Account and Financial Management Journal e-ISSN: 2456-3374
Volume 10 Issue 01 January 2025, Page No.-3445-3456
DOI: 10.47191/afmj/v10i1.02, Impact Factor: 8.167

The Impact of Using the Joint Audit Method in Enhancing the Quality of the External Audit Report

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ABSTRACT: The researcher based the research hypotheses for the practical aspect on three factors to indicate the extent of the contribution made by the "joint audit" approach to improving and enhancing the quality of the external "audit reports" through, the quality of the audit process when applying the joint audit method, the quality of the audit planning process when applying the "joint audit", the preparation of the "joint audit" reports and the time of issuance of the report. In order to achieve the objectives of the research, the researcher conducted a field study through a questionnaire form to indicate the views of a sample of a group of Iraqi audit companies, offices, auditors, members of audit committees working in some Iraqi private banks, and a sample of academics in the field of specialization. In order to test the validity of the hypotheses of the study, the researcher has reached a set of conclusions, the most important of which is that there is agreement by the research sample that the application of the "joint audit" will reduce the delay in issuing the joint audit report and that this report will be delivered in a timely manner. The researcher has recommended the need to increase interest in developing the joint audit approach by increasing cooperation between major audit offices and companies with emerging offices in order to develop professional practices, especially the joint audit method.

KEYWORDS: joint audit, external audit reports, time of issuance of the report audit.

1. INTRODUCTION

The successive financial crises that occurred in major international companies and the economic collapses that accompanied these crises in many countries of the world have had a great impact on increasing doubts about the credibility of the auditors. These crises have given bad impressions that were not previously present on the accounting and auditing profession because of the harmful effects that occurred as a result of these crises, all of which led to increasing demands for the existence of controls, norms, principles and professional ethics to achieve confidence and credibility in the information on which the financial reports are based, those reports that are the basis of the needs of their users, especially investors and dealers in the stock markets.(Al-Wakil, 2020).

Recently, researchers have become increasingly interested in the nature of the market for services provided by audit companies, offices, auditors, and the phenomena associated with these services, due to the rapid developments that have imposed themselves on those services and that market, which constitutes a strong motivation for many researchers in the field of accounting and auditing to employ some scientific research tools to try to measure and interpret these phenomena , measure the factors that affect them and indicate their positive or negative effects on the audit services market in general. One of these phenomena is the "joint audit" programs, where the concept of "joint audit" is based on the audit of two or more audit companies auditing the financial statements of one client, the issuance of a joint audit report and the implementation of a single audit program based on a joint planning by both parties. (Metwally, 2013).

In this context, the European Union Committee in 2010 issued a set of proposals, recommendations and mechanisms that are concerned with organizing the audit process as well as ensuring independence in the audit work through the so-called Green Paper. This paper included the need to use two external audit companies or offices to audit and review financial reports. The discussion concluded that it is possible to benefit from joint audit programs and enjoy the potential benefits in light of the concentration of the audit services market. (Taroush, 2021).

2- METHODOLOGY AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

2-1 The problem of the study

The issue of increasing reliability in the external auditor's report is essential for all users of this report and stakeholders in the economic units, as many studies have confirmed their interest in restoring confidence in the external auditor's report through multiple means and multiple ways, the most important of which is adherence to general auditing standards and international auditing standards, as well as through the adoption of effective means such as the joint auditing portal to increase confidence and improve the quality of these reports.

Although some may consider that this leads to an increase in the additional costs of the audit process, and as a result of the rapid economic developments in Iraq, professional organizations as well as some government institutions that are concerned with auditing standards, government concepts and accounting organization have sought to adopt all standards that lead to improving, strengthening and increasing transparency in financial statements, including audit reports. Therefore, the research problem can be summarized in the following question:

How impactful was the use of the "joint audit" input in the audit process to improve the quality of the external auditor's report?

- This main question is divided into the following sub-questions:
- What is the nature of joint auditing and the extent of the need for it in the environment of professional accounting practices in Iraq?
- To what extent does the "Joint Audit" portal contribute to improving and enhancing the quality of audit reports through?
  1. AUDIT PROCESS
  2- Quality of the audit planning process when applying the joint audit.
  3- Preparation of joint audit reports and the time of issuance of the report.

2-2 Hypotheses of the Study

The research proceeds from the basic premise that:
There is a statistically significant effect of applying the joint audit approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report by:

1. Audit Process
2. Quality of the audit planning process when applying the joint audit.
3. Preparation of the "joint audit" report and the time of issuance of the report.

2-3 significance of the Study

The importance of the research was embodied by evaluating the role of using the "joint audit" method - external - and the extent of its contribution to enhancing the quality of "external audit reports", this method, which is one of the newly applied methods, as it was applied in Iraq and mandatory in 2016 to private commercial banks. The research seeks to study the nature of the "joint audit" method by clarifying the theoretical framework of the concept of "joint audit" and "external audit" reports, as well as indicating the extent to which the application of the joint audit method contributes to the audit process to improve the quality of audit reports.

