

**THE EFFECT OF FIRM PERFORMANCE ON AUDIT COMMITTEE
DILIGENCE**

FİRMA PERFORMANSININ DENETİM KOMİTESİ TİTİZLİĞİNE ETKİSİ

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this research study is to determine the effect of firm performance on audit committee diligence. The research concentrates on the relationship between audit committee meeting frequency and firm age. In this regard, the data of 12 banks operating in the financial sector in the BİST over the period 2010-2021 are examined in the research study. The variables such as “the number of years since the establishment of the company”, “logarithm of total assets”, “debt to assets ratio”, “return on equity” and “return on assets” are used as independent variables; whereas “the number of audit committee meetings held during the year” is used as the dependent variable. Panel data analysis is conducted to consider the effect of firm age on audit committee meeting frequency. A regression model, which is established with the obtained data, is analyzed with the help of STATA software. The findings obtained from the analysis indicate that the firm age has a positive and statistically significant effect on the audit committee meeting frequency at the 1% significance level. The other independent variables have no statistically significant effect on the dependent variable. Consequently, this study indicates that the firm’s audit committee diligence is closely associated with its market experience and active operating process.

Key words: Audit Committee, Firm Experience, Panel Data Analysis

ÖZ: Bu araştırmanın amacı, firma performansının denetim komitesi titizliği üzerindeki etkisini saptamaktır. Araştırmada, denetim komitesi toplantı sıklığının firma yaşı ile ilişkisine odaklanılacaktır. Bu doğrultuda, araştırmada 2010-2021 dönemleri arasında BİST’te mali sektörde faaliyet gösteren 12 bankanın verileri incelenmiştir. Çalışmada kullanılan değişkenler, “yıl içinde yapılan denetim komitesinin toplantı sayısı” bağımlı değişken, “şirketin kuruluşundan bu yana geçen yıl sayısı”, “toplam varlıkların logaritması”, “borcun aktiflere oranı” , “özkaynak karlılığı” ve aktif karlılığı ise bağımsız değişkenlerdir. Firma yaşının, denetim komitesi toplantı sıklığı üzerindeki etkisini ele almak için, panel veri analizi kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen verilerle regresyon modeli kurulmuştur. Kurulan model Satata

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programı ile analiz edilmiştir. Analizden elde edilen bulgular, %1 anlamlılık düzeyinde firma yaşının denetim komite toplantı sıklığı üzerinde pozitif ve istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir etkisinin olduğu yönündedir. Diğer bağımsız değişkenlerin ise bağımlı değişken üzerinde istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir etkisi bulunamamıştır. Sonuç olarak yapılan bu çalışma, firmaların denetim komitesi titizliğinin, piyasadaki tecrübesi ve aktif faaliyet süreci ile yakından ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Denetim Komitesi, Firma Tecrübesi, Panel Veri Analizi

1. INTRODUCTION

Prior to the enactment of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, many firms operating in the USA encountered major corporate scandals that resulted in billions of USD in losses. Certain firms that encountered major financial losses and corporate scandals can be listed as Nortel, Enron, eToy, and WorldCom. In fact, these listed firms have embezzled large amounts of money by through corporate managers. Many shareholders surrendered to destitution following liquidation and bankruptcy caused by the scandals (Darko et al., 2016). In order to prevent similar incidents, audit committees (ACs) have been established in firms. ACs have been developed as a solution against corporate scandals.

The primary duty of ACs consists of counseling on the replacement and appointment of an external auditor, monitoring managers, and reviewing the firm's internal control system (DeZoort et al., 2002). Knowledgeable ACs help increase the firm's performance, so the effectiveness of ACs would also improve firm performance (Zabri et al., 2016). Besides, ACs can improve the quality of financial reporting and reduce audit risk, thus enhancing the quality of proceeds (Abernathy et al., 2015). Therefore, ACs play an important role in the management, oversight and monitoring of the firm to uphold the owners' interests (Kallamu and Saat, 2015). An effective AC concentrates on upgrading the competitiveness and performance of the firm in ever-changing economic conditions (Herdjiono and Sari, 2017).

According to the findings obtained in the first research study conducted on AC diligence in the literature, it was determined that the first AC meeting in companies would have been sufficient to meet at least twice annually to approve the plans of the external auditors and schedule the next one to reconsider the outcomes (Menon and Williams, 1994). in their research study, Abbott et al. (2000) detected that an inverse association existed between fraud and independent board members. Nowadays, the number of AC meetings needs to be increased in order to support corporate governance performance and prevent errors or fraud. The Accounting Reporting Council (2012) emphasized that at least three meetings per year scheduled by board members and internal auditors is perceived as an indication of good communication. However, the active AC performs an important task in promoting transparency in the securities market, which enhances the book value of the firm and upholds the shareholders' interests even better (DeZoort et al., 2002). In fact, the AC

is accountable for offering independent supervision as a mechanism to diminish firm-specific conflicts.

