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Effect of Risk-Based Audit and Information Technology on the Relationship between Client's Risk Management and Audit Quality

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Abstract

Background: Audit quality is pivotal for financial reporting integrity, yet the mechanisms linking client risk management (CRA) to audit outcomes remain underexplored. Understanding how risk-based audits (RBA), information technology applications (ITA), and auditor accountability influence this relationship is critical for enhancing audit practices.

Objective of the Study: This study examines the impact of CRA on audit quality, with RBA and ITA as parallel mediators and auditor accountability as a moderator.

Methodology: Data were collected from 170 auditors through a survey and analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0.9.2. Validity and reliability were rigorously tested, and the analysis assessed direct, mediating, and moderating relationships.

Results: CRA positively influences audit quality, mediated by RBA and ITA. Auditor accountability strengthens the relationship between CRA and audit quality. Still, it weakens the link between RBA and audit quality, suggesting that accountability pressures may shift auditors toward professional judgment over structured methods.

Unique Contribution: This study highlights the mediating roles of RBA and ITA and the dual moderating effects of accountability, offering practical insights for audit firms to balance accountability demands with technological and methodological advancements.

Conclusion: Effective CRA, supported by RBA and ITA, improves the audit quality. However, managing accountability pressures is crucial to ensure auditors effectively leverage structured methodologies and technologies. These findings contribute to both theory and practice in audit quality improvement.

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Key Recommendation: Future research should examine the impact of emerging technologies (e.g., AI and machine learning) on audit quality and explore cross-cultural or regulatory variations in the study's findings. Longitudinal studies are also suggested to evaluate the long-term effects of accountability pressures on audit practices.

Keywords: Audit quality, Client risk, Accountability, Information technology, Auditor, Risk-based audit

Introduction

A cornerstone of credible financial reporting, audit quality is nonetheless a multifaceted concept that presents conceptual and practical challenges. It is commonly defined as the joint probability that an auditor will detect and report a material misstatement (DeAngelo, 1981). This definition emphasises the importance of auditor independence and professional competence. However, audit quality is inherently difficult to observe externally due to opaque audit processes and divergent stakeholder expectations. Researchers have adopted multi-method approaches to gauge audit quality, combining traditional input-output measures with behavioural perspectives on how auditors, preparers, and users perceive audit performance (Knechel et al., 2013). Many studies have identified factors influencing audit quality, including auditor independence, the client's significance, the audit firm's tenure, mandatory auditor rotation, and fees associated with audit and non-audit services. Other studies have examined the characteristics of auditors and audit firms, such as auditor demographics, auditor characteristics, and audit firm size and reputation.

A series of previous studies have confirmed the influence of internal factors such as independence, professional scepticism, professional competence, and professional judgment on the quality of audit work. Internal factors, including audit planning, software utilisation, methodology, risk assessment, and quality control procedures, also play a crucial role in enhancing audit quality by improving the ability of auditors to detect material misstatements (Knechel et al., 2013). Research has also explored the impact of various contextual factors on audit performance, such as audit clients and inspection regimes (Tuan & Dung, 2024). Studies have indicated that both financial statement preparers and auditors perceive audit quality to be connected to the quality of service provided by the client, which encompasses the responsiveness and empathy of auditors toward the client's needs (Tuan & Dung, 2024). Beattie et al. (2011) showed that the relationship between the auditor and the audit client significantly affects audit quality. However, some studies have shown that 'client service' has an adverse effect on audit quality by impairing auditors' independence.

Modern auditing practice has increasingly emphasised risk-based approaches and the use of technology. Auditors can bolster quality by using advanced analytics, engaging more senior personnel in high-risk areas, and acquiring industry-specific expertise to better understand a client's risk profile (Knechel et al., 2007). These strategies direct audit efforts toward areas of greatest risk. Nevertheless, little empirical work has examined how a client's own risk management practices affect audit quality—a notable gap given the rising importance of risk management in corporate governance and the expectation that auditors tailor procedures to the client's risk environment.

In light of these gaps, this study investigates how CRA influences audit quality by exploring both the mechanisms and contextual conditions that shape this relationship. Specifically, it contributes to the audit literature in three important ways. First, it offers empirical evidence on the previously

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underexplored link between auditors' perceptions of CRA and audit quality, addressing a notable gap in current research (Dung, 2024). Second, by examining the simultaneous mediating effects of RBA procedures and ITA, the study helps clarify inconsistent findings in prior research regarding the effectiveness of these tools in enhancing audit outcomes (Mardiana & Avianti, 2019). Third, it incorporates auditor accountability as a moderating variable, extending recent behavioural research by analysing how accountability dynamics shape auditors' use of client risk assessments and structured audit methodologies to influence audit quality (Dang & Nguyen, 2022).

