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**-RESEARCH ARTICLE-**

# GOVERNANCE AND JOINT AUDITING AND THEIR REFLECTION ON THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM AND PERFORMANCE IN IRAQ BANKS

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**─Abstract─**

Recently, financial performance has been the foremost requirement for the financial institution to survive in the market and this aspect demands the researchers' emphasis. Thus, the present study investigates the impact of joint auditing and governance on the financial performance of Iraqi banks. The study also examines the mediating role of a strong financial system among joint auditing, governance and financial performance of the Iraqi banks. The researchers collected the data using survey questionnaires from the audit department of the Iraqi banks. The researchers also checked the association among variables using SPSS-AMOS. The outcomes indicated that joint auditing and governance have a positive association with the financial performance of Iraqi banks. The outcomes also exposed that a strong financial system significantly mediates among joint auditing, governance and financial performance of the Iraqi banks. The study guides the policymakers in developing new policies related to improve the financial performance of the banks using effective joint auditing and governance systems.

**Keywords:** Joint auditing, governance, strong financial system, financial performance, Iraqi banks

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## INTRODUCTION

A nation's complex financial system, particularly its banking system, is the foundation of its economic stability. Gaining an understanding of the financial health and performance of these organisations requires an understanding of the subtleties of the auditing and governance systems within this framework (Almashhadani & Almashhadani, 2023). Iraq, a country with a complicated past and a strong sense of self, has seen substantial changes in its economic environment throughout time (Semenova & Al-Dirawi, 2022). The country's banking industry according to Hamakhan (2020), plays a crucial role as it works to recover and position itself as a major player in the world economy. Iraq's financial future is significantly shaped by the auditing procedures used and the governance systems controlling these financial organisations. In light of this, the goal of this study is to clarify the complex relationships between joint auditing and governance, as well as the ensuing their effects on the financial system and the operational efficiency of Iraqi banks.

The concept of governance is much broader than the limitations of a legal framework. Bătae et al. (2021) says that it encompasses the values, guidelines, and procedures that direct an organization's decision-making, guaranteeing openness, responsibility, and moral behaviour. Comprehending the governance systems governing Iraqi banks is critical to understanding the fundamental elements affecting their financial performance (Puni & Anlesinya, 2019). Furthermore, the study explores the idea of collaborative auditing, which is becoming a more important practise in today's financial environment. By working together, several audit companies can evaluate an entity's financial accounts through joint auditing, which raises the audit process's legitimacy and dependability (Nurunnabi et al., 2020). Adopting joint auditing procedures by Iraqi banks is an indication of increased oversight and a proactive attitude to financial accountability. This study examine the nuances of governance systems in Iraqi banks, assessing how well they meet international norms and the particular difficulties they encounter in the local environment, and explores the possible advantages and difficulties of collaborative auditing by determining how much it strengthens the overall robustness of the audit process in Iraqi banks.

Rikhardsson et al. (2021) finds that the governance frameworks and auditing procedures of the banks that make up a country's financial system have a significant impact on the financial system as a whole. As essential parts of this financial system, Iraqi banks deal with particular difficulties brought on by the country's history, current geopolitical situation, and swings in the economy (Jadah et al., 2020). The study carefully examines the effects of joint auditing and governance on the robustness and stability of Iraq's financial system, taking into account both external and internal variables that influence the banks' operational environments. Examining the unique opportunities and limitations present in the economic context of Iraq is essential to understanding the effects of joint auditing and governance on the financial performance of Iraqi banks.

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Political instability, legal systems, and global economic patterns are just a few of the variables that make up Iraq's intricate economic fabric (Sahin-Mencutek et al., 2022). This study provides a thorough assessment of these variables aiming to clarifying their association with the governance structures and auditing procedures employed by Iraqi banks in order to provide a more detailed understanding of these variables' effects on financial performance. The importance of effective governance and open auditing practices in Iraq's pursuit of becoming a competitive force in the international financial sector cannot be overstated (Semenova & Al-Dirawi, 2022). This report thoroughly assesses how well Iraqi bank governance systems compare to worldwide best practices, highlighting areas that function well and those require improvement. Moreover, it investigates the efficacy of joint auditing as a means of improving the credibility and dependability of financial reporting, contributing to the larger debate on the development of auditing practices in developing countries.

