

Research Paper

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Effectiveness of Internal Audit in Monitoring Controls for Assessment of Risk: A Gambian Public Sector Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to identify the determinants of internal audit effectiveness and it is based upon a case study on one of the largest public institutions in The Gambia. The study examines how independent variables such as internal auditor's competence, management support to internal auditors, availability of an audit committee and continuous professional development influence the effectiveness of the internal audit department. The source of the required data is from ten staff of the internal audit department of the organization under study. Qualitative data is collected through semi-structured interview of all participants to ensure detailed information has been collected. In the findings, it is observed that internal auditor's competence, management support to internal auditors, availability of an audit committee and continuous professional development strongly influence the effectiveness of the internal audit department of the organization under study. However, the result of this study is limited and cannot be generalized.

Keywords: *determinants, internal auditors, internal audit effectiveness, internal audit department.*

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, iç denetimin etkililiğinin belirleyicilerini belirlemek ve Gambiya'daki en büyük kamu kurumlarından birinde yapılan bir vaka çalışmasına dayanmaktadır. Çalışma, iç denetçinin yetkinliği, iç denetçilere yönetimin desteği, bir denetim komitesinin mevcudiyeti ve sürekli mesleki gelişim gibi bağımsız değişkenlerin iç denetim bölümünün etkinliğini nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir. Gerekli verilerin kaynağı, incelenen organizasyonun iç denetim departmanının on personelinden alınmıştır. Niteliksel veriler, ayrıntılı bilgilerin toplandığından emin olmak için tüm katılımcılarla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yoluyla toplanır. Bulgularda, iç denetçinin yeterliliğinin, iç denetçilere yönetim desteğinin, denetim komitesinin mevcudiyetinin ve sürekli mesleki gelişimin, incelenen kurumun iç denetim bölümünün etkinliğini güçlü bir şekilde etkilediği görülmektedir. Ancak bu çalışmanın sonucu sınırlıdır ve genellenemez.

Anahtar Kelimeler: belirleyiciler, iç denetçiler, iç denetim etkinliği, iç denetim departmanı.

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INTRODUCTION

Businesses no matter the type and size are associated with risks that could affect them, these risks evolve as time goes by, giving more and more importance to the work of the internal audit department. The department engages in activities that detects and manages risks of various types in the organization, these gives assurance to management about an effective internal control that adds value to the performance of the organization ((IIA), Internal Auditing: Adding Value Across the Board- A look at the profession and corporate governance, 2020). Businesses for the past years have discovered so many changes in their needs. As a result of this, internal audit activities have been expanded to not only focus on accounting issues but to cover the actual risks of businesses and evaluate their activities to ensure compliance and effective performance (Munteanu & Zaharia, Current Trends in Internal Auditing, 2013).

The accounting and auditing profession for the past decades has gone through so many challenges resulting to the collapse of major companies around the world and so many families were affected because of the billions of dollars that were lost. All these has given rise to the need for having effective internal audits in public and private enterprises, internal auditors have become the most important means by which stakeholders rely on data and information, as well as effective decision making. The business environment has changes related to regulatory requirements and an expand in technology, all these changes have made the internal auditor an important asset to the organization to handle the responsibilities related to the business (Mahdawi, Ayedh, & Khairi, 2018).

As mentioned earlier, an effective internal audit department ensures reliability of data that stakeholders use in decision making . However, to our knowledge, no research about internal audit exist in The Gambia and it's public sector. This shows that there is a gap and this study will make a comprehensive research to examine internal audit effectiveness of one of the largest public institutions in The Gambia and focus particularly on the factors that affect it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internal Control