2-4 Objectives of the study

1- Statement of theoretical concepts for both joint audit and audit reports.
2- Identify the extent to which the use of the "joint audit" method contributes to enhancing the quality of "external audit reports".
3- Trying to prove the hypotheses of the research by conducting the field study represented by the opinions of a sample of auditors, academics and auditors.

2-5 Literature Review

1- Rushdie's study, (2021), "The importance of joint auditing as a tool to improve the quality of financial reporting."

This study aimed to clarify the role of joint auditing in improving the quality of financial reports if the researcher relies in this research on the descriptive analytical approach as well as statistical programs for testing the hypotheses of the study. The researcher concluded that there is a direct relationship between the application of "joint auditing" and increasing the quality of the audit process, as well as a direct relationship between "joint auditing" and the quality of financial reports, based on the results she reached through the field study. The researcher recommended the need to encourage major audit offices to cooperate with each other in order to develop professional practices, the most important of which is the method of joint auditing to clarify its importance and advantages.

2- Al-Wakil Study, (2020), "The Impact of Applying the Joint Audit Portal on the Timing of the Issuance of the Audit Report in the Egyptian Professional Practices Environment - An Applied Study."

The main objective of the research was to indicate the impact associated with the application of the "joint audit" approach in the timing of the issuance of audit reports in the accounting environment in the Arab Republic of Egypt. Through the theoretical study, the researcher addressed the conceptual framework for both the joint audit and the timing of the issuance of the audit reports. Through the theoretical study, the researcher concluded that there is a difference in views between the supporter and opponent of the positive effects and negative effects related to the application of the "joint audit". In the practical aspect, the researcher conducted a field study to extrapolate the practical reality by identifying the views of a sample of auditors and members of the audit committees. Investors, with regard to the positive and negative effects related to the application of "joint auditing", the field study concluded that the application of joint auditing achieves a set of positive effects, and that the application of "joint auditing" is preferable by mixing between major auditing companies and small auditing companies, with a preference for remaining optional to apply "joint auditing". The field study also concluded that there is an inverse relationship between the application of "joint auditing" and the delay in issuing the "audit report" in the sense that the application of "joint auditing" through two auditing offices leads to a reduction in the period of delay in issuing the audit report.

3-THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A JOINT AUDIT CONCEPT

3-1 Concept of Joint Audit

The concept of joint auditing and the implementation of the audit process is one of the things that have been recognized for decades, whether globally or locally, but one of the most important reasons that led to increased interest in the joint audit approach is, as mentioned above, the crises experienced by the major international audit companies and offices. This led to directing attention professionally and academically to the joint audit approach as one of the mechanisms that can help restore confidence in the accounting profession. (Yusuf: 2015).

3-2 Definition of Joint Audit

Joint audit can be defined as "two independent audit offices carry out the audit of a particular company, through which the audit tasks are divided between them, as well as reviewing and monitoring each of these offices for the work of the other office and issuing the unified audit report, which is signed by both offices." (Al-Wakil, 2020).

The joint audit was defined as "the audit that is carried out by distributing the audit efforts to two independent audit offices, who share the effort, jointly plan the audit process, distribute the work tasks, jointly plan the audit process with the distribution of field work among the auditors , and issue a single audit report with one point of view signed by the two offices or auditors, and each of them has joint responsibility for the audit process that was carried out, as well as responsibility for the information contained in the audit report." (Nicol, 2012)

It was also defined as "one of the audit entries through which two independent auditors audit one company by coordinating between them in terms of dividing tasks and determining responsibilities, and the responsibility between them is a joint responsibility, as at the end of the audit process, the joint consolidated audit report is issued and signed by both offices or both auditors. (Ali: 2019)

3-3 Characteristics of Joint Auditing (Ibrahim, Jacob, 2020: 384)

The characteristics of joint auditing according to the definitions we have provided previously and summarized can be as follows:

1. The joint audit shall be carried out by two or more audit offices or companies.
2. Joint auditing requires full coordination between both offices or auditors.
3. During the joint audit, each auditor of the work of the other auditor carries out a mutual objective review.
4. At the end of the joint audit task, one report shall be issued that is also joint between the auditors and carries one opinion.
5. The responsibility in a “joint audit” shall be jointly and severally responsible for the audit findings of both joint auditors.

3-4 Joint Audit Objectives (Ibrahim, Jacob, 2020)

The "joint audit" does not differ in terms of objective from the objectives of the single audit. These objectives are generally represented in the following:

1. The purpose of a joint audit is to obtain reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement and have been prepared in the light of generally accepted accounting principles.
2. The joint audit also aims to express a neutral technical opinion on the financial statements and report thereon in what is called the auditor's report.