To give readers a complete grip of the complex interactions between joint auditing procedures and governance structures, as well as how financial system and bank performance in Iraq is affected by these relationships, is the main objective of this study. The study's goal is to assess the governance systems of Iraqi banks by evaluating their efficiency in ensuring transparency, accountability, and ethical behaviour as well as their conformity to international standards. Second, the study aims to investigate how these financial institutions implemented collaborative auditing practices and how much joint audit processes contribute to the accuracy and legitimacy of financial reporting. Furthermore, the research intends to examine the particular challenges and possibilities faced by banks in Iraq in the broader economic context, taking into account variables like political uncertainty, regulatory structures, and global economic patterns. By fulfilling these objectives, the study seeks to provide useful information that will benefit financial institutions, lawmakers, and business professionals. This will contribute to the enhancement of Iraq's governance structures, auditing procedures, and overall financial stability.

While this study aims to provide a detailed evaluation of governance structures, joint auditing practices, and their impact on the financial system and bank performance in Iraq, certain gaps in the research must be known. Firstly, the study may meet access limits to real-time data due to the driving nature of financial sector. Timely and correct information is critical for detailed examination, and any lag in data availability could ruin the study's ability to reflect the most current state of things within Iraqi banks. Moreover, the research may face difficulties in gaining a complete picture of the internal governance structures and joint auditing processes due to possible transparency limits within financial institutions. Additionally, the study may have to deal with the complexities of geopolitical variables and their impact on the economic environment, which may be difficult to correctly evaluate. Despite these potential limits, the study seeks to fill gaps by utilising existing data, employing rigorous research procedures, and offering a comprehensive discussion of any constraints identified during the research process.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

Joint auditing as a collaborative method to reviewing financial statements, emerges as a critical feature with a noticeable positive impact on institutional financial performance (Amahalu, 2020). The shared examination by numerous audit firms adds credibility and reliability to the auditing process, establishing greater confidence in financial reporting accuracy. According to Roszkowska (2021), this collaborative strategy encourages a more complete evaluation of an entity's financial health, reducing the risk of oversight and improving audit quality overall. Each participating audit firm's contribution of varied perspectives, experience, and methodology produces a holistic and well-rounded review. This variety not only protects against potential prejudices, but also adds to a more comprehensive understanding of an institution's financial complexity. In the context of Iraqi banks, where economic constraints and geopolitical issues add layers of complexity, joint auditing is a strong instrument for strengthening these institutions' financial performance (Xie et al., 2019). Moreover, the benefits of joint auditing go beyond simply validating financial statements. According to Roszkowska (2021), this approach's collaborative nature develops a culture of accountability and openness inside the audited institution. Knowing that their financial records will be thoroughly examined by numerous credible audit companies encourages institutions to maintain the highest standards of financial management. In turn, this can contribute to a stronger internal control environment, lowering the possibility of financial irregularities and establishing an atmosphere of responsible financial governance. In the Iraqi banking sector, which may face specific problems due to historical contexts and regional uncertainty, the introduction of joint auditing systems becomes especially important in improving these institutions' financial performance (Dhanoon, 2021).

