of the financial statements.
- It was proven that external auditors in France utilize simple methods of analytical procedures to assist in understanding the activities and sectors of the enterprises audited, as well as in identifying unusual relationships to pinpoint high-risk areas.
- The wide application of advanced methods of analytical procedures by external auditors due to their effectiveness in detecting risks and significant errors, and in increasing the accuracy and reliability of the results obtained.

- The study found that the conditions for practicing external auditing in France are suitable for external auditors to apply analytical procedures, due to the professional organizations' focus on training professionals in the application of modern methods during their tasks, and on issuing and updating standards that align with international developments.

Based on the insights garnered from this study, several strategic actions are recommended to advance the practice of external auditing in Algeria:

- Highlight the importance of analytical procedures in the external auditing profession through issuing guidelines, directives, and scientific bulletins related to the auditing profession that emphasize the necessity of adopting and generalizing the use of analytical procedures.
- Activate the role of the training committee of the National Accounting Council in ensuring proper training by developing programs for training professionals in the use of statistical methods and contributing to organizing workshops on international auditing standards and how to apply and adapt them to the professional reality in Algeria.
- Benefit from foreign expertise and international experiences in applying international auditing standards, particularly those related to the professional and practical aspects.
- Legal control over the work of professionals and subjecting them to legal accountability in cases of failure to exercise necessary professional care in applying analytical procedures in external auditing.
- Raise awareness among professionals of the need for continuous updating of their skills and competencies, through constant exposure to the latest developments in the field of external auditing internationally, and holding them responsible in case of failure to exercise necessary professional care.

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