The book about the Integrated Framework to Improve Confidence in Sustainability Performance Data discusses the importance of internal control and how effective internal control can be a determinant for the growth of an organization because internal controls have value beyond compliance with regulations and report (Herz, Monterio, & Thomson, 2017, p. 6). The 2013 COSO Framework defines internal control as *“a process, effected by an entity's board of directors, management, and other personnel, designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of objectives relating to operations, reporting and compliance ”* (Everson, et al., 2013, p. 3). To generalize application of internal control systems for different entities in different environmental areas, the framework decided to include some essential key ideas into the definition. Another definition of internal control was given by (Kumuthinidevi, 2016) and it states that internal control is applicable to the whole organization serving as checks and balances to enable employee's carryout the business efficiently. However, the establishment of an effective internal control is very expensive but the advantages it has on the business out ways its consequences. She further highlights the benefits that a company can derive from an effective internal control which can be beneficial for both management and the auditor as it helps mitigate fraud and errors, promotes reliability of information for management on both operations and financial, promotes efficiency as well as safeguarding assets or misuse of assets.

The objective of the internal control of every business is to enhance efficiency and performance of the institution while mitigating risk. The three classes of objectives include all aspects of internal control, they are operations, reporting and compliance. Operations are the efficacy of tasks handled in the business, the reporting which entails the internal and external monetary and non-monetary reporting as per the guidelines of accounting standards, and the compliance which means abiding by the rules and regulations of

the business (Everson, et al., 2013, p. 1).

The internal control components are shown in the new framework as a basis for people to understand internal control effectiveness and internal auditors use them as a basis for setting their objectives. Any organization whose five components are functioning effectively tends to stand stronger than others in terms of achieving their objectives (Everson, et al., 2013, p. 3). These five components applies to all organization regardless of size, but the only difference is that it is more formal in some organizations due to their sizes.

These components include:

- control environment
- risk assessment
- control activities
- information and communication and
- monitoring

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit is a body headed by Director of Internal Audit (Chief Internal Auditor). Its focus was mainly related to accounting issues but over the years it has evolved to detecting entity's risk and tackling areas such as checking of accounting records, evaluation of controls, conformity, and risk management system, examining procedures and making reports on internal control system and activities performed. Its activities keep changing in other to suit the rapidly changing business environment. The internal audit activity is governed by a framework known as the "internal audit framework" which is widely accepted as it is made flexible to adapt to different countries, this framework ensures professionalism and the effectiveness of internal control of an organization (Munteanu & Zaharia, Current Trends in Internal Audit, 2013)

Prior to 1999, internal audit was defined as "*an independent appraisal function established within an organization to examine and evaluate its activities as a service to the organization*" (Protiviti, 2009, p. 3). The main aim of the definition is to ensure that all staff can carry out their responsibilities in an effective manner, attaining an effective internal control at a reasonable cost. However, internal audit is currently defined as "*an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organization's operations*" (IIA, 2020, p. 3). This means that businesses become successful by following the approach of the internal audit department as they evaluate risks by setting up controls. Internal audit is also defined by (Kumuthinidevi, 2016) as an independent appraisal body that assigns special staff to review the operations and controls in place for management better decision making and prevention of fraud and risk. However, the internal audit has a significant role in monitoring the internal control systems. They conduct auditable activities by verifying the work of management in assessing risks and compliance with regulations thereby providing reasonable assurance to business stakeholders (Munteanu & Zaharia, Current Trends in Internal Auditing, 2013).

(Caratas & Spatariu, 2014) suggests that in order to increase transparency for a good cooperate governance, internal auditors should make available their assessment of management and internal control to all interested parties and not just management and audit committee. This means that for internal auditors to be given the proper importance they should increase their transparency, and this will as well help stakeholders or other interested parties to know the organization.

The objective of the internal audit is to ensure minimization of business risks, they give assistance to management by identifying business risks and managing emerging ones, also making sure that there is effective internal control system to be followed.

Relationship Between Internal Control and Internal Audit

The two terms share a common objective which is to minimize risk and help the business to achieve its goals. A complementary

relationship exist between the internal control and internal audit whereby internal control establishes controls through which all business activities should be carried out to achieve the operational, financial and compliance objectives, while internal audit monitors the internal controls to ensure that those controls are working effectively.

