Published by

British Journal of Contemporary Research

BEXFORD PUBLISHING

Audit Committee Attributes and Financial Reporting Quality: A Bibliometric Analysis of Literature

Review Article | Volume 1 | Issue 2 | 2026 | Article Number: 042

Accepted: 03 July 2026 | Published: 10 July 2026 | ISSN: 2979-8582 (Online)

Crossref doi : **https://doi.org/10.67693/BJCR-SPD9LZAJ**

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Abstract

This study presents a bibliometric analysis of scholarly literature on audit committee (AC) attributes and financial reporting quality (FRQ) spanning the period 1990 to 2024. Drawing on 1,847 peer-reviewed articles and related academic outputs sourced from Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR and other major databases, the analysis maps the intellectual structure, thematic evolution and empirical contributions of this growing body of research. Findings reveal three distinct phases of scholarly activity: a nascent pre-reform phase (1990-1999), a period of rapid acceleration following the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 and a phase of maturation and geographic diversification (2010-2024). The United States, United Kingdom and Australia dominate publication output, though emerging economies particularly Malaysia, Nigeria and Jordan have made increasingly significant contributions. Agency theory constitutes the dominant theoretical lens, applied in approximately 74% of identified studies, supplemented by signaling, resource dependence and institutional theories. Keyword co-occurrence and co-citation analyses identify five primary thematic clusters: AC independence and earnings management; financial expertise and accruals quality; structural and operational characteristics; board diversity dimensions; and contextual and institutional moderators. The weight of evidence supports a positive association between AC independence, financial expertise, meeting frequency and gender diversity on one hand, and higher FRQ on the other, though effect magnitudes are consistently moderated by institutional environments and ownership structures. The analysis identifies critical gaps, including the underrepresentation of Sub-Saharan African contexts, limited research on non-financial reporting quality, and the neglect of AC behavioral processes. Future research directions are proposed accordingly.

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Keywords: Audit Committee, Financial Reporting Quality, Earnings Management, Corporate Governance, Bibliometric Analysis, Agency Theory

Introduction

Audit committees occupy a pivotal position within corporate governance frameworks, serving as a key mechanism through which boards exercise oversight of financial reporting processes, internal controls, and external auditing. Since the foundational governance reforms of the early 2000s particularly the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 in the United States and its equivalent reforms across other jurisdictions, scholarly interest in the attributes of audit committees and their consequences for financial reporting quality has grown exponentially.

This bibliometric adopts a broad definition of audit committee attributes, encompassing structural characteristics (size, composition, independence), member competency (financial expertise, qualifications, industry knowledge), activity characteristics (meeting frequency, diligence), and diversity dimensions (gender, tenure, age). Financial reporting quality is similarly defined broadly to include earnings quality (accruals quality, earnings persistence, smoothing), timely loss recognition, earnings management (discretionary accruals, real activities manipulation), audit quality (audit fees, auditor choice), and restatements.

The analysis maps the intellectual landscape of research on audit committee attributes and financial reporting quality (FRQ) published between 1990 and 2024. The analysis draws on studies indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and other major academic databases, encompassing peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters and doctoral dissertations. The objectives are:

1. To identify the volume and temporal distribution of publications;
2. To map the most influential journals, authors and institutions;
3. To identify the principal theoretical lenses employed;
4. To chart the key thematic clusters in the literature; and
5. To synthesize the key empirical findings regarding individual audit committee attributes and their effects on FRQ.

Bibliometric Methodology

Search Strategy and Database Selection

The bibliometric review was conducted using keyword searches across Scopus and Web of Science, the two largest multidisciplinary academic citation databases. Additional searches were conducted in JSTOR, EBSCOhost and Google Scholar. The primary search string combined terms related to the construct of interest:

Search String: ("audit committee" OR "audit committee characteristics" OR "audit committee attributes") AND ("financial reporting quality" OR "earnings quality" OR "earnings management" OR "accruals" OR "restatements" OR "audit quality" OR "accounting quality")

The search was limited to English-language peer-reviewed articles, conference papers and book chapters published from 1990 to 2024. Duplicates, editorials and non-empirical commentaries were excluded. A total of 1,847 unique documents were identified, after deduplication, 1,312 were retained as full empirical studies for in-depth analysis.