Literature Review

Understanding the determinants of audit quality has long been a central focus of auditing research. Although numerous studies have explored the factors that influence audit quality, several gaps remain, particularly regarding the interplay between client-specific risks, technological advancements, and auditor behaviour. Most studies on audit quality acknowledge that audit quality depends on people, internal factors, and the audit context (Sulaiman, 2019). Input factors determine the quantity and quality of output, which adds value to the organisation. Accordingly, whether output quality is guaranteed depends mainly on the quantity and quality of the input factors. From the above empirical results, audit input factors can be divided into two main groups: (i) auditor characteristics and (ii) audit firm characteristics.

Auditor attributes—such as independence, professional competence, ethical conduct, and professional scepticism—have consistently been identified as core determinants of audit quality (Knechel et al., 2013). In parallel, organisational-level characteristics of audit firms, including reputation, size, audit tenure, fee structures, and market share, also significantly shape audit outcomes. These features influence not only the perceived credibility of auditors but also the actual diligence applied during engagements. However, most prior research has focused on auditor-side inputs, focusing less on how the CRA practices interact with these auditor characteristics. This study extends the literature by examining whether auditors' perceptions of CRA—rather than just their capabilities, shape audit quality outcomes.

The quality of audit work determines audit quality. The quality of audit work depends on the unique characteristics of the audit client, which are often measured through four indicators: client size, complexity of business operations, business risk, and client profitability. These indicators were chosen because they affect the level of audit fees, where the level of audit fees is positively correlated with the quality of audit work. For example, the higher the audit fee, the more time and effort the auditing firm will expend in order to arrange for auditors with more appropriate qualifications to conduct additional risk assessment procedures and control testing. As a result, these auditors will be more likely to detect errors (Knechel et al., 2013).

The second factor that indicates the quality of audit work is the audit process. The audit process guides the auditor in ensuring the implementation of audit procedures that follow professional standards. The audit approach is mainly based on the auditor's risk assessment and sample selection; therefore, auditor errors affecting audit work quality can still occur. Indicators that measure the correct application of audit procedures include risk assessment, the auditor's professional judgment, and audit evidence. The auditor's risk assessment is essential in determining the nature, timing, and extent of audit procedures, which directly impact audit quality.

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As Detzen and Gold (2021) note, differences in risk assessment approaches can lead to materially different audit strategies, directly influencing audit quality. Nevertheless, practical constraints such as time pressure, budget limitations, and performance incentives may hinder optimal audit execution (Knechel et al., 2013). Additionally, audit output was found to affect audit quality directly. Audit output is the most direct measure of audit quality. According to Detzen and Gold (2021), the most representative measurement factors in evaluating audit results include audit failure, financial reporting, and audit report quality. Despite its significance, the literature has yet to fully capture how client-side risk controls affect auditors' application of structured methodologies. This study addresses this gap by exploring the mediating role of RBA in the link between CRA and audit quality.

The effect of client's risk management implementation on audit quality

Client risk encompasses the probability of an entity failing to achieve business objectives due to internal/external pressures, threatening survival and profitability (Mardiana & Avianti, 2019). This risk manifests as financial misstatement risks, necessitating auditors to prioritise understanding the client's business environment to mitigate fraud and operational failure risks (Detzen & Gold, 2021). Effective CRA—critical for auditor reputation and litigation avoidance, particularly among Big 4 firms—directly impacts audit quality by shaping risk-aligned audit procedures. However, empirical investigations into how CRA efforts influence audit quality remain limited. Prior studies have tended to treat risk as an audit input, rather than examining how proactive CRA strategies shape auditor responses (Mardiana & Avianti, 2019). This study proposes that CRA improves audit quality, and that this effect is partially channelled through RBA and ITA—two structured audit tools that help align procedures with risk profiles.

The impact of information technology application on audit quality

The adoption of ITA in auditing has grown rapidly, particularly in the wake of COVID-19, which accelerated remote audits and digital transformation (Ghanoum & Alaba, 2020). ITA enhances audit quality by facilitating large-scale data processing, standardizing procedures, and supporting real-time risk analytics. Auditing software improves resource allocation by enabling auditors to focus on complex or high-risk transactions, thus enhancing audit effectiveness and efficiency.

However, the empirical literature on ITA's impact remains inconclusive. While some studies report performance gains, others note minimal or inconsistent improvements (Mardiana & Avianti, 2019). Moreover, Nazmi et al. (2017) suggest that ITA supports the implementation of RBA by enabling data-driven decisions. Few studies have explicitly tested ITA as a mediating mechanism through which CRA influences audit quality. This research addresses this gap by positing ITA as a parallel mediator in the hypothesised model.