The presence of an effective internal audit together with an effective system of internal control ensures smooth decision-making process as well as reliability in the financial reporting and there will be efficient and effective operations in the organization as a whole (HAILEMARIAM, 2014). Furthermore, it is suggested that both internal control and internal audit should find ways of supporting cooperate governance as well as preventing risk and fraud that could affect the business because management should disclose the weaknesses of internal control and however, the internal audit department should also provide good opinions during management assessment (Caratas & Spatariu, 2014).

(Mahdawi, Ayedh, & Khairi, 2018) discussed in their study that the goal of internal audit is to assess the internal control, but their responsibility is to give recommendation for improvement, it is this responsibility that differentiates the internal auditor from the external auditor because they assess internal control to determine the sample of their audit, cited in (Frank, 1980). A research conducted on Somali Remittance Firms reveals a positive moderate correlation between internal control system and internal audit practices. The researcher went further to suggest that if remittance companies want to be successful then they should have an effective internal control which reviews the control system as well as the performance of management (Mohamud, 2013).

Risk Assessment

Because of the emerging risks affecting businesses, more focus has been given to internal auditors as they assess and manage risks. They ensure management has an effective internal control in place and these are evaluated to ensure their work is being carried out effectively (Sobel, 2011). This is supported by a research about the contemporary approaches in internal audit. It states that although internal audit is vital in the activities and future performance of the company, internal auditors should be able to anticipate risk as it is something that has been here for decades and there has been new trends, the internal audit department should therefore find new ways for maintaining an effective internal control (Caratas & Spatariu, 2014). The internal audit department carries a scope of work that covers all aspects of the business, together with the audit committee they form the third line of defense, protecting the business from all forms of fraudulent activities or risks that may affect it ((IFC), 2001). Also, the internal audit provides insurance with regards to the adequacy and inadequacy of practices and gives recommendation. They help entities achieve their objectives by removing dysfunctions to improve risk control (Danescu, Prozan, & Prozan, 2015).

The IIA global survey on the current role of internal audit shows that 57% of audit activities are related to enterprise risk management (ERM) while 20% shows that ERM will be very significant over the next few years (Sobel, 2011). Furthermore, another research was conducted to explore internal auditors' current practices; the survey was done in banks in Jordan, results indicate that their role is limited to compliance related risk (Modar & Shatha, 2015).

EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT

The audit committee ensures internal audit effectiveness of the organization while considering that an effective internal audit is very important because it affects the overall control process of the organization positively (KPMG, 2018)

It is discussed in the study of (Mahdawi, Ayedh, & Khairi, 2018) that effectiveness is an important concept for the department in trying to achieve the organization's objectives. It is essential to the extent that without it the reason for its existence fails, cited in (Dittenhover, 2001). However, it is argued that as an effective internal audit aids the management of the company in taking care of their responsibilities, the internal control needs to have new perspective in order to handle the changing needs of the department. It is further stated that the presence of an effective internal audit aids in preventing misstatements in the financial report (Caratas &

Spatariu, 2014).

The discussion on internal audit effectiveness will be based on the the 4 determinants, which includes: Internal auditor's competence, management support to internal auditors, audit committee, and continuous professional development.

Internal auditor's competence relates to the existence of competent internal audit staff that are knowledgeable in the field. According to (Temesgen & Estifanos, 2018) and (HAILEMARIAM, 2014) having competent internal auditors is one of the determinants of internal audit effectiveness and an organization becomes more effective with more skilled internal audit personnel. Resources of internal auditors are in terms of qualification, technical knowledge, experience on the job, and language needs. The internal auditors according to the institute of internal auditors are required to be knowledgeable and competent in their field, as a result so many programs are introduced to enable internal auditors learn and get certificated from, one of them is the Certified Internal Auditor (CIA). These certifications are currently very important as it is becoming a requirement for internal audit professionals to be certified in at least one of these programs (Protiviti, 2009).