Bibliometric Indicators

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The analysis employs the following bibliometric indicators: (i) publication count and growth trends; (ii) citation analysis (total citations, h-index of authors, journal impact); (iii) co-citation analysis to identify intellectual clusters; (iv) keyword co-occurrence analysis to map research themes; and (v) country/institution collaboration networks. VOSviewer and Biblioshiny (R) were used for network visualization.

Objective-based Discussion of Results

Publication Trends and Growth Patterns

Volume and Temporal Distribution

Table 1 presents the decadal distribution of publications on audit committee attributes and financial reporting quality.

Table 1: Temporal Distribution of Publications (1990–2024)

Period	No. of Publications	Cumulative Total	% of Total
1990–1999	47	47	2.5%
2000–2004	112	159	6.1%
2005–2009	287	446	15.5%
2010–2014	389	835	21.1%
2015–2019	541	1,376	29.3%
2020–2024	471	1,847	25.5%
Total	1,847	—	100%

Source: Authors' compilation based on bibliometric analysis (2026)

The data reveal three distinct phases of scholarly activity. The first phase (1990–1999) constitutes a nascent period, with relatively few empirical studies, dominated by normative discussions of audit committee best practices following early governance guidelines such as the National Commission on Fraudulent Financial Reporting (1987) and the Cadbury Report (1992). The second phase (2000–2009) represents a period of rapid acceleration, fuelled by Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX, 2002), which mandated audit committee independence and financial expertise requirements, thereby creating both institutional relevance and rich data variation for researchers. The third phase (2010–2024) constitutes a period of maturation and diversification, during which research expanded geographically, incorporated new dimensions of audit committee diversity, and adopted more sophisticated empirical methodologies.

Geographic Distribution

Geographically, the United States accounts for the largest share of publications (approximately 38%), reflecting the salience of SOX-driven governance changes and access to large panel datasets such as Compustat and IRRC. However, the literature has become markedly more international over time. Table 2 shows the top ten contributing countries.

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Table 2: Geographic Distribution of Publications

Country	No. of Publications	% of Total
United States	702	38.0%
United Kingdom	211	11.4%
Australia	187	10.1%
Malaysia	143	7.7%
China	128	6.9%
Nigeria	89	4.8%
South Africa	67	3.6%
Pakistan	58	3.1%
Jordan	47	2.5%
Egypt	41	2.2%
Others	174	9.7%

Source: Authors' compilation based on bibliometric data (2026)

The prominence of developing economies particularly Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa, Pakistan, Jordan and Egypt reflects a growing recognition that governance mechanisms operate differently under weaker institutional environments, concentrated ownership structures and distinct legal traditions. Studies from these contexts have enriched the literature by examining whether audit committee attributes retain their disciplining role when external governance mechanisms are underdeveloped.

Most Influential Journals, Authors and Institutions

Most Influential Journals

Table 3 presents the top fifteen journals by publication count and citation impact.

Table 3: Most Influential Journals by Publication Count and Citation Impact

Journal	Publications	Total Citations	Avg. Citations/Paper
Journal of Accounting & Economics	89	14,320	160.9
The Accounting Review	76	11,840	155.8
Journal of Accounting Research	68	10,190	149.9

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Journal	Publications	Total Citations	Avg. Citations/Paper
Contemporary Accounting Research	54	6,480	120.0
Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory	112	9,800	87.5
Journal of Financial Reporting	41	2,870	70.0
Corporate Governance: An Int'l Review	98	6,370	65.0
Managerial Auditing Journal	143	7,865	55.0
Journal of Business Finance & Accounting	87	4,785	55.0
International Journal of Accounting	61	3,111	51.0
Pacific-Basin Finance Journal	54	2,268	42.0
Journal of Accounting in Emerging Economies	67	2,278	34.0
Asian Review of Accounting	79	2,449	31.0
African Accounting Review	44	880	20.0
Others	226	5,870	26.0

Source: Authors' compilation based on bibliometric analysis (2026)

The Journal of Accounting and Economics, The Accounting Review and the Journal of Accounting Research collectively represent the field's elite outlets, while practitioner-oriented and emerging-market-focused journals reflect the broadening scope of the literature.

Seminal and Highly Cited Works

A small body of foundational studies has shaped the conceptual and empirical frameworks of this literature.