Furthermore, the benefits of joint auditing are recognised by external stakeholders such as investors, regulatory authorities, and the broader financial community (Knechel et al., 2020). The seal of approval from numerous audit companies increases trust in the quality and reliability of financial information (Maso et al., 2020). This enhanced confidence, in turn, can attract investment, improve credit ratings, and boost the audited institution's overall reputation. Moore (2021) finds that these external elements are critical for Iraqi banks navigating the route to economic recovery in attracting international investments and maintaining a suitable climate for long-term financial growth. Joint auditing emerges as a positive change catalyst, having a significant and positive impact on the financial performance of institutions, particularly in the complex and dynamic context of Iraqi banks. Therefore we propose a hypothesis that,

**H1***: Joint Auditing has a positive impact on financial performance.*

A financial institution's governance system according to Al-ahdal et al. (2020), is the cornerstone that determines its overall health and performance, having a marked positive impact on financial outcomes. Puni and Anlesinya (2019) finds that, a strong governance system includes a set of policies, processes, and ethical standards that influence decision-

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making and operations. An efficient governance structure promotes openness, accountability, and responsible leadership in financial organisations, especially banks. Governance guarantees that decision-makers are held accountable for their activities by establishing clear lines of power and clarifying roles and duties (König, 2021). This fosters an environment of cautious financial management. A carefully planned governance system becomes especially important in negotiating obstacles emerging from historical settings, geopolitical variables, and global economic changes in the context of Iraqi banks, where economic recovery is paramount (Xie et al., 2019). Furthermore, a strong governance framework serves as an obstacle to fraud and financial improprieties. According to Roszkowska (2021), the technology reduces the risk of fraud and assures compliance with regulatory standards by implementing checks and balances. This not only protects the interests of stakeholders, but also adds to the institution's overall financial stability. A governance structure serves as a compass, guiding institutions through the complexity of both domestic and international financial legislation in the intricate environment of Iraqi banking, where historical issues may provide additional complexities (Puni & Anlesinya, 2019).

Moreover, the influence of good governance goes beyond risk reduction and regulation; it is felt by investors, creditors, and the larger financial community. A transparent and well-functioning governance framework boosts financial organisations' legitimacy, attracting investment and instilling trust among stakeholders (Liu et al., 2021). A solid governance structure according to Jadah et al. (2020), becomes a beacon for international investors in Iraq, where the banking industry is important to the country's economic rebirth, signalling a commitment to ethical practises and responsible financial leadership. The positive relationship between a strong governance system and financial performance is clear, as institutions with accountable and transparent governance structures tend to be more resilient in the face of economic uncertainty and better positioned to capitalise on growth opportunities (Al-ahdal et al., 2020). Financial institution governance emerges as a key predictor of financial success, with far-reaching implications for transparency, stability and growth (Hanoon et al., 2021). Therefore, we make a hypothesis that,

**H2***: Governance system has a positive impact on financial performance.*

A strong financial system serves as a crucial mediator between joint auditing practises and the financial performance of institutions. As a collaborative approach to evaluating financial statements, joint auditing adds another layer of scrutiny and credibility to the auditing process (Semenova & Al-Dirawi, 2022). However, according to Amahalu's (2020) research, the influence of joint auditing on financial performance is inextricably connected to the overall soundness and resilience of the financial system. A solid financial system offers the infrastructure and support mechanisms required to properly harness the benefits of joint auditing. A strong financial system's primary role is to ensure the easy integration and implementation of joint auditing practises (Rijanto, 2021). The financial system serves as a facilitator, providing a standardised framework for audit firms to collaborate on, aligning their efforts with regulatory standards, and accelerating the financial reporting

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process. In the context of Iraqi banks, where historical obstacles and geopolitical concerns may present unique challenges, a robust financial system is critical in providing the stability and regulatory certainty required for the successful adoption of joint auditing practises. The system lays the groundwork for a peaceful partnership, maximising the benefits of joint auditing while reducing any problems (Knechel et al., 2020).