Another determinant is the management support, internal audit effectiveness of an organization is not only dependent on the function of internal auditors but also on the support given by management and management can show support through the input in all internal audit activities starting from planning to making follow ups on the outcome of the audit activities (Sarens & Beelde, 2006). A research in Israeli's organizations suggest that management support is the most important determinant of internal audit effectiveness, the researchers went further to explain that all other determinants are because of the support given by management, for example the hiring of competent staff is done by top management, ensuring internal audit independence, etc. It is argued that when top management shows importance to the work of internal auditors then employees at all levels will do the same (Cohen & Sayag, 2010). This is supported by another study on Ethiopian public sector and the result of their finding shows the more support management gives to internal auditors, the more effective the internal audit department becomes (HAILEMARIAM, 2014).

According to the KPMG audit committee handbook, an audit committee ensures on behalf of the board that internal controls are operating and that both internal and external auditors are being effective, they are appointed by the board and in whose power, they use to operate their responsibilities. They carry out this role by ensuring that management has fulfilled their responsibilities and key business risks are identified, evaluated and managed, they establish the forum for management to take ownership for risk and control, to ensure that they are effective and finally make review (KPMG, The Evolving Role of the Internal Auditor, 2007). A study on the role of audit committee in corporate governance describes the power and function of the audit committee, it states that the responsibility of audit committee increased since the collapse of major companies like Enron, WorldCom, and the passage of the Sarbanes Oxley act in 2002. Furthermore, their report is what the board rely on to carry out their work in directing and managing the organization (Al-Baidhani, 2014).

With regards to the continuous professional development of internal auditor's, it is important to note that discovery and education are very important throughout the career of the internal auditor. It is important to have non-technical skills in addition to the already obtained technical skills in order to be an effective internal auditor for the future and the most important technical skill that is most valuable to the internal auditor is to be naturally inquisitive. KPMG international's article on the evolving role of internal auditor discusses the need to continue learning more skills because organizations expect internal auditors to use their competences to make improvement on risk management (KPMG, The Evolving Role of the Internal Auditor, 2007). Their professional level has two dimensions, these are:

- Having the intellectual ability that is required to constantly absorb new information.
- Having the flexibility that will enable them to change priorities in response to the changing business needs.

(frijat, 2020) conducted a research on the importance of compliance with continuous professional development (CPD). CPD serve as a way for accountants and internal auditors to seek more knowledge and improve the quality of the department. This is proven as the results were positive indicating that continuous professional development affects the quality of internal audit. CPD enables the internal auditor to have technical knowledge and skills that can be important for the job.

Emperical Review

The study of (Mihret & Yismaw, 2007) on internal audit effectiveness assessed how factors such as internal audit quality, management support, organizational setting, and auditee attributes, affects the effectiveness of internal audit. Primary data was collected through questionnaires to the internal auditors and an interview with the director of internal audit of one of the public institution in Ethiopia, while secondary data were collected through review of audit manual and audit report. The findings shows that by internal audit quality as well as management support strongly influenced the internalaudit effectiveness while organizational setting and auditee attribute shows the contrary.

Another study was conducted in Sudan whereby the researcher examines how internal audit achieves stakeholders' expectations and effectiveness in the public sector environment. This was examined by using real life experience of internal auditors in Sudan ese public sector, the researcher used case study in other to obtain more data by probing during interview. Both primary and secondary data was collected, and it was determined that the operation of internal audit is very complex and has an interconnected institutional environment which limits the effectiveness. Also, the position and condition of the internal audit creates opportunities for institutional entrepreneurship in the process of solving challenges in the organization (Enid, 2018).