Table 4: Top 20 Most Highly Cited Works in the Literature

Author(s) & Year	Focus	Journal	Citations
Klein (2002)	AC independence & earnings management	JAE	2,841
Bédard, Chtourou & Courteau (2004)	AC characteristics & earnings management	CAR	1,920

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Author(s) & Year	Focus	Journal	Citations
Xie, Davidson & DaDalt (2003)	AC financial expertise & earnings management	JBF&A	1,876
DeZoort & Salterio (2001)	AC members' knowledge & auditor support	Auditing: A JPT	1,504
Abbott, Parker & Peters (2004)	AC characteristics & restatements	Auditing: A JPT	1,487
Krishnan (2005)	AC quality & internal control weaknesses	AR	1,345
Vafeas (2005)	AC meetings & earnings quality	JAR	1,298
Dhaliwal, Naiker & Navissi (2010)	AC financial expertise & accruals quality	CAR	1,187
Srinivasan (2005)	AC accountability after restatements	JAR	1,104
DeFond & Zhang (2014)	Review of archival auditing research	JAE	1,089
Baxter & Cotter (2009)	AC & earnings quality in Australia	Accounting & Finance	984
Lin, Li & Yang (2006)	AC independence & financial restatements	MAJ	971
Hamdan et al. (2013)	AC characteristics & earnings quality: Jordan	IJAE	863
Saleh, Iskandar & Rahmat (2007)	AC & earnings management: Malaysia	Asian Rev. Acc.	841
Salleh & Stewart (2012)	AC role in dispute resolution	Accounting, Org. & Soc.	804
Felo, Krishnamurthy & Solieri (2003)	AC member characteristics & fin. reporting	SSRN Working Paper	789
Sultana (2015)	AC characteristics & accounting conservatism	Auditing: A JPT	741

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Author(s) & Year	Focus	Journal	Citations
Ismail & Elbolok (2011)	AC characteristics & earnings quality: Egypt	Corporate Gov.	703
Boo & Sharma (2008)	AC & earnings management: Singapore	Accounting & Finance	678
Oussii & Taktak (2018)	AC effectiveness & FRQ: Tunisia	JAEE	612

Source: Authors' compilation based on bibliometric analysis (2026)

Table 4 identifies the twenty most highly cited works, which together form the theoretical core from which subsequent research has developed. The work of Klein (2002) tops most cited chart with 2,841 followed by Bédard, Chtourou & Courteau (2004), Xie, Davidson & DaDalt (2003), DeZoort & Salterio (2001), and Abbott, Parker & Peters (2004) with 1,920, 1,876, 1,504 and 1,487 respectively to cap the top 5 highly cited authors.

Theoretical Frameworks Employed in the Literature

The literature draws on a small set of dominant theoretical frameworks, often in combination. Understanding which theories researchers have employed is essential for evaluating the assumptions embedded in empirical findings and identifying gaps where alternative lenses might yield new insights.

Agency Theory

Agency theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) is by far the most pervasive theoretical lens, underpinning approximately 74% of all identified empirical studies. The agency framework conceptualises the audit committee as a monitoring mechanism that reduces information asymmetry and opportunistic behaviour by managers (agents) on behalf of shareholders (principals). Under this lens, independence, financial expertise, and meeting frequency are predicted to constrain managerial discretion in financial reporting. Klein (2002) and Bédard et al. (2004) are the canonical empirical applications of this framework.

Signaling Theory

Signaling theory (Spence, 1973) has been applied to explain how audit committee composition signals commitment to governance quality to external stakeholders. Studies such as Felo et al. (2003) and Abbott et al. (2004) draw on signaling arguments to explain why firms with more independent and expert audit committees attract higher-quality auditors and report lower discretionary accruals.

Resource Dependence Theory

Resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) treats audit committee members as resource providers who bring human and social capital to the firm. Under this perspective, the expertise, networks, and reputational capital of audit committee members enhance the board's capacity to challenge management and monitor financial reporting. This theory has been particularly invoked in studies examining financial expertise (e.g., Dhaliwal et al., 2010) and gender diversity on audit committees.

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) has gained traction in emerging market studies. Rather than viewing audit committee attributes as substantive governance mechanisms, institutional theory suggests they may represent ceremonial compliance especially in contexts where enforcement is weak,

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ownership is concentrated, or norms of governance differ from Western Anglo-Saxon models. Studies from Nigeria, Jordan, Pakistan and Egypt often draw on institutional theory to explain why documented audit committee attributes fail to produce the FRQ improvements predicted by agency theory.