The effect of RBA implementation on audit quality

RBA is a structured methodology designed to enhance audit efficiency and quality by tailoring procedures to risk assessments, enabling auditors to prioritise high-risk areas and optimise resource allocation (Sutisman et al., 2021). Unlike conventional approaches, RBA focuses on aligning audit scope, timing, and depth with identified risks, ensuring risks are managed within acceptable thresholds while reducing time and costs (Sulaiman et al., 2019). This approach contrasts traditional audits by emphasizing dynamic risk evaluation over standardized procedures. Empirical evidence confirms RBA's positive impact on internal audit quality, particularly in improving risk

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mitigation and operational reliability (Erlina et al., 2020). Nonetheless, research has yet to integrate RBA within a broader model that includes both client-side risk initiatives and behavioral factors such as auditor accountability. The present study contributes to filling this void by examining RBA's mediating role between CRA and audit quality while also testing the potential moderating influence of auditor accountability on this relationship.

Building upon the preceding literature, this study proposes a conceptual model that positions CRA as a key driver of audit quality, both directly and indirectly through two primary mechanisms: RBA and ITA. Prior research has suggested that effective CRA improves the alignment between audit procedures and client-specific risk profiles, enhancing audit outcomes (Detzen & Gold, 2021; Mardiana & Avianti, 2019). Accordingly, the first hypothesis (H1) posits a direct positive relationship between CRA and audit quality.

The model introduces two mediators, RBA and ITA, to further understand this relationship's mechanisms. Given that RBA is a structured audit strategy that emphasises audit focus on higher-risk areas (Sutisman et al., 2021) and that ITA facilitates this strategy through data-driven decision-making (Nazmi et al., 2017), it is hypothesised that CRA positively influences both RBA (H2) and ITA (H4). These two factors, in turn, are expected to exert positive effects on audit quality (H3 and H5, respectively), aligning with evidence that both structured methodologies and advanced technologies contribute to more efficient and accurate audits (Erlina et al., 2020; Ghanoum & Alaba, 2020).

Furthermore, this study examines the indirect effects of CRA on audit quality through RBA (H6) and ITA (H7) and explores their parallel mediating effects (H8). This parallel mediation framework reflects the increasingly integrated nature of audit technology and methodology in contemporary practice.

Lastly, the model incorporates auditor accountability as a behavioural moderator. While accountability has been shown to enhance auditor diligence and professional judgment (Dang & Nguyen, 2022), it may also impose cognitive pressure that affects the structured use of audit tools. Therefore, it is hypothesised that increased perceived accountability strengthens the direct relationship between CRA and audit quality (H9) but weakens the relationship between RBA and audit quality (H10), as auditors may rely more on personal judgment under accountability pressure rather than rigidly adhering to structured audit plans.

These ten hypotheses form the basis of the proposed model (Figure 1), which offers a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how client-side risk management, auditor methodology, technological application, and behavioral dynamics interact to shape audit quality outcomes (Table 1).

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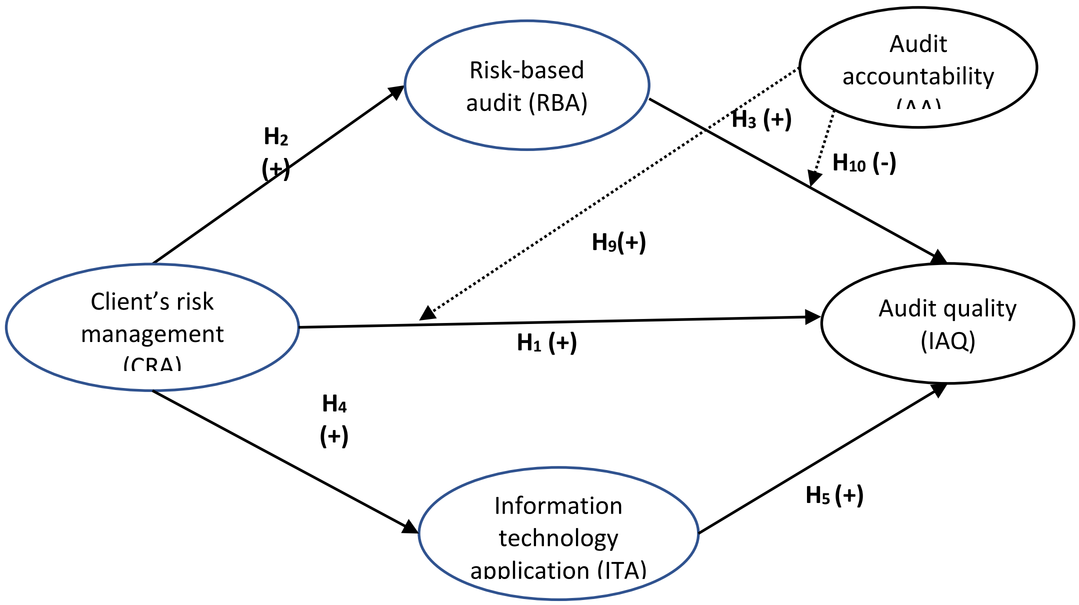