Emperical Framework

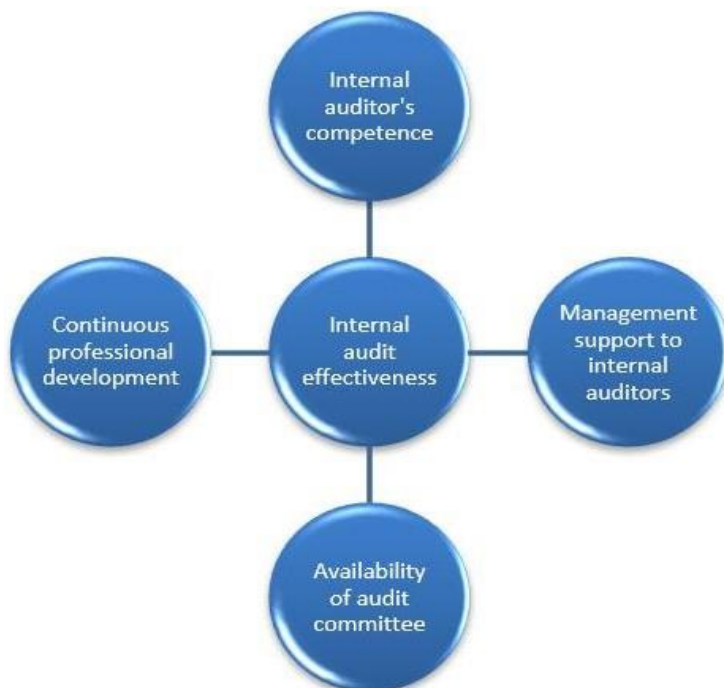


Figure 1: The model

The effectiveness of internal audit which is the dependent variable is linked to the four independent variables which include internal auditor's competence, management support to internal auditors, availability of an audit committee and continuous professional development. The diagram shows that internal audit effectiveness (dependent variable) has direct relationship with the determinants (independent variables). The determinants mentioned above have appeared in previous studies and are said to be elements that characterizes an internal audit department and have potential impact on the effectiveness of an internal audit department. For example, in prior research conducted by (Hailemariam, 2014, Dawuda, Aninanya & Alnaa, 2015, Malgrane & Malthus, 2010, Mihret & Yismaw, 2007, etc).

INTERNAL AUDIT FUNCTION IN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS IN THE GAMBIA

The Gambia is a country found in West Africa. It is one of the smallest countries of West Africa and it is surrounded on three sides, the north, south and east by Senegal and on the fourth side which is the west lies the Atlantic Ocean. The Gambia is a very small country and hence the population size which is estimated to be 1.4 million as at 2003 population and housing census. This number grows annually at a rate of 2.8% and has increased to 1.79 million as at the 2013 population and housing census (ILO, 2015-2017). To ensure transparency and accountability in the public sector and to strengthen public service delivery, enhance good governance and operational efficiency, the Government of The Gambia (GOTG) establishes the Internal Audit Directorate (IAD). It was established in 2004 and their mission is to provide a high quality and effective audit service that is responsive to the needs of the government of the Gambia Ministries, Department and Agencies (MOFEA, 2021). It is tasked to determine whether the government Ministries, Agencies and Departments' risk management, control and government processes are adequate and functioning effectively.

In order to standardize the internal audit function of government institutions, several mechanisms were used and one of which includes the establishment of a manual. This manual is under the Audit Committee, Director of Internal Audit and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, it is required to be used by Government internal auditors in their day-to-day activities as it provides guidelines and support audit programs. It enhances compliance thereby improving the quality of audit. The purpose of the manual is to provide the internal auditors with the resources they need in their audit engagements from planning to reporting stage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study objective is to identify the determinants of effectiveness of the internal audit department of a public institution in the Gambia. It will also identify some of the challenges of the internal auditors. The focus is to determine whether factors such as internal auditor's competence, management support to internal auditors, audit committee and continuous professional development affects the effectiveness of the internal audit department of the organization under study.

In order to achieve the goal of this study, qualitative research method is used. A qualitative research method is defined as a method of collecting data through various sources by conducting interviews, observation, and document review in order to understand a phenomenon. In the case of this study interview was conducted using open-ended questions because this is the first time this research is conducted, and the interview will enable the researcher to obtain detailed information about the topic.

The population of a study is the target population in which the researcher intends to focus the study on. Sampling on the other hand involves selecting individuals as representatives of the population under study (Majid, 2018). In this study the target population is one of the largest public institution in Gambia. Because of the difficulty in obtaining data, this study intends to focus only on one public institution, particularly the internal audit department which has a population of 12 staff. 10 out of the 12 staff of the internal

audit department was interviewed in order to obtain the required data to answer the research questions, the remaining 2 could not be reached because one is on maternity leave and the other is abroad on studies. The sample of the population is not many but in qualitative research it does not matter the size of the population, what matters is the quality of data obtained from the research.