The importance of the AC for firms emerges in allocating oversight and audit roles within organizations. There is a wide variety of literature results investigating the role, characteristics, and effectiveness of ACs (Carcello et al., 2002; DeZoort et al., 2002; Abbott et al., 2004; Al-Musali et al., 2019; Al-Okaily and Naueihed, 2019). The primary goal of this research study involves providing information that supports the association between firm age and AC diligence, given that previous research studies on AC diligence yielded no conclusive evidence in the literature. In the next part of the research study, information regarding the conceptual framework is introduced, and in the next part, the sample, data, and findings of the research are presented. In the last part, the evaluation of the research findings and suggestions pertinent to future research are made.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The agency theory suggests that once conflict exist between shareholders and managers and opportunistic behaviors are involved in the process, managers would begin to act either in favor of their own interests or against of the shareholders (Dellaportas et al., 2012). In the presence of this situation, assuming that firms lack the monitoring instruments and efficacious marketing regulations, the managers tend to deviate from upholding the interests of shareholders (Al-Matari et al., 2012). Therefore, in such a case, the AC's effectiveness in the firm would mitigate the existing conflict (Al-Matari, 2013) and play an active role in positively affecting firm performance (Ainuddin & Abdullah, 2001).

Geroski (1995) found that firm age had a positive impact on firm performance, and there had been extensive research over the years regarding experience in the business world. Gregory et al. (2005) asserted that firms that have been operational for for a long time had better facilities to earn revenues compared to younger companies. Umoren and Asogwa (2013) stated that well-organized and experienced firms had better reporting systems and could provide accurate and factual information. Abdullah et al. (2017) found that internet financial reporting was greatly influenced by firm age. Nevertheless, Bhatt & Bhattacharya (2016) and Planiappan (2017) concluded that there was a positive relationship between firm performance and firm age. However, the development approach of firms that have been operating for many years, key elements regarding regular norms limit the transformation of entrepreneurial activities and actions into affirmative consequences (Ward and Mendoze, 1996). Pursuant to the agency theory, firms with excessive agency costs reduce them by enhancing their operational and financial activities through ACs (Aljaaidi and Bagais, 2021).

ACs maintain their functions through fixed activity levels (Al Farooque et al., 2019; Sultana et al., 2015). The AC meeting frequency increases the effectiveness

of the committees' tasks (Bedard et al., 2004), and subsequently, firm performance would be unintentionally positively affected (DeZoort et al., 2002; Al Farooque et al., 2019). Similarly, Kamaludin et al. (2020) examined the effects of AC diligence on firm performance of the firms operating in Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, an inverse relationship was detected between firm performance and AC diligence, and AC diligence caused negative firm performance especially in family businesses. Aljaaidi and Bagais (2021) examined the effect of firms' experience on AC diligence in the Saudi Stock Exchange and found that firm experience had a positive impact on AC activity. However, ACs can detect and prevent opportunistic behavior and maintain the integrity of reported earnings (Bedard et al., 2004). Another effect is that AC diligence relates to internal control and reporting issues, and frequent audit meetings minimize opportunities for internal control and reporting issues (Archambeault and DeZoort, 2001; Abbott et al., 2004; DeFond and Francis, 2005; Zhang et al., 2007; Naiker & Sharma, 2009). Allegrini and Greci (2013) and Li et al. (2012) found in their research studies that AC members who held at least 4 meetings annually were significantly associated with the level of voluntary and intellectual capital disclosure.

3. RESEARCH METHOD AND DATASET

The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of firm performance on AC diligence. In the research study, the data of 12 banks operating in the financial sector in the BIST over the period 2010-2021 are examined. In the study, "the number of AC meetings held during the year" is used as the dependent variable. The independent variables include "the number of years since the establishment of the firm", "logarithm of total assets", "debt to assets ratio", "return on equity" and "return on assets". The data are obtained from XX. Panel data method is employed for the data analysis. A panel dataset is a cross-sectional time-series dataset providing repeated measurements of a certain number of variables over such observed units as individuals, households, and firms (Eom et al., 2008: 572). The obtained data in this study are prepared for panel dataset. A regression model is established using the data. The established model is analyzed via STATA software. Information on the variables of the analysis and the descriptive codes used on behalf of the variables in the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Variables and Their Codes

	CODES
Dependent Variables	
The number of AC meetings held annually	AC
Independent Variables	
The number of years since the establishment of the firm	FEX
Logarithm of total assets	LAS
Leverage ratio (%)	LEV
Return on Equity (%)	ROE
Return on Assets (%)	ROA

The model established for the analysis is as follows.