Figure 1: *Research Hypothesis Model*

Table 1. *Research Hypotheses*

Hypothesis	Expectations	Result
H1. Client's risk management has a positive relationship with the audit quality	(+)	Nazmi et al. (2017); Le et al. (2022); Abdallah et al. (2015); Mardiana & Avianti (2019)
H2. Client's risk management has a positive relationship with the risk-based audit application	(+)	Nazmi et al. (2017); Le et al. (2022)
H3. Risk-based audit has a positive relationship with the audit quality	(+)	Erlina et al. (2020)
H4. Client's risk management has a positive relationship with the information technology application	(+)	Le et al. (2022)
H5. Information technology application has a positive relationship with the audit quality	(+)	Le et al. (2022)
H6. The mediating effect of risk-based audit on the causal relationship between Client's risk management and audit quality	(+)	Sutisman et al. (2021)
H7. The mediating effect of information technology has a positive relationship with the causal relationship between client's risk management and audit quality	(+)	Sutisman et al. (2021)

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Hypothesis	Expectations	Result
H8. The parallel mediating effect of risk-based audit and information technology have a positive relationship with the causal relationship between Client's risk management and audit quality	(+)	Author's expectations
H9. The relationship between Client's risk management and audit quality will be strengthened when auditors perceive increased accountability	(+)	Author's expectations
H10. The relationship between risk-based audit and audit quality will be weakened when auditors perceive increased accountability	(-)	Author's expectations

Source. Author's own.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a positivist paradigm and employs a cross-sectional survey-based research design commonly used in auditing and behavioural accounting research to examine the relationships among latent variables. The goal is to empirically validate a conceptual model by testing the causal relationships among the constructs through structured and standardized instruments.

The research model is reflective, wherein each latent variable is indicated by its observed items. The constructs were operationalized based on validated measurement scales adapted from prior studies (Table 2), ensuring theoretical relevance and empirical reliability. The questionnaire was structured in two sections: the first collected demographic information about the respondents (see Table 3), while the second comprised 28 items measuring five core constructs using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree").

Data were collected using a random sampling method to reduce selection bias and improve generalizability. The unit of analysis was the individual auditor. A total of 170 usable responses were obtained, which exceeds the minimum sample size required for partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) as recommended by Hair et al. (2021), given the number of constructs and indicators.

The research model includes both direct and indirect relationships, incorporating parallel mediation and moderation effects. The analysis follows a two-step approach: (i) evaluation of the measurement model to assess construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity; and (ii) assessment of the structural model using PLS-SEM with bootstrapping to test the significance of hypothesised paths and the mediating and moderating effects.

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Table 2. ***Indicators and Latent Variables***

Latent Variable	Indicator	Inherited from Research
Client's risk management	CRA1-CRA4	Abdallah et al. (2015)
Risk-based audit	RBA1-RBA5	Nazmi et al. (2017)
Information technology application	ITA1-ITA6	Nazmi et al. (2017)
Audit quality	IAQ1-IAQ5	Alaraji et al. (2017)
Auditor accountability	AA1-AA8	Overman et al. (2021)

Source. Author's own.

Table 3. ***The Demographic Profile of the Respondents***

Demographics	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Female	81	48%
	Male	89	52%
		170	**100%**
Qualification	Bachelor	135	80%
	Ph.D.	28	16%
	Others	7	4%
		170	**100%**
Position	Audit partner	13	8%
	Audit leadership	34	20%
	Auditors	119	70%
	Others	4	2%
		170	**100%**
Experience	Less than 5 Years	63	37%
	5 to less than 10 Years	56	33%
	10 to less than 20 Years	41	24%
	Above 20 Years	10	6%
		170	**100%**

Source. Author's own.

The hypothesised model in this study is reflective (indicated by the arrows pointing to the indicators from the latent variables). Thus, the data analysis will be conducted with consistent PLS-SEM bootstrapping and a consistent PLS-SEM algorithm.

Research Results

Table 3 summarises the respondents' profiles. Most auditors held bachelor's degrees (80%, n=135), while 16% had postgraduate qualifications. The respondents' experience levels were distributed, with 37% having less than five years, 33% having 5–10 years, and 24% having more than 10 years of auditing experience. The majority (70%, n=119) were auditors, with 28% in leadership roles (partners/leaders).