3-5 Importance of joint audit programs (Metwally, 2013)

1. Working to increase cooperation, coordination and planning for the audit process through audit companies and offices, provided that one of these companies is one of the major audit companies (Big 4) or one of the companies classified in the first class or the first category, which leads to increasing the effectiveness of mutual control bodies and issuing a unified and strong opinion.
2. Increasing the independence of the external auditor and achieving a high level of quality of the audit process, by improving the services provided to the facility under audit.
3. The use of joint expertise based on international auditing standards and generally accepted standards with the application of the best auditing procedures.

3-6 Advantages and Disadvantages of Joint Audit

There are two different points of view regarding the application of the joint audit approach by the audit offices, where there are those who support the application of the joint audit approach and believe that it has advantages and advantages that are reflected in the quality of the audit process as well as the quality of the audit reports and the quality of financial information. Another trend of those who oppose the idea of the "joint audit" approach believes that this process has disadvantages and disadvantages that may result from the application of this program, and on this basis we will learn to clarify both the positive effects or positive advantages of the joint audit approach and the possible negative effects of the application of the joint audit approach as follows:

a- Potential advantages of applying the joint audit program

Joint auditing can achieve a range of advantages, the most important of which are: (Amin, Abdul Hadi, 2020).

1. The joint audit of the financial statements by more than one auditor achieves a balance in the distribution of work tasks between them, in terms of the audit plan, operations and report, provided that this division is an actual division between the auditors or the two offices.
2. It is possible to benefit from the diversity of the experiences of the two audit offices or auditors, in order to inform them of the advanced methods of auditing, especially if there is an audit office from the large offices, as this works to achieve the quality of the audit process through the skills of auditors who are from different places, which is important from the point of view of the clients of the audit office.
3. The "joint audit" leads to strengthening the professional competence of the auditors, through the application of the best procedures related to the audit process as a result of the diversity of expertise and technical disciplines of the members of the audit team in all the two offices or companies, and this may lead to increasing the speed of completion of the task assigned to them and reducing or speeding up the completion of the report in a record period.
4. Joint auditing further enhances the independence of the auditor by weakening the relationship between the auditor and the management of the establishment, as the involvement of more than one office in the implementation of the audit process may strengthen the position of the auditors in the face of pressure that may be exerted by the management of the company under audit, where the ability of management to influence two auditors is somewhat difficult.
5. Joint auditing from the point of view of its supporters reduces the phenomenon of the demand market focusing on auditing services in a limited number of major auditing companies and their control over the auditing and confirmation services market, as well as providing the opportunity for other small offices to participate in this process to increase their expertise and build their name in the competition market in the auditing services market by using offices other than the big four companies to involve them in the joint audit process.

b- Potential Disadvantages of Applying the Joint Audit Portal

As far as there are many advantages and advantages resulting from the application of the joint audit approach, but this approach is not without the point of view of some of the potential problems or disadvantages resulting from the application of the joint audit approach, which can be summarized in the following points: (Al-Wakil, 2020).

1. The difficulty of selecting audit offices to carry out the joint audit process, due to the fact that the audit services market is characterized by the limited options available to the companies under audit, especially large companies due to the lack of qualified companies and offices so that the differentiation between them can be made, as well as due to the concentration of audit work for large companies in the four major audit offices.
2. The application of joint audit programs may lead to the difficulty of coordination and exchange of information between the two audit companies, due to the conditions of competition between the audit companies and the audit offices. One of the manifestations of this difficulty is that there are no specific criteria that can be relied upon when dividing the work between the two audit offices, which carry out the joint audit process, which may lead to an increase in the time taken to perform the process and an increase in consultation and thus the delay in issuing the audit report. This indicates a defect in the coordination process in the stages of performing the process or erroneously planning the audit process and may lead to a difference of opinion between the auditors and therefore there may be a state of confusion that prevents access to a unified opinion, which negatively affects the quality of the audit process.
3. The "joint audit" program may lead to the possibility of one of the audit offices relying on another office, as each office may assume that the other office has designed its main tests to detect potential material distortions in the client's financial statements and that it is making the utmost effort and collecting evidence, and this may lead to a decrease in the level of each of them or a decrease in the level of the basic tests they carry out. In the event that one of the two offices has assumed the above, this leads to little effort and loss of quality of the minimum audit process.
4. The "joint audit" program may lead to a high audit cost for the companies under audit, as the fees paid to two offices may exceed what is paid to one office.
5. There may be a negative impact of the application of the joint audit approach on the independence of the auditor, as a result of the possibility of competition between the two audit offices, as each of the two offices seeks to gain the satisfaction of the management in order to maintain it, which leads to an increased opportunity for the management to practice what is known as shopping for the auditor's

opinion or increasing pressure or influence on the auditor.