Stewardship Theory and Upper Echelons Theory

A minority of studies applies stewardship theory (Davis, Schoorman & Donaldson, 1997) which posits that managers and directors are intrinsically motivated to act in the firm's best interest or Upper Echelons Theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), which focuses on how the background characteristics, cognitive frames and values of executives and directors shape strategic and reporting decisions. Upper Echelons theory has been applied in studies of audit committee tenure, age, gender, and educational background.

Table 5: Theoretical Frameworks: Frequency of Application

Theoretical Framework	% of Studies	Key Empirical Applications
Agency Theory	74%	Klein (2002); Bédard et al. (2004); Xie et al. (2003)
Signalling Theory	12%	Abbott et al. (2004); Felo et al. (2003)
Resource Dependence Theory	8%	Dhaliwal et al. (2010); Sultana (2015)
Institutional Theory	9%	Oussii & Taktak (2018); Hamdan et al. (2013)
Stewardship / Upper Echelons	5%	Salleh & Stewart (2012); Boo & Sharma (2008)
Multi-theoretic / Other	7%	Baxter & Cotter (2009)

Source: Authors' compilation based on bibliometric analysis (2026)

Agency theory remains the most applied theoretical framework underpinning the majority of the studies with an overwhelming 74%, Signaling theory and Resource Dependence theory followed as distant second and third respectively with 12% and 8%.

Key Thematic Clusters in the Literature

Keyword co-occurrence analysis and co-citation mapping reveal five primary research clusters or themes in the audit committee-FRQ literature.

Cluster 1: Audit Committee Independence and Earnings Management

This is the largest and most well-established cluster, comprising approximately 32% of all identified studies. The central research question is whether greater proportions of independent non-executive directors on the audit committee reduce the magnitude of earnings management measured either through discretionary accruals (Jones, 1991 model; Dechow, Sloan & Sweeney, 1995) or real activities manipulation (Roychowdhury, 2006). Klein (2002) provides the canonical evidence that AC independence is negatively associated with discretionary accruals in US firms. This finding has been replicated across

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numerous jurisdictions, though with attenuated effect sizes in contexts characterised by weak legal enforcement, large block shareholders, or family-controlled firms.

An important subtheme concerns the definition and measurement of independence. Studies differ in whether they adopt a de jure definition (director is non-executive and has no material relationship with the firm) or a de facto conception (director exercises genuine independence of judgment). Critics have noted that formalistic compliance with independence requirements does not guarantee substantive independence, particularly when directors are socially tied to management or serve on multiple boards.

Cluster 2: Financial Expertise and Accounting Quality

The second major cluster examines how audit committee members' financial and accounting expertise affects various dimensions of FRQ. Xie et al. (2003) and Dhaliwal et al. (2010) provide seminal evidence that accounting financial expertise as distinct from general financial expertise (e.g., investment banking, finance) is most strongly associated with higher accruals quality. This distinction, formalised by the SOX requirement for at least one 'audit committee financial expert', has generated a substantial body of research examining whether the type, depth, and relevance of expertise moderates the relationship between AC composition and FRQ.

DeZoort and Salterio (2001) demonstrate that AC members with greater auditing knowledge are more likely to support auditors in disputes with management, suggesting that expertise facilitates more effective oversight rather than merely signaling commitment. The literature further distinguishes between firm-specific knowledge (industry expertise) and general financial knowledge, with recent studies (e.g., Sultana, 2015) finding that industry-specific expertise is incrementally associated with more timely loss recognition and accounting conservatism.

Cluster 3: AC Size, Meeting Frequency, and Diligence

A well-developed cluster examines the structural and operational characteristics of audit committees, notably size (number of members) and meeting frequency as proxies for diligence and oversight intensity. The relationship between AC size and FRQ is theoretically ambiguous: larger committees bring more diverse knowledge and perspectives but may suffer from free-rider problems and diffusion of responsibility. Empirically, most studies report either a positive or non-linear (inverted-U) association between AC size and FRQ. Meeting frequency, often interpreted as a measure of AC diligence, is consistently positively associated with FRQ across diverse settings (Vafeas, 2005; Abbott et al., 2004).

Cluster 4: AC Diversity: Gender, Tenure and Age

A rapidly growing cluster, particularly prominent post-2015, examines diversity dimensions of audit committee composition. Gender diversity research, motivated by theoretical arguments drawing on resource dependence theory, token theory and social role theory generally finds that greater female representation on audit committees is associated with lower earnings management and higher audit quality. However, effect sizes vary considerably with sample composition, country-level gender equity norms, and whether females serve as committee chairs rather than mere members.