The Model:

$$AC_{it} = \alpha_{it} + \beta_1 FEX_{it} + \beta_2 LAS_{it} + \beta_3 LEV_{it} + \beta_4 ROE_{it} + \beta_5 ROA_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

The null and alternative hypotheses of the model are as shown below.

H_0 = Firm performances have no effect on audit quality.

H_1 = Firm performances have effects on audit quality.

3.1. Analysis and Findings of the Research

To perform the analysis, it is mandatory to decide which estimators would be used in the established model. Certain tests are recommended to this end this. Making a decision according to the results of these recommended tests is crucial for the reliability of the analysis (Tatoğlu, 2020: 176). In panel data analyses, some tests are performed to determine whether or not the classical model is valid, meaning, the existence of unit and/or time effects in model preferences. The F test, Breuch-Pagan LM test and Likelihood Ratio Test (LR) are among the recommended tests.

F test, Breusch-Pagan's LM (1980) Test, and Likelihood Ratio Test (LR) are analyzed to determine the model preference. The results of the analyses are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Estimation Model Determination Analysis Results

Tests	Statis tic	Value	Prob.	Results
F two-ways		12.22	0.0000	There are Unit and Time Effects
F unit	4	22.8	0.0000	There is Unit Effect
F time		1.03	0.4256	No Time Effect
LM unit	33	226.	0.0000	There is Unit Effect
LM time		0.00	1.0000	No Time Effect
LR two-ways	5	97.6	0.0000	There are Unit and Time Effects
LR unit	2	97.5	0.0000	There is Unit Effect
LR time		0.00	1.0000	No Time Effect

In order to select the correct estimation model in the analysis, the results of the F, LR, and LM tests shown in Table 2 are considered. According to the test results, it is concluded that it is not appropriate to estimate the model with the pooled least squares.

Hausman (1978) test is performed to determine which of the fixed effects/random effects estimators of the model would be suitable to be used. The H_0 and H_1 hypotheses of the Hausman (1978) test are shown below.

H_0 : There is no correlation between error term components and independent variables.

H_1 : A correlation exists between the error term components and the independent variables.

Table 3: Hausman Test Statistics

Chi-Square	10.59
P-value	0.0316

The probability values of test statistic in Table 3 are lower than 0.05. Thus, in the model established at the 95% confidence level, the null hypothesis of the Hausman test is rejected. According to the Hausman test result, the model would be estimated by using the fixed effects model (FEM).

In the analysis, estimation would be made using a one-way (unit effect) FEM. In case the FEM has autocorrelation, heteroscedasticity, autocorrelation and multicollinearity problems, regression estimations may yield results different than their actual values. Therefore, it is crucial to perform certain tests prior to estimating the model in terms of the reliability of the analysis results. Assumption violation and multicollinearity tests, which are included in the basic assumption tests, should be

performed. As assumption violation tests that disrupt the effectiveness in practice; heteroskedasticity, autocorrelation and correlation tests are performed.

In the analysis, the Modified Wald Test, one of the recommended heteroscedasticity assumption tests, is conducted for the models estimated by the FEM. Heteroscedasticity is described as the situation in which the assumption of constant variance becomes invalid. In other words, it is the case in which the variances of the error terms assume different values for all sections. Nonetheless, it also means that their covariances are not equal to zero (Topaloğlu, 2018: 28). The modified Wald test of heteroscedasticity (Greene, 2000) is used to test this model with heteroscedasticity by units (Yerdelen Tatoğlu, 2020: 236).

The null hypothesis of the Modified Wald Test of Heteroscedasticity by Units is as shown below.

H₀: “There is no heteroscedasticity problem among the units”.

H₁: “There is a heteroscedasticity problem among the units”.

Table 4: Modified Wald Test

Chi-square (12)	7234.16
Probability	0.0000

The H₀ hypothesis with 12 degrees of freedom, the X² test statistic and the probability value is shown in Table 4. According to the test result, the H₀ hypothesis is rejected. In this case, it is determined that heteroscedasticity by units exists in the model.

The assumption of autocorrelation describes the significant relationship between the successive time values of the error term in these established panel data models. The fact that the unit values are not independent from each other would cause a systematic relationship in the analysis, which leads to inconsistencies in the analysis (Topaloğlu, 2018: 28).