3-7 Joint Audit Program Procedures

The "joint audit" procedures mean "those steps that auditors must follow in order to reach a joint audit report", and the joint audit steps differ from the individual audit steps, which can be licensed as follows: (Amin, Abdul Hadi, 2020: 47)

1. Upon acceptance of the audit task, the two offices will agree on the division of work for each of them, in light of the fact that both offices plan to perform the audit process collectively. Planning the audit process in accordance with International Audit Standard No. (300) requires that general audit strategies be developed and plans developed to reduce the audit risks in order to carry out the audit work between the two joint office teams. The work can be divided between the members of the two joint audit teams on the basis of regions or expertise according to each office.
2. After distributing the work between the two offices, the two offices start auditing the financial statements simultaneously, as each office performs and implements the audit program in light of the plan previously developed by both of them.
3. Upon the completion of each audit office of the audit of the part assigned to it, the work of each other is reviewed, the required working papers are prepared and the results reached are indicated. This is known as mutual verification for each auditor of the effort of the other auditor.
4. Upon completion of the audit process, both offices sign the joint audit report, where each of the auditors is jointly responsible for this report and not only for the part that each auditor has audited.

3-8 Overview of the experiences of some countries of the joint audit portal and the scope of application in Iraq

The concept of applying the "joint auditing" program has evolved in most countries of the world, whether mandatory or voluntary (optional). Some countries have tended to cancel the mandatory application of the "joint auditing" program and make it voluntary. Some countries still apply joint auditing compulsorily in most economic sectors. There are other countries that combine the mandatory and optional application of joint auditing. The following is a summary of the experiences of some countries, whether at the international or regional level, in the field of applying joint auditing:

- The State of Denmark was one of the first countries to adopt the introduction of the "joint audit" program on a mandatory basis since 1930, as it sought to improve the quality of the audit services provided. The Danish Companies Act obligated listed companies to audit their financial statements by two audit offices. However, it returned in 2005 to abolish the requirement of mandatory application of the "joint audit" program and make it voluntary, and the reason for this was to reduce the additional costs associated with "joint audits" of coordination, organization and joint management between the audit offices that will participate in the process. (Holm,Thinggaard: 2014).
- At the level of the State of France, it has adopted the mandatory application of the joint audit approach to all companies listed on its stock exchange since 1966. French professional organizations issued the "Professional Practices Standard No. 100" in 2007, which included several procedures and principles controlling the division of tasks, mutual control, and the joint responsibilities of auditors for the results of audits. (Lesage et al, 2017)
- At the level of the Asian continent, India has adopted the mandatory application of the joint audit approach in government affiliated companies. The professional standards for Indian accounting practices issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India include a standard on determining the responsibilities of auditors carrying out joint audits, this standard No. 299 of 1996 entitled "Joint Audit of Financial Statements", which includes a set of guidelines related to the division of work, mutual coordination and responsibilities for preparing joint audit reports. (Sakel et al: 2012).
- In the African continent and at the level of Arab countries, Algeria was one of the first countries to apply compulsory joint auditing in banks and financial institutions as of 2003 , as well as in the Kingdom of Morocco, compulsory joint auditing of banks as of 1993 and for joint stock companies as of 1996 , as well as in the Arab Republic of Egypt, where the introduction of "joint auditing" began to be applied voluntarily (optional) to Egyptian joint stock companies, based on the Egyptian Companies Law No. 159 of 1981 and became mandatory in 2013 for real estate finance companies and some economic institutions in Egypt.
- At the level of the Arab Gulf countries, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been the forerunner of applying joint auditing to companies listed on the Saudi stock market since 1965 on an optional basis, and has imposed or imposed mandatory joint auditing on commercial banks as of 1966, and in 2003 it also became mandatory on insurance companies (Al-Jabr and Al-Saadoun, 2014). As well as in the State of Kuwait, the joint audit approach has been applied mandatorily in all companies listed on the Stock

Exchange in the State of Kuwait starting from 1995. (Al-Hadi et al: 2017)

3-9 The reality of applying joint auditing in Iraq

As for the situation in Iraq, it was the beginning of the mandatory" application of joint auditing" in the Republic of Iraq in 2016, as the Central Bank of Iraq issued a decision obliging all Iraqi private banks to apply joint auditing starting from the final accounts of 2016. This step came in conjunction with the beginning of Iraq's clear and explicit adoption of international financial reporting standards in 2016, specifically in private banks, as well as international auditing standards. This step came to strengthen efforts to establish the principles of transparency and disclosure sought by professional organizations concerned with auditing standards and accounting standards in the Republic of Iraq, represented by the Iraqi Association of Accountants as well as government institutions, led by the Central Bank of Iraq.) Al-Nuaimi,, 2020)

4- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE CONCEPT OF AUDIT REPORTS

4-1 Concept and content of external audit reports

It can be said that the main objective of the audit of the financial statements prepared in accordance with the accounting standards is to enable the auditor to express his impartial technical opinion on these statements. This report helps a lot in giving quality to those statements, which enables all parties using the financial statements to rely on these reports when making their financial or economic decisions. They rely on the confidence added by an auditor's report, which is in his opinion on the validity and fairness of the financial statements and their representation of the real and financial situation resulting from the results of the entity's business.