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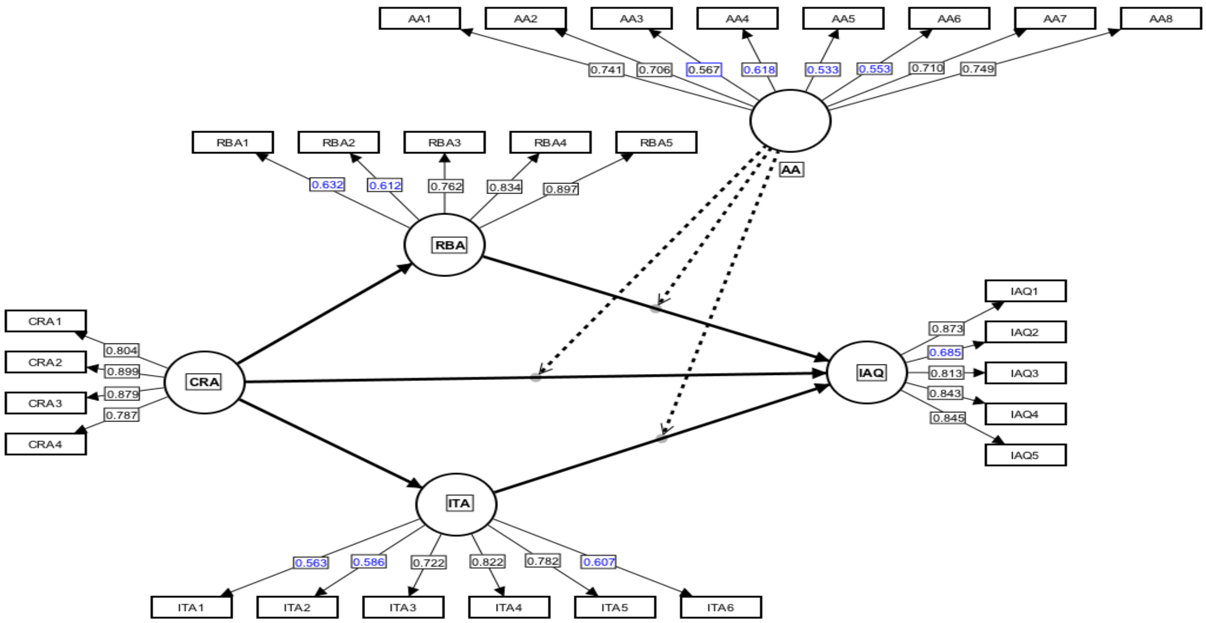

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Figure 2. ***Indicator Loadings***

The ten items have loadings under the benchmark of 0.7 (Figure 2). Therefore, they were removed from the research hypothesis model. The data analysis was then conducted again with the consistent PLS-SEM algorithm.

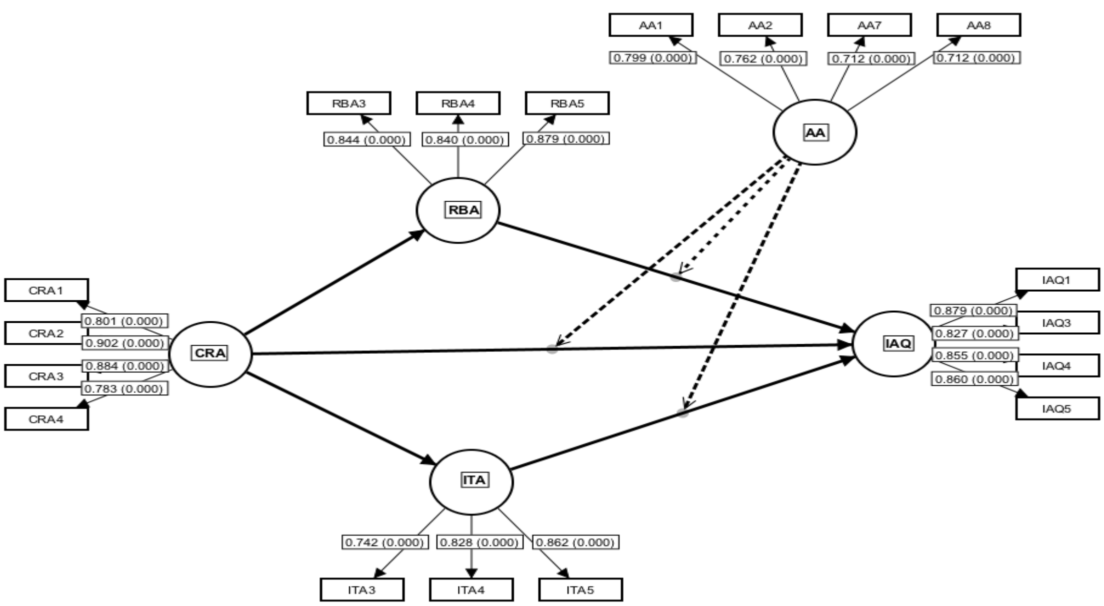

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Figure 3. ***Indicator Loadings***

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The loadings (Figure 3) are above the benchmark of 0.7. The output shows that all indicators of the five latent variables—CRA, RBA, ITA, AA, and IAQ—achieve convergent validity (loading > 0.7, $p < 0.05$). This means that the indicators are valid for the loadings.