The recommended tests for testing the autocorrelation assumption in the FEM include Baltagi-Wu’s Locally Best Invariant (LBI) test and Bhargava et al.’s Durbin-Watson (D-W) test. The H₀ and H₁ hypotheses of the tests are as shown below.

H₀: There is no autocorrelation.

H₁: There is autocorrelation.

Baltagi-Wu’s LBI Test and Bhargava et al.’s D-W Test statistics are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Baltagi-Wu’s LBI and Bhargava et al.’s D-W Test Statistics

	Statistics
Bhargava et al.’s D-W	0.703546
Baltagi-Wu’s LBI	1.052000

For cases in which these test statistics results are lower than 2, it is seen that autocorrelation exists in the established model. In this case, there is no

autocorrelation, and the H_0 hypothesis is rejected. The existence of autocorrelation is determined in the model established by accepting the H_1 hypothesis.

The proposed Pesaran CD (2004) test is performed to detect the existence of autocorrelation in the FEM. The H_0 and H_1 hypotheses of the Pesaran CD Test are as shown below.

H_0 : "There is no autocorrelation".

H_1 : "There is autocorrelation".

Table 6: Pesaran CD (2004) Correlation Test

Chi-Square	0.999
P-value	0.3179

The results of the Pesaran CD Test (2004) statistics are presented in Table 6. Upon considering the obtained results, the H_0 hypothesis, which implies that "there is no autocorrelation", is rejected and the H_1 hypothesis is accepted. In this case, no autocorrelation exists in the established model.

In the established model, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are considered to investigate the multicollinearity problem. The Multicollinearity VIF values are given in Table 7.

Table: 7 Multicollinearity VIF Values

Variables	VIF	1/VIF
ROE	1.39	0.718545
FEX	1.31	0.763706
ROA	1.13	0.881988
LAS	1.10	0.911656
LEV	1.02	0.983437
Average VIF	1.19	

For cases in which the obtained VIF values are lower than 5, it is known that no multicollinearity problem exists among the variables. In Table 7, no multicollinearity problem exists among the variables in the model, where the VIF values are lower than 5 in the test results.

According to the basic assumption test results obtained for the established model; the results of the two tests lead to the violation of the assumption. Estimations based on resistant standard errors should be made to obtain more reliable results. Thus, more reliable estimation results would be obtained for the model. The results of the estimation statistics based on resistant errors are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Estimation Statistics Based on Resistant Standard Errors

Variables	Coefficient	p-values
FEX	0.4724611	0.009 *
LAS	-6.47e-12	0.157
LEV	-1.619865	0.138
ROE	-0.0753259	0.555
ROA	1.084511	0.393
Cons.	-6.921974	0.305
R² = 0.0544		

*Note: * indicates significance at a 1% significance level.*

Upon examining the findings obtained from the analysis, it is determined that the firm age has a positive and statistically significant effect on the AC meeting frequency at the 1% significance level. Once firm experience increases by one percent, the firm's AC quality would increase by 0.47 percent. Other independent variables, such as "logarithm of total assets", "debt to assets ratio" and "return on equity", have no statistically significant effect of on the dependent variable.

4.CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

The AC is a phenomenon that contributes to the profitability, reliability and sustainability of the firms by assuming duties on behalf of the corporate management of the firms. At the same time, transparency and public disclosure, which include the top-priority corporate governance principles of firms, are among the main duties of the ACs. The only way to generate an effective corporate governance structure in firm is the approval of a good AC. In this study, upon emphasizing the importance of the AC for firms, the extent to which AC relates to the sustainability of the firms are investigated.

Upon considering the obtained findings of the study, a significant and positive relationship is found between the sustainability of the companies and the AC. Therefore, the firm experience is directly associated with the active operating periods in the market and the AC diligence of these firms. The sustainability of the firms and their ability to compete with their long-term competitors in the market may be associated with the the AC diligrnce and quality.

In conclusion, this study asserts that firms' AC diligence is closely related to their experience in the market. In order for firms to maintain their sustainability in the market, they should attach importance to the quality of the AC. At the same time, the profitability and good performance of firms depend solely on their sustainability. Therefore, it is determined that the good performance and continuity of the firms would also indirectly depend on the quality of the AC.

It is expected that this study would contribute to the studies to be conducted in this field. At the same time, it is recommended to investigate the effect of firms on the AC using different variables by paving the way for future studies. Moreover, although the effects of the AC on firm performance have been examined in the literature, the opposite effect (the effect of firm performance on AC quality) is investigated in this study. In this context, this study enables the explication of the studies conducted in this field from a wider and different perspective.

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