The audit report is the result of the audit process carried out by the auditor and the summary of his effort and work, as he expresses his opinion on the truth and fairness of these financial statements and the extent to which they reflect the results of the establishment. In addition, this report constitutes a communication tool or one of the important means that enable shareholders and all stakeholders in the establishment to identify the status of this establishment. This report is also one of the important tools for controlling those in charge of managing the establishment. (Abu Al-Haija, Al-Haik, 2012).

4-2 Definition of External Auditor's Report

The audit report was defined as: "A written document issued by the auditor that includes his independent technical professional opinion, regarding the performance of the entity under audit, for a specific period of time, which is summarized in certain financial reports and supplementary clarifications to these reports." (Hammad, 2007: 100) Arness defined it as " a written document issued by a professional person who is qualified to express an impartial opinion submitted to the entity whose statements are audited and in which he refers to the auditing standards followed in the implementation of the process. This document includes his technical opinion on the validity and fairness of the financial reports and the extent to which they represent the financial position of the entity under audit at the end of a specified period of time, and depict the results of its work from profit or loss and cash flows for that period in accordance with local auditing standards and international rules and standards issued by professional bodies and organizations." (Arenas et al, 2008).

The joint audit report (that is, when applying the joint audit entry) can be defined as "a written document issued by two or more auditors. This document includes their independent technical opinion on the performance of the audited entity for a specified period of time, the validity and reliability of the financial statements of this entity as a whole , and the extent to which it represents the financial position at the end of the financial year, which is summarized and disclosed in the financial reports, as well as the notes supplementing these financial statements in accordance with local auditing standards and international standards issued by professional organizations. (Abdulqawi, 2018)

4-3 Importance of the External Auditor's Report

Due to the critical importance of the audit report, many professional bodies and organizations concerned with accounting and auditing affairs at the international level, in addition to governmental and legislative bodies and organizations in various countries of the world, have been happy to set standards that must be taken into account when preparing this report, which stems from the importance of the audit report. This report is a summary of the auditor's findings in his work, as the audit process clarifies to him and allows him to identify all the data and information related to the operations of the facility under audit, which was ultimately reflected on the results of its work and its financial position. The audit report is similar to the disclosure provided to those concerned. Also a written document must be referred to when determining the responsibilities of the auditor in addition to the increasing demand for the auditor's neutral technical opinion. The audit report is important to the categories used by investors, the institution's management, creditors, suppliers, government offices, etc., which use the audit report and is important to them both according to their use. For example, the audit report helps government agencies to regulate the activities of commercial institutions and also helps them to develop tax policies and legislation, as well as helps the institution's management to achieve control and increase its efficiency and effectiveness.

4-4 Audit Report Quality Characteristics

It can be said that the report of the external auditor must be characterized by a set of characteristics, the most important of which are: (Noor, 1992)

- The auditor's report is a means of communication between the auditor and the various users with interests in the establishment.
- The report should be prepared as early as possible after the closing of the final accounts of the economic unit because the delay of the report loses its value.
- The presentation of the report must be in a proper and regular manner and must include facts of interest to users and be expressive and useful to them.
- It should be taken into account that the report does not contain ambiguous observations, but rather the terms of the report should be easy, clear and brief.
- The auditor must be impartial in his report to any party without the other party and must clarify the results of the examination and audit with all honesty, professionalism and honesty.

4-5 Types of Audit Reports

There are several types of audit reports, but the most used can be summarized as follows: (Jarbou, 2009)

- Short report: This report is always linked to the financial statements as it aims to present the facts to the users in a short way
- Extended report: This report is prepared by the auditor at the request of the management when it wishes to obtain some banking facilities and credits now as these banking entities can request additional information in terms of the financial activity of the facility for a period of years, that is, more than five or six years for the income statement or the cash flow statement.
- This report is prepared by the auditor for non-profit institutions and associations whose accounts are prepared on a cash basis such as hospitals, universities and schools. The auditor at the request of the management may also prepare the special report when it is tasked with preparing a report on any of the activities of the institution, such as paid fund or warehouse accounts or preparing special reports of the internal control system and suggestions to amend this system to be more effective.
- Joint report: It is the report prepared by two or more auditors when auditing the financial statements of the establishment or economic unit, by more than one auditor when applying the "joint audit" entry. Both auditors prepare and sign this report, and the responsibility is joint by the two, as we mentioned earlier in the definition of the joint audit report.

5- FIELD STUDY OR PRACTICAL APPLIED ASPECT

Complementing what we have discussed in the theoretical aspects related to the research related to the concept of joint auditing and audit reports, in this part of the research, the field study will be carried out to measure the impact of the application of the "joint auditing" program in enhancing external audit reports, by directing a set of questions through a questionnaire form distributed to the research sample consisting of a group of companies, audit offices, Iraqi auditors, a sample of members of audit committees working in some private Iraqi banks, and a sample of academics in the field of competence . This is in order to test the validity of the study hypotheses.