Table 4. ***Reliability and Validity of Constructs***

Latent variable	Indicator	Outer loadings	Cronbach's alpha (CRA)	Composite reliability (rho_a) (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Client's risk management (CRA)	CRA1	0.801	0.864	0.867	0.712
	CRA2	0.902			
	CRA3	0.884			
	CRA4	0.783			
Risk-based audit (RBA)	RBA3	0.844	0.816	0.820	0.730
	RBA4	0.840			
	RBA5	0.879			
Information technology application (ITA)	ITA3	0.742	0.745	0.776	0.660
	ITA4	0.828			
	ITA5	0.862			
Audit quality (IAQ)	IAQ1	0.879	0.878	0.883	0.732
	IAQ3	0.827			
	IAQ4	0.855			
	IAQ5	0.860			
Auditor accountability (AA)	AA1	0.799	0.761	0.747	0.558
	AA2	0.762			
	AA7	0.712			
	AA8	0.712			

Source. Author's own

Confirmatory PLS-SEM analysis confirmed that all five reflective constructs (CRA, RBA, ITA, audit quality, accountability) satisfied convergent validity (loadings > 0.7, $p < 0.05$, CR > 0.7, AVE > 0.5, Table 4), discriminant validity (HTMT < 1.0, Table 5), and internal consistency (Cronbach's α, composite reliability > 0.7). No multicollinearity was detected (VIF < 5.0), ensuring robust construct validity.

Table 5. ***Discriminant Validity Test Results (HTMT)***

Latent variable	AA	CRA	IAQ	ITA	RBA	AA x CRA	AA x RBA	AA x ITA
Auditor accountability (AA)								
Client's risk management (CRA)	0.273							
Audit quality (IAQ)	0.461	0.765						

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Latent variable	AA	CRA	IAQ	ITA	RBA	AA x CRA	AA x RBA	AA x ITA
Information technology application (ITA)	0.516	0.537	0.703					
Risk-based audit (RBA)	0.493	0.617	0.784	0.698				
AA x CRA	0.258	0.176	0.192	0.145	0.185			
AA x RBA	0.320	0.105	0.284	0.302	0.346	0.515		
AA x ITA	0.240	0.115	0.267	0.371	0.328	0.636	0.677	

Source. Author's own

Structural model analysis revealed significant direct effects ($p < 0.05$) of CRA on audit quality ($\beta = 0.383$), RBA ($\beta = 0.531$), and ITA ($\beta = 0.435$). RBA ($\beta = 0.269$) and ITA ($\beta = 0.185$) also significantly predicted audit quality. All path coefficients were positive, supporting RBA and ITA as parallel mediators in the CRA-audit quality relationship.

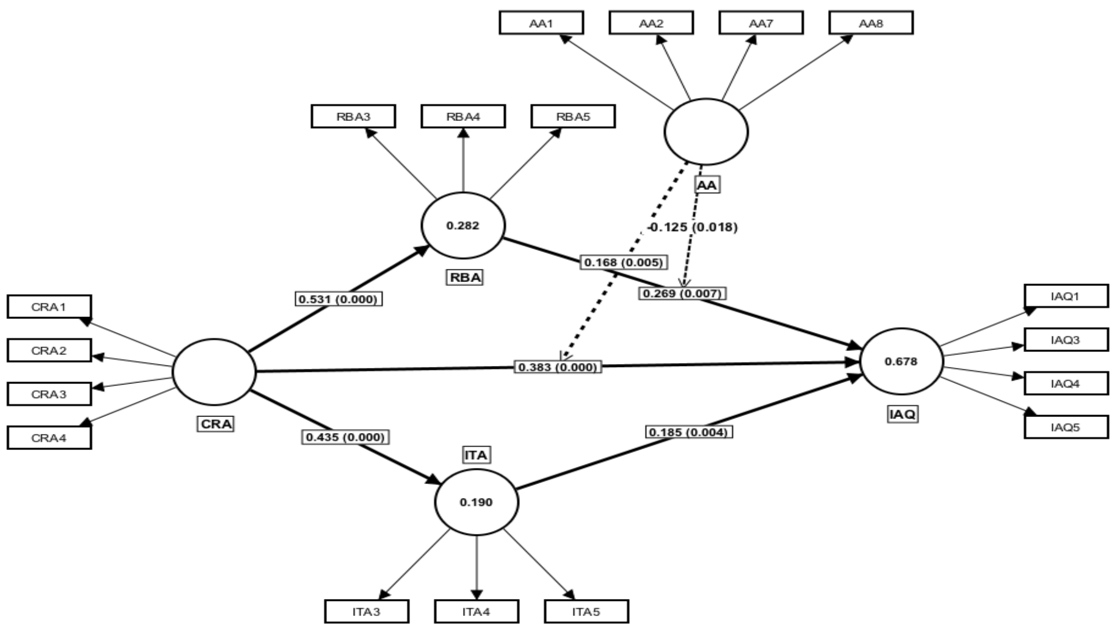

Figure 4. ***The Hypothesized Study Model***

Table 6. ***Indirect Relationships between Constructs in the Model***

Relationship	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	p-values
CRA -> RBA -> IAQ	0.143	0.142	0.057	2.498	0.013
CRA -> ITA -> IAQ	0.080	0.081	0.033	2.405	0.016
CRA -> IAQ	**0.606**	**0.611**	**0.055**	**10.955**	**0.000**