The Interview Process

The interview was done online via WhatsApp audio. The contact of all the participants from the internal audit department were provided and a time suitable was scheduled for the interview to be conducted. This was done because all the participants could not download zoom and WhatsApp audio was available to all participants. Only two of the participants were reached while they were at home, the rest of them were interviewed while they were at work. The interview guide was used throughout the interview and all the participants could speak English which makes it easier to communicate.

The interview was recorded, and the recordings were used to transcribe the data for analysis. According to (Seidman, 2006) the benefits that can be derived from tape recording an interview involves the originality in preserving the data and during the process of transcribing the data one can always go back to the original audio in order to have accurate data. Also, in cases where the participants were using a different language, the researcher could listen and transcribe their words to English, or the language being used.

The technique of probing was also done to get in-depth information from the participants. “*Probing is defined as diligent and thorough in inquiry or investigation*” (Muthuvelu, 2012, p. 2). Each interview lasted approximately an hour.

The final part of the research methodology is the analysis. The data is gathered through semi-structured interviews, and it will be analyzed based on case study analysis. Responses from the ten participants are analyzed using descriptive coding system. Coding is a form of categorizing data to easily facilitate analysis. It helps to summarize segments of data and provides the basis for further research on that data (Elliott, 2018)

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Internal Auditor’s Competence

According to (Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA), 2016, p. 5) the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing 1210 states that, “*Internal auditors must possess the knowledge, skills, and other competencies needed to perform their individual responsibilities*”. The findings reveal that the internal audit effectiveness of the organization under study increases as a result of the competent internal auditors with many years of working experience in the field, the department is characterized by skilled internal audit staff with certification in professional courses such as ACCA, FCCA and AAT, first class degree and master’s degree holders with a range of 2 to over 20 years of working experience. The management provides support in terms of budgeting funds for education, there is always adequate fund for staff education and all staff benefits from this package, new staff are given a probation of 6 months in which they must serve the organization before they can be eligible for the educational package. The results are consistent with the studies of (HAILEMARIAM, 2014 and Temesgin & Estifanos, 2018).

Management Support to Internal Auditors

The support provided by management to internal auditors is a very important determinant of internal audit effectiveness as highlighted in the study of (Sarens & Beelde, 2006). The responses from the questions revealed that management has been very supportive to the internal audit department in terms of providing funds for further education of the staff, providing working facilities, a conducive environment, and other resources to ease the movement of auditors from one branch to another. This is consistent with the study of (Mihret & Yismaw, 2007 and Alshbiel & AL- Zeaud, 2012) where it was determined that the support of management

improves the performance level of internal auditors. It was further determined that management support in terms of provision of incentives (material and immaterial) and providing professional development for internal auditors, with the help of modern technology to ease their work improves the performance of internal auditors, except for this case the professional development of staff is effective, but the digitalization of all activities is a work in progress and needs more improvement for achievement of optimal value.

However, the resources are there but it is not enough as the internal auditors need their own software, which is not available, they normally use other software from other departments which is sometimes difficult to access, and this poses delay to the work of internal auditors. It is determined that audit recommendations are not always implemented on time, it is only implemented on time when the issue is technical that is it is related to issues like fraud in which case management acts immediately. Apart from that it sometimes takes time for management to implement audit recommendations but at the end of the day it is implemented as there is a follow-up mechanism and it is always highlighted in the subsequent audit report as “queries that were not responded”.