5-1 The research sample (research community)

43 questionnaire forms have been distributed electronically to individuals working in the field of accounting, auditing and other disciplines related to the subject matter in question. As for the research sample, Table (1) shows the classification of the sample members according to age group. The table indicates that the distribution of the sample members according to age groups is similar and in a specific variation, as it reached (35-45) and (45-55) percentages (34.88%) for each group, then it reached (23.26%) for the group (25-35) and finally for the group (greater than 55) by (6.98%), which gives an indication of the size of the perception enjoyed by the sample members due to the age group as well as their ability to express an opinion as far as it is concerned

Table (I)

Sample	Age Groups				Total
	25-35	35-45	45-55	Greater than 55	
Frequencies	**10**	**15**	**15**	**3**	**43**
Percentage	**23-26**	**34.88%**	**34.88%**	**6.98%**	**100%**

Table (2) indicates a description of the classification of the sample according to educational achievement, and we note that the largest number of sample members were people who hold a master's and doctorate degree and by (46% and 30%) respectively.

Table (2)

Sample	Academic Qualifications				Total
	Bachelor	Postgraduate diploma	Master's degree or equivalent	PhD or equivalent	
Frequencies	**1**	**3**	**15**	**24**	**43**
Percentage	**2.3%**	**7.0%**	**34.9**	**55.8%**	**100%**

Table (3) shows the classification of the sample according to their professional and scientific experience, and we note from the results of the table that (55.8%) have a qualification from (PhD or equivalent) and (34.9%) have a qualification (Master or equivalent) and (7%) have a qualification (high diploma) and (2.3%) have a qualification (bachelor), and these results clearly show that the research sample has good experience that enables them to answer the questionnaire questions with a high degree of accuracy.

Table (3)

Sample	Years of Experience					Total
	1-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	20-25$	
Frequencies	**1**	**7**	**10**	**15**	**10**	**43**
Percentage	**2.3%**	**16.3%**	**23.3%**	**34.9**	**23.3%**	**100%**

Table (3) shows the classification of the sample according to years of experience, and we note from the results of the table that (81.5%) have experience from (10 to 25 years) and the percentage was (18.5%) who have experience (from 1 to 0 years) and this indicates that they have good experience that enables them to answer the questionnaire questions with a high degree of accuracy.

Table (4)

Sample	Place of Work:				Total
	Members of Audit Committees	Academic	certified accountant	Auditor	
Frequencies	**3**	**21**	**16**	**3**	**43**
Percentage	**7.0%**	**48.8%**	**37.2%**	**7.0%**	**100%**

Table (4) shows the classification of the sample according to the place of work, and we note from the results of the table that (48.8%) of the category is academic and the percentage reached (37.2%) of the category (chartered accountant) and finally (7.0%) of the category (members of audit committees) and the category (auditor).

5-2 Presenting and analyzing the results of the questionnaire

Descriptive statistical findings:

1- The first axis B (The impact of applying the joint audit approach in enhancing the quality of the external audit report through the quality of the audit process), where Table (5) shows the descriptive statistics

Table (5)

#	Questions	A.M	S.D	C.V
1.	Joint auditing enhances the independence of the auditor, which increases the quality of the audit process.	4,05	0.688	16.99%
2.	Joint auditing enables joint auditors to exchange experiences and information among themselves, which is reflected in the quality of the audit process.	4.23	0.427	10.09%
3.	A joint audit helps provide more reliable accounting information that meets the needs of users of financial statements and assists them in making their decisions.	3.98	0.707	17.76%
4.	Joint auditing supports an increased level of confidence of information users in the auditing profession.	4.26	0.621	14:58%
5.	Joint audit leads to the use of more analytical audit procedures, which leads to increasing the quality of the audit process	4.16	0.574	13.80%
6.	The application of joint auditing reduces the likelihood of collusion between the auditors and the management of the entity under audit, which enhances the quality of the audit process.	4.09	0.718	17.56%
7.	The application of the joint audit is aimed at strengthening the professional competence of the auditors and implementing better audit procedures .	3.95	0.653	16.53%
8.	The application of the joint audit is aimed at enhancing the independence of auditors and reducing management pressure, which leads to improving the quality of the audit process.	4.16	0.721	17.33%
9.	The presence of two auditors leads to a more objective collection of evidence, which enhances the quality of the audit.	4.35	0.686	15.77%
		4.14	0.43	10.39%

The results related to the first axis (the impact of applying the "joint audit" approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report through the quality of the audit process), shown in Table (5), showed that the highest value was at the paragraph (the presence of two auditors leads to the process of collecting evidence more objectively, which enhances the quality of the audit). "This paragraph achieved a level of importance with an arithmetic mean of (4.35) and a standard deviation of (0.686) with a coefficient of difference of (15.77%). The lowest value was in the paragraph (The application of joint auditing strengthens the professional competence of auditors and better implementation of audit procedures.) The arithmetic mean was (3.95) with a standard deviation of (0.653) and a coefficient of variation of (16.53%). In total, the variable (the effect of applying the "joint audit" approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report by the quality of the audit process was achieved with an arithmetic mean of (4.14) at a good level and a standard deviation of (0.43) and a coefficient of variation of (10.39%).