Source. Author's own

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Table 6 shows that indirect (mediating) effects of RBA ($\beta = 0.143$, $p < 0.05$) and ITA ($\beta = 0.080$, $p < 0.05$) were statistically significant, with a total parallel mediation effect of $\beta = 0.223$ ($p < 0.05$, medium effect size). The results also display CRA and IAQ (moderating effect = -0.125, $p < 0.05$) and RBA and audit quality (moderating effect = 0.168, $p < 0.05$). The effect of auditor accountability is large (Figure 4). Effect sizes were categorised as large for CRA's influence on RBA ($f^2 = 0.393$), medium for CRA's impact on audit quality ($f^2 = 0.291$) and ITA ($f^2 = 0.234$), and small for RBA's effect on ITA ($f^2 = 0.122$) and ITA's impact on audit quality ($f^2 = 0.066$). The final structural model explained 67.8% of audit quality variance ($R^2 = 0.678$) and demonstrated robust predictive relevance via positive Q^2 values (Table 7).

Table 7. ***LV Prediction Summary (Q^2) and PLS-SEM Prediction Error***

Variables	Q^2predict	Mean	RMSE	MAE
IAQ	0.463	-0.030	0.747	0.499
ITA	0.165	-0.002	0.934	0.652
RBA	0.262	-0.006	0.885	0.579

Source. Author's own.

The positive Q^2 predicted values for all three dependent measurement models and the almost-zero PLS-SEM prediction error values (Table 7) indicate that the final model has sufficient predictive power.

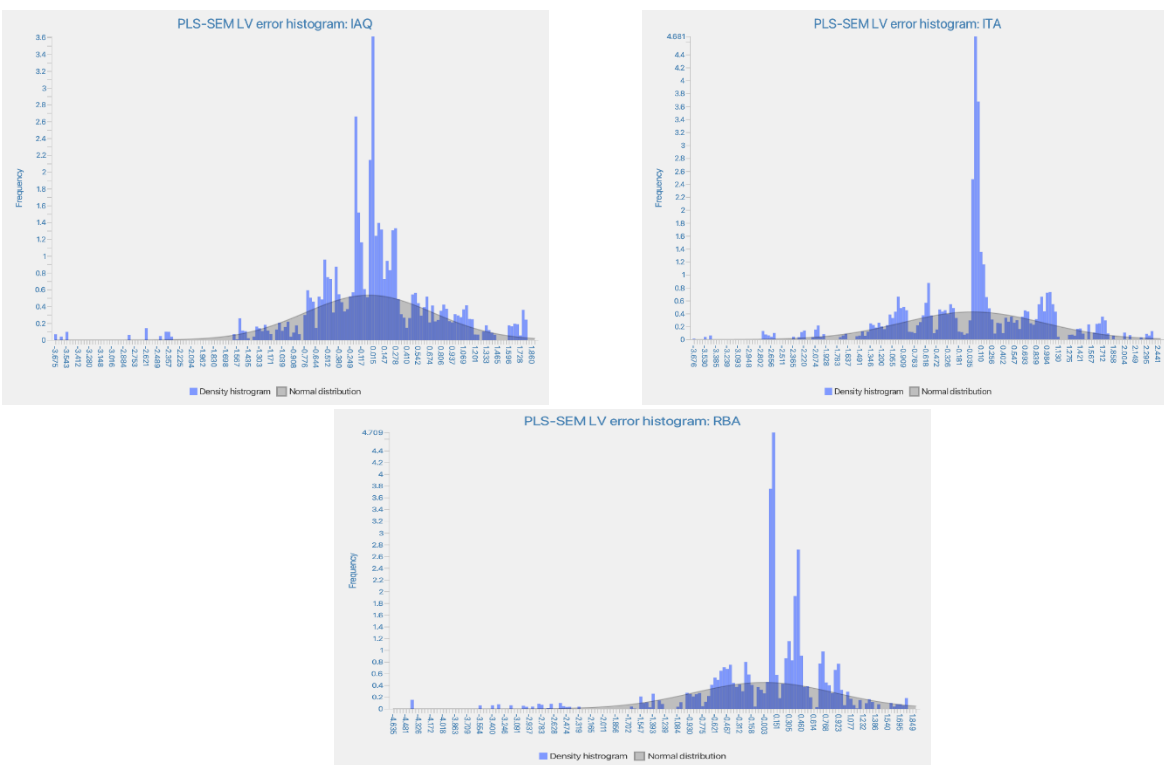

Figure 5. ***PLS-SEM LV Error Histograms***

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The almost symmetrical bell shapes of the three PLS-SEM LV error histograms of RBA, ITA, and audit quality can be normally distributed. Thus, the RMSE values will be used to determine the prediction power of the final model.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study offer empirical support for the proposed model examining the influence of CRA on audit quality, with RBA and ITA as parallel mediators and auditor accountability as a behavioural moderator. The results contribute to audit quality theory by clarifying the mechanisms through which client-side risk practices shape audit outcomes and by exploring how contextual behavioural factors can amplify or constrain these effects.