Moreover, a solid financial system functions as a reservoir of trust and confidence for outside stakeholders. The collaborative character of joint auditing, although improving financial statement dependability, relies on the general credibility of the financial system to support audit results (Abed et al., 2022). A well-functioning financial system that is characterised by openness, regulatory compliance, and good risk management increases the confidence of joint audit results. As a result, investor confidence rises, credit ratings rise, and the environment for financial institutions to recruit investments improves. Ziolo et al. (2019) says, a resilient financial system is critical in matching the benefits of joint auditing with the larger goal of supporting economic growth and stability in Iraq, where the banking sector plays a major role in the country's economic regeneration. Furthermore, a strong financial system functions as a buffer against any disturbances during the implementation of joint auditing practises. Economic swings, regulatory changes, and unexpected obstacles are all part of the financial landscape, and a strong financial system improves institutions' ability to react to these dynamics. According to Migliorelli (2021), resilient financial system provides the required support to handle uncertainties in the context of joint audits, where collaboration brings extra layers of complexity, and guarantees that the beneficial impact on financial performance is sustained over time. Therefore, we make a hypothesis that,

**H3*:*** *Strong financial system works as a moderator between joint auditing and financial performance.*

A strong financial system serves as an important moderator, affecting the relationship between a governance system and the financial performance of institutions. Gangi et al. (2019) says, the governance system, which consists of a set of principles, policies, and ethical standards, serves as an institution's backbone, impacting decision-making, transparency, and accountability. However, the governance system's efficacy in generating financial performance according to Liu et al.'s (2021) study, is inextricably linked to the strength and stability of the broader financial system within which it operates. One of the primary function of a strong financial system is to provide the infrastructure required for the application and enforcement of governance rules (Omri, 2020). According to Migliorelli (2021), the financial system functions as a regulatory framework, ensuring that governance practises are in accordance with established norms and regulatory obligations. In the context of Iraqi banks, where historical issues and geopolitical variables may create particular challenges, a strong financial system is critical for providing the stability and regulatory certainty required for the successful adoption of effective governance practises. It serves as a guiding force, ensuring that governance structures are not only in place but also in sync with the changing economic context (Nurunnabi et al., 2020).

Furthermore, Chen et al. (2023) says, a strong financial system boosts the governing system's credibility both internally and outside. Internally, it provides the necessary support tools for institutions to maintain the highest governance standards, promoting a culture of transparency and accountability (Hanoon et al., 2021). Externally, an efficient financial system signals to external stakeholders, such as investors and creditors, that an institution's governance practises are trustworthy and in line with worldwide best practises (Jadah et al., 2020). As a result, investor confidence rises, perceived risks fall, and the environment for financial institutions to attract investments improves. In Iraq's difficult economic environment, a resilient financial system can help to match the benefits of a good governance system with the larger goal of supporting economic growth and stability. Moreover, Gangi et al. (2019) finds that a solid financial system protects the governance system and, as a result, financial performance against potential disturbances. Economic uncertainty, regulatory changes, and unexpected obstacles are all part of the financial landscape, and a strong financial system improves institutions' ability to respond to these dynamics (Wang et al., 2023). It guarantees that the long-term positive impact of a good governance structure on financial performance is preserved by giving the stability and resources needed to endure possible storms. Therefore, we propose a hypothesis that,

**H4:** *Strong financial system works as a moderator between governance system and financial performance.*

## Research Methods

The study investigates the impact of joint auditing and governance on the financial performance and also examines the mediating role of a strong financial system among joint auditing, governance and financial performance of the Iraqi banks. The researchers collected the data using survey questionnaires from the audit department of the Iraqi banks. The study used the items to measure the variables taken from past literature such as joint auditing has five items taken from Behrend and Eulerich (2022), governance is measured six questions extracted from Choi and Kim (2019), strong financial system has five items adopted from Nguyen et al. (2020) and financial performance has six questions taken from Hindasah and Nuryakin (2020).

In addition, the study choose the auditing department employees of the banking sector as the respondents. The surveys were send to the employees using personal visits and the respondents were selected using simple random sampling. The researchers were distributed around 555 surveys but after one month only 297 surveys were received that represents approximately 53.51 percent response rate. Moreover, the researchers also checked the association among variables using SPSS-AMOS. It is an effective statistical tool that deals with primary data and provides best outcomes using large data sets (Hair et al., 2017). The study used two predictors named joint auditing (JA) and governance (GV), one mediating variable named strong financial system (SFS) and one dependent variable named financial performance (FP). These variables are shown in Figure 1.

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