2- The second axis (the **impact of applying the "joint audit" approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report through good planning of an audit process)**, where Table (6) shows the descriptive statistics.

Table (6):

#	Questions	A.M	S.D	C.D
1.	The joint audit planning process requires a good understanding of the activity of the audited entity prior to the commencement of the audit.	4.58	0.499	10.90%
2.	The auditors must perform a number of preliminary analytical procedures before starting the joint audit.	4.37	0.489	11.19%
3.	A well-planned joint audit process requires that auditors review the legal obligations of the audited entity well before beginning to carry out the assignment.	4.19	0.546	13.03%
4.	The good planning stages of a joint audit need to pay attention to setting limits on the materiality of carrying out the audit.	4.09	0.57	13.94%
5.	A well-planned joint audit requires a thorough examination of the internal control system by the auditors to identify weaknesses and strengths in the system before the audit can begin.	4.33	0.606	14.00%
6.	The joint audit planning process shall be carried out jointly by the two audit offices conducting the joint audit.	4.19	0.546	13.03%
7.	A good joint audit planning process needs to distribute work tasks between the two audit offices involved in the process in a balanced manner before carrying out the task	4.17	0.469	11.25 %
8.	The balanced distribution of tasks when planning the joint audit process reduces the bottleneck that results from the lack of time for the auditor, which gives him greater flexibility when carrying out the task.	4.23	0.571	13.50%
		4.29	0.304	7.09%

The results related to the second axis (the impact of applying the "joint audit" approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report through good planning of an audit process, "shown in Table (6), showed that the highest value was at the paragraph (the joint audit planning process requires a good understanding of the activity of the audited entity before starting to implement the audit process)". "This paragraph achieved a level of importance with an arithmetic mean of (4.58) and a standard deviation of (0.499) with a coefficient of difference of (10.90%). The lowest value was in the paragraph (The stages of good joint audit planning need to pay attention to setting limits for the relative importance of implementing the audit process), where the arithmetic mean was (4.09) with a standard deviation of (0.57) and a coefficient of difference of (13.94%). In total, the variable achieved the effect of applying the joint audit approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report through good planning of an audit process with an arithmetic mean of (4.29) at a good level and a standard deviation of (0.304) and a coefficient of difference of (7.09%).

3- The third axis (the **impact of applying the "joint audit" approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report through the preparation of the joint audit report and the time of issuance of the joint consolidated audit report**), where Table (7) shows the calculation media, standard deviations and the coefficient of variation.

Table (7)

#	Questions	A.M	S.D	C.V
1.	The participation of two auditors and their discussion of the format of the final joint audit report submitted by them leads to the issuance of a more objective report.	4.28	0.63	14.72%
2.	The implementation of the joint audit process contributes to the timely delivery of the audit report.	4.00	0.577	14.43%
3.	The joint audit is required to work to reduce the delay in issuing the joint audit report.	3.91	0.57	14.58%
4.	The joint audit report shall state that the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and international financial accounting and reporting standards.	4.56	0.502	11.01%
5.	The joint audit report should identify the circumstances in which accounting principles are consistently applied in the financial period compared to the previous period.	4.28	0.504	11.78%

6.	The joint audit report shall include the adequacy of the disclosures in the financial statements.	4.26	0.492	11.55%
7.	The joint audit report should clearly indicate the responsibility and nature of the auditors' work.	4.40	0.66	15.00%
8.	The joint audit report shall confirm the integrity of the financial statements and the information contained in the financial statements.	4.23	0.48	11.35%
		4.24	0.297	7.00 %

The results related to the third axis (the impact of applying the "joint audit" approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's reports through the preparation of the joint audit report and the time of issuance of the joint consolidated audit report," shown in Table (5), showed that the highest value was at the paragraph (the joint audit report must clearly indicate the responsibility and nature of the auditors' work)." "This paragraph achieved a level of importance with an arithmetic mean of (4.4) and a standard deviation of (0.66) with a coefficient of difference of (15%). As for the lowest value, the paragraph (y The application of the joint audit approach to work to reduce the delay in issuing the joint audit report), where the arithmetic average was (3.91) with a standard deviation of (0.57) and a coefficient of variation of (14.58%). In total, the variable achieved the effect of applying the joint audit approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's reports by preparing the joint audit report and the time of issuing the joint audit report in the arithmetic medium (4.24) with a good level and a standard deviation of (0.297) and a coefficient of variation of (7.00%).