First, CRA exhibits a strong and statistically significant effect on audit quality ($\beta = 0.606$, $p < 0.001$), confirming Hypothesis H1. This finding reinforces the theoretical proposition that auditors' assessments of clients' internal control and risk mitigation systems influence the extent and quality of audit procedures (Detzen & Gold, 2021; Abdallah et al., 2015). Notably, the magnitude of this effect surpasses that reported by Le et al. (2022), suggesting that in regulatory contexts with heightened risk sensitivity, such as Vietnam's emerging audit environment, the role of client-side controls may be more salient.

Second, CRA is found to significantly predict both RBA ($\beta = 0.531$, $p < 0.001$) and ITA ($\beta = 0.435$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypotheses H2 and H4. This aligns with Nazmi et al. (2017), who argued that well-governed clients facilitate auditors' ability to tailor audit approaches through technology and structured risk assessments. Furthermore, both RBA (H3) and ITA (H5) show significant positive effects on audit quality ($\beta = 0.269$ and $\beta = 0.185$, respectively), validating prior claims that technology and risk-based methodology enhance audit precision and resource allocation (Erlina et al., 2020; Mardiana & Avianti, 2019; Sutisman et al., 2021).

These findings affirm Hypotheses H6 to H8, indicating that RBA and ITA are partial and parallel mediators in the link between CRA and audit quality (total indirect effect $\beta = 0.223$, $p < 0.05$). This partial mediation suggests that while auditors incorporate structured tools to enhance audit responses, a considerable portion of audit quality outcomes is still explained by direct perceptions and professional judgments associated with client risk. Compared to Mardiana and Avianti (2019), whose results showed marginal mediation by ITA, this study presents a more robust case for dual mechanisms, likely attributable to increased digital adoption and risk awareness in the post-COVID audit landscape (Ghanoum & Alaba, 2020).

Third, the moderation analysis reveals an interesting behavioral dynamic. Auditor accountability positively moderates the effect of CRA on audit quality ($\beta = 0.168$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H9. This aligns with the findings of Dang & Nguyen (2022), who emphasized that perceived accountability motivates auditors to exercise greater care and diligence when client risk is elevated. It indicates that auditors under high accountability pressure tend to reinforce the impact of CRA by adopting more rigorous procedures, aligning with agency theory and stakeholder expectations.

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Conversely, accountability negatively moderates the relationship between RBA and audit quality ($\beta = -0.125$, $p < 0.05$), confirming H10. This counterintuitive finding may be explained by the cognitive and professional tension auditors experience under pressure: while RBA promotes structured, standardised audit responses, high accountability environments may compel auditors to favour discretionary professional judgment, sometimes deviating from prescribed methodologies. This behavioural shift reflects the inherent trade-off between procedural adherence and individualised auditor responsibility, especially when facing litigation risk or regulatory scrutiny.

This study enriches the theoretical understanding of audit quality by integrating perspectives from RBA, IT adoption, and behavioural accountability. It provides empirical evidence that risk-oriented client management, when supported by structured methodologies and enhanced by responsible auditor behaviour, leads to superior audit outcomes. The results imply that regulators and audit firms should balance structured approaches like RBA with adequate training and support for auditor judgment, especially under intense accountability pressures.

Conclusion

Findings reveal that CRA exerts both direct and indirect influences on audit quality, with its direct effect surpassing that of RBA and ITA. Indirectly, CRA enhances audit quality through two parallel mediating pathways, RBA and ITA, whose implementation is contingent on client risk assessment. Accountability moderates these relationships, amplifying the client risk-audit quality link while diminishing RBA's impact, reflecting auditors' tendency to prioritize professional judgment over methodological adherence under accountability pressures. The validated model demonstrates strong predictive validity, offering three theoretical advancements: (1) accurate client risk assessment improves audit quality by necessitating thorough audit procedures in high-risk contexts; (2) RBA and ITA adoption enhances audit quality when aligned with client-specific risk profiles; and (3) accountability strengthens the client risk-audit quality relationship but weakens RBA's efficacy, highlighting how contextual pressures shape audit outcomes. This integration of risk management, technology, and accountability into a unified framework advances the understanding of audit quality determinants.

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