Audit Committee

There is an independent oversight body called the Finance and audit committee which is the body on behalf of the board, and it is chaired by the board chair and it is fully constituted. Part of the membership are the director of audit, director of finance, CEO, and the deputy. In this committee a forum is created and the internal audit is given a priority where all their issues are discussed and dealt with. It is updated on the activities of the department on monthly basis. In terms of internal control weaknesses, the internal auditors follow the chain of command as per the internal audit charter in which the internal audit officers report to their supervisors, the supervisor reports to the audit manager, the audit manager reports to the deputy director, and he relates to the director who reports to the board or FAC. This committee has been very vibrant in dealing with issues relating to the department.

Continuous Professional Development of Internal Auditor

According to (Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA), 2016, p. 7) in standard 1230 “*Internal auditors must enhance their knowledge, skills, and other competencies through continuing professional development*”. The staff training needs are being identified through the Human Resource Information System (HRIS). This is done to make sure that annually there is a budget for staff to be able to meet their personal development plans both in terms of further education to meet their future competence requirement and trainings. The organization support internal auditors by providing continuous staff development through continuous education, training (for capacity building and development) and provision of incentives. All internal auditors have access to continuous education on fields related to their job and this is fully funded by the organization to help upgrade their knowledge. Eight out of ten participants are undergoing continuous education, one of the remaining 2 is on probation and that means he is a new staff and have to serve a period of 6 months before given the opportunity for further studies and the other participant without continuous education is already a certified accountant and an MBA holder prior to his coming to the organization.

With regards to the local and international training for staff development, this has only been done for the senior staff. The junior staff does not have access to these trainings and recommend that management to consider them as it will be very helpful in their career.

Challenges of Internal Auditors

The challenges of the internal auditors were also discussed. In terms of the COSO principles, the mostly faced internal control component is that of information and communication. The organization is still working towards the complete digitalization of all their processes, it is still a work in progress, the difficulty in accessing information from the system because of the unavailability of information. Effectiveness of Internal Audit in Monitoring Controls for Assessment of Risk: A Gambian Public Sector Case Study

of a software for the department and the poor internet connection that keeps getting interrupted are basically under the issue of information and communication. These issues should be corrected to ensure optimal effectiveness in the internal audit department. The mostly faced problem by internal auditors is people's perception of who an internal auditor is and what their field of work is about. Looking at the African context (Gambia in particular) sometimes internal auditing is very difficult because people think that you are standing between them and their benefits, so they always resent internal auditors. Some people fear internal auditors and do run away from them, they are at times regarded as "informants" and called all sort of names. All staff needs to be enlightened on the job of internal auditors and that they are working for the best interest of the organization which is every department's objective.

Recommendation

The organization is responsible for the whole country and have many branches all over the country, more competent staff should be recruited to facilitate the internal audit works and they should work towards having internal audit staff in all their branches since their mere presence serves as a warning for staff to be vigilant in their job. Management should provide a software particularly for the internal audit department, so they do not have to depend on other departments. This can help improve the accessibility of data wherever they are and at any given time. Also, management should work towards making sure that all queries in the audit report are given the same importance, not only technical issues should be implemented on time but all queries. Also, management should ensure that each department have their own internet connection or find ways of improving the speed of the internet connection and finally, management should consider upgrading the existing junior staff by organizing short term local and international trainings for the junior staff as well. This can help them become more skillful to meet the changing needs of the internal auditing field as it is always evolving.

CONCLUSION

The existence of an effective internal audit department improves organizational efficiency, effectiveness and ensures reliable reporting. The objective of this study is to determine the effectiveness of internal audit in which this study mainly focused on the four determinants. These four factors which are the independent variables of this study are internal auditor's competence, management support to internal auditors, availability of an audit committee and having continuous professional development of the staff. The objective of the study is obtained using a qualitative research method in which a semi-structured interview method was used to collect primary data from the participants which consist of 10 staff from the internal audit department of the organization under study.

The study reveals that all the independent variables which includes internal auditor's competence, management support to internal auditors, availability of an audit committee and having continuous professional development affects the effectiveness of the internal audit department of the organization under study.

This study is based on the participants experience and education level and the study findings cannot be generalized to other organizations in The Gambia. Further research can be done using quantitative data to involve many public institutions, they can also try to compare the internal audit department of the private and public institutions in The Gambia.

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