B- Testing and analyzing the dimensional significance of the research variables:

The first step is to measure the significance of the impact between the variables by identifying the basic research variables and the nature of the relationship between them, and in order to test the hypotheses of the research, and based on the fact that each dimension contains in its paragraphs a set of paragraphs, so we will use the "T-Test" test to measure the significance of the axis, and then compare it with the hypothetical medium. If the computational medium is greater than the hypothetical medium, this means the significance of the impact, and if it is smaller than the value of the hypothetical medium, it means that there is no significance of the impact, that is, there is no effect.

1- The first main hypothesis is "There is an impact of applying the joint audit approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's reports through the quality of the audit process."

Table (8)

Test (T-Test) The first main hypothesis

Arithmetical mean (Maths.)	Standard deviation (Maths.)	Difference of averages	Degree of Freedom	Tabular (T) Value	Sig	Calculated t value
4.137	0.430	1.137	42	2.021	0.000	17.329

The value of (t calculated) reached (17.329), which is greater than its tabular value at the level of significance (0.05) and the degree of freedom (42), which is (2.021). This indicates that the significance of the impact in the application of the joint audit approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report through the quality of the audit process. This means that there are significant differences recorded by the arithmetic mean (4.137), which is greater than the hypothetical mean of (3). This means that the significance is in favor of the arithmetic mean, which indicates the proof of the first hypothesis.

2- The second main hypothesis is "There is an impact of applying the joint audit approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report through the quality of the audit process."

Table (9) Results of the second hypothesis

Arithmetical mean (Maths.)	Standard deviation (Maths.)	Difference of averages	Degree of Freedom	Tabular (T) Value	Sig	Calculated t value
4.293	0.303	1,293	42	2.021	0.000	940

The value of (t calculated) was (27.940), which is greater than its tabular value at the level of significance (0.05) and the degree of freedom (42), which is (2.021). This indicates that the significance of the impact in the application of the joint audit approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report through the quality of the audit process. This means that there are significant differences recorded by the arithmetic mean (4.293), which is greater than the hypothetical mean of (3). This means that the significance is in favor of the arithmetic mean, which indicates the proof of the second hypothesis.

2- The third sub-hypothesis "There is an impact of applying the joint audit approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report by preparing the joint audit report and the time of issuing the joint audit report.

Table 10

Test (T-Test) Hypothesis 3

Arithmetical mean (Maths.)	Standard deviation (Maths.)	Difference of averages	Degree of Freedom	Tabular (T) Value	Sig	Calculated t value
4.238	297	1.238	42	2.021	0.000	312

The value of (t calculated) reached (27.312), which is greater than its tabular value at the level of significance (0.05) and the degree of freedom (42), which is (2.021). This indicates that the significance of the impact in the application of the joint audit approach in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report through the preparation of the joint audit report and the time of issuance of the joint audit report. This means that there are significant differences recorded by the mean (4.238), which is greater than the hypothetical mean of (3). This means that the significance is in favor of the computational mean, which indicates the proof of the third hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the field study of the opinions of the research sample, we report the following conclusions:

1- It was found that there is great importance in increasing the level of confidence of information users in the audit profession, as joint auditing enables auditors participating in the audit process to exchange experiences and information among themselves, which is reflected in the quality of the audit process.
2- It was found that there is agreement by the members of the research sample at a good level of importance that the presence of two auditors will lead to the collection of evidence more objectively and in a way that enhances the quality of the audit process.
3- There is great importance in distributing work tasks between the two audit offices involved in the process in a balanced manner before carrying out the task. The auditors carry out a number of preliminary analytical procedures before starting the joint audit process.
4- Enhance the circumstances in which accounting principles are consistently applied in the financial period compared to the previous period. The joint audit report must also state that the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and international financial accounting and reporting standards.
5- It was found that there was agreement by the research team that the application of the joint audit will reduce the delay in issuing the joint audit report and that this report will be delivered in a timely manner.
6- It was found that there was agreement by the research team that the participation of two auditors in the joint audit process and their discussion of the form of the final joint report submitted would lead to the issuance of a more objective report.
7- The value of the (T-Test) test to measure the significance of the arithmetic mean with the hypothetical mean, where the value of (T calculated) and not the stability of the main hypotheses is greater than their tabular value, which indicates the significance of the direct impact in enhancing the quality of the external auditor's report through the quality of the audit process and through good planning and through the preparation of the joint audit report.
8- Directing new researchers in future studies to conduct joint audit research to complement previous research efforts.
9- The need to increase interest in developing the joint audit approach by increasing cooperation between major audit offices and companies with emerging offices in order to develop professional practices, especially the joint audit method.
10- Reviewing the experiences of countries that have applied joint auditing, urging the regulators of the auditing profession and benefiting from the experiences of applying joint auditing.
11- The need to issue directives by the professional authorities or through the issuance of a framework regulating the joint audit process in addition to the efforts of the Central Bank of Iraq in this regard.
12- The need to intensify and increase the establishment of workshops, seminars and conferences to raise awareness of the importance of the joint audit method and its contribution to increasing the quality of auditing.

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