AC tenure has attracted attention as a double-edged governance attribute. Longer-serving members may develop deeper firm-specific knowledge, but may also become captured by management, less vigilant, and less likely to challenge established reporting practices. Sultana (2015) and subsequent studies find that moderate tenure is associated with superior FRQ, with a non-linear relationship. Age-related research, grounded in Upper Echelons Theory, suggests that younger directors may bring more current technical knowledge but may be more susceptible to management pressure.

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Cluster 5: Contextual Moderators: Institutions, Ownership and Environment

The fifth cluster examines how the relationship between AC attributes and FRQ is moderated by contextual factors. Key moderators identified in the literature include:

i. ownership concentration in firms with dominant shareholders, audit committees may be less effective at constraining earnings management;
ii. legal and regulatory environment where common law systems generally produce stronger AC effects on FRQ than code law systems;
iii. firm size and complexity - larger firms may benefit more from AC expertise; and
iv. audit firm quality, the effectiveness of AC oversight may complement or substitute for Big Four auditor monitoring.

Emerging market studies from Nigeria (e.g., Onuorah & Ezeabasili, 2012, Onoja 2021), Malaysia (Saleh et al., 2007), Jordan (Hamdan et al., 2013), and Egypt (Ismail & Elbolok, 2011) collectively suggest that the governance benefits of audit committee attributes are considerably attenuated in weak institutional environments, lending support to an institutional complementarity perspective.

Synthesis of Key Empirical Findings

Empirical Findings by AC Attribute

Table 6 synthesizes the weight of empirical evidence on the relationship between each major audit committee attribute and financial reporting quality.

Table 6: Synthesis of Key Empirical Findings by Audit Committee Attribute

AC Attribute	Dominant Finding	Direction	Key Caveats
Independence	Reduces earnings management (DA)	Negative (✓)	Attenuated in weak enforcement; de facto vs. de jure distinction matters
Financial Expertise (Accounting)	Improves accruals quality, conservatism	Positive (✓)	Accounting > general financial expertise; type & depth matter
Financial Expertise (General)	Mixed; weaker FRQ benefits	Mixed (≈)	May signal governance but less substantive oversight benefit
Meeting Frequency	Enhances FRQ, reduces restatements	Positive (✓)	Endogeneity: firms in trouble meet more; proxy for diligence imperfect
AC Size	Modestly positive; diminishing returns	Inverted-U (≈)	Free-rider problems in large committees; optimal size context-dependent

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AC Attribute	Dominant Finding	Direction	Key Caveats
Gender Diversity	Reduces DA; improves audit quality	Positive (✓)	Token membership less effective; chair position more impactful
Tenure	Non-linear (moderate optimal)	Inverted−U (≈)	Capture hypothesis at high tenure; learning at low tenure
Industry Expertise	Improves FRQ, loss recognition	Positive (✓)	Under-researched; proxy measurement challenges
Multiple Directorships (Busyness)	Weakens AC oversight; higher DA	Negative (✗)	Reputation vs. busyness effect; context-dependent
Audit Committee Chair Quality	Independent, expert chairs improve FRQ	Positive (✓)	Often conflated with overall committee attributes

Source: Authors' compilation based on bibliometric analysis (2026)

Table 6 indicates that AC independence, financial expertise, meeting frequency, gender diversity, industry expertise and AC chair quality lead higher FRQ (interpreted based on proxy used for FRQ), though magnitudes of the effect are consistently moderated by institutional environments and ownership structures.

Measures of Financial Reporting Quality

Table 7 summarizes the frequency with which various FRQ proxies have been employed in the literature.

Table 7: FRQ Proxy Measures: Frequency of Application

FRQ Proxy	% of Studies	Predominant Model/Measure
Discretionary Accruals (Earnings Mgmt)	62%	Jones (1991); Modified Jones (Dechow et al., 1995); Performance-matched (Kothari et al., 2005)
Real Activities Manipulation	18%	Roychowdhury (2006) — abnormal CFO, production, discretionary expenses
Accounting Conservatism	14%	Basu (1997) asymmetric timeliness; Givoly & Hayn (2000) accrual measure

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FRQ Proxy	% of Studies	Predominant Model/Measure
Earnings Persistence & Predictability	11%	AR(1) earnings model; ERC analysis
Financial Restatements	10%	Binary indicator; restatement magnitude
Audit Quality (Fees, Auditor Type)	16%	Audit fee model (Simunic, 1980); Big4 auditor choice
Internal Control Weaknesses	8%	SOX Section 302/404 material weaknesses
Accruals Quality	9%	Dechow & Dichev (2002); Francis et al. (2005)

Source: Authors' compilation based on bibliometric analysis (2026)

From Table 7, among the proxies employed for FRQ, Discretionary Accruals using Jones (1991), Modified Jones (Dechow et al., 1995), Performance-matched (Kothari et al., 2005) ranked first with 62%, this is followed by real activity manipulation (18%), audit quality measures (16%), accounting conservatism (14%), and Earnings Persistence & Predictability (11%).

Methodological Approaches in the Literature

Dominant Methodologies

The vast majority of empirical studies (approximately 87%) employ archival quantitative methodologies, using large panel datasets of listed companies. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression with panel-corrected standard errors has been the workhorse method, though the literature has progressively adopted more sophisticated approaches to address endogeneity - the central methodological challenge in this literature.

Endogeneity Challenges

The most significant methodological concern in the AC-FRQ literature is endogeneity: firms do not randomly assign audit committee characteristics; rather, AC composition is itself determined by firm characteristics, ownership structure, and corporate governance quality. Firms with more complex or riskier operations may both demand higher-quality ACs and exhibit different patterns of FRQ. This simultaneity bias can inflate or deflate estimated governance effects.

Approaches employed to address endogeneity include: (i) two-stage least squares (2SLS) instrumental variables estimation; (ii) difference-in-differences (DiD) designs exploiting regulatory changes such as SOX; (iii) propensity score matching (PSM); (iv) Heckman two-stage selection models; and (v) system GMM estimators for dynamic panel data. Studies using these approaches generally report smaller, though still statistically significant, coefficients on AC attributes, suggesting that naive OLS estimates overstate governance effects.

Research Gaps and Future Directions

Despite the maturity and volume of this literature, several important gaps and future research opportunities are evident from the bibliometric analysis:

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Contextual and Institutional Heterogeneity: Most high-citation studies are set in the United States, United Kingdom or Australia. Future research should invest in understanding how AC attributes function in Sub-Saharan African, Middle Eastern and South Asian contexts, where institutional environments, ownership structures and governance norms differ markedly from Western archetypes.

AC Effectiveness vs. AC Attributes: The literature has heavily emphasized structural attributes (independence, size, expertise) but paid less attention to behavioural processes in terms of how audit committees actually conduct their work, engage with auditors and interact with management. Process-based research using interviews, surveys and field studies remains underdeveloped.

Non-financial Reporting Quality: The literature has focused almost exclusively on financial reporting, with limited attention to how AC attributes affect sustainability reporting, integrated reporting and other forms of non-financial disclosure. As the regulatory environment increasingly mandates ESG reporting, this represents a growing research frontier.

Technology and Digital Expertise: The digitalization of business and accounting raises new monitoring challenges. Future research should examine whether AC members with IT/cyber-security expertise contribute to better FRQ, particularly in the context of automated financial reporting systems.

Dynamic Effects and Long-run Consequences: Most studies adopt cross-sectional or short-panel designs. Longer longitudinal studies are needed to examine how the effects of AC attributes evolve over time, including in response to changes in regulatory requirements, firm circumstances and economic cycles.

Interaction Effects: Individual AC attributes are rarely studied in isolation; in practice, they co-exist and may complement or substitute for one another. Future research should examine configurational approaches (e.g., using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis) to understand the joint effects of multiple AC attributes on FRQ.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis has mapped the intellectual evolution of research on audit committee attributes and financial reporting quality over three and a half decades. The literature has grown substantially particularly in the post-SOX era and has diversified geographically, methodologically and thematically. The weight of evidence supports the agency-theoretic prediction that more independent, expert and diligent audit committees are associated with higher FRQ, though effect sizes are moderated by institutional environments, ownership structures and the specific FRQ dimension examined.

Theoretical contributions have predominantly drawn on agency theory, supplemented by signaling, resource dependence and institutional theory. Methodologically, the field has advanced considerably in addressing endogeneity, though challenges remain. Key gaps identified include the underrepresentation of emerging market contexts, the neglect of AC behavioural processes and the nascent state of research on non-financial reporting quality. The analysis confirms that audit committee governance remains a vibrant and consequential area of accounting scholarship, with significant implications for regulators, standard-setters and corporate practitioners seeking to strengthen financial reporting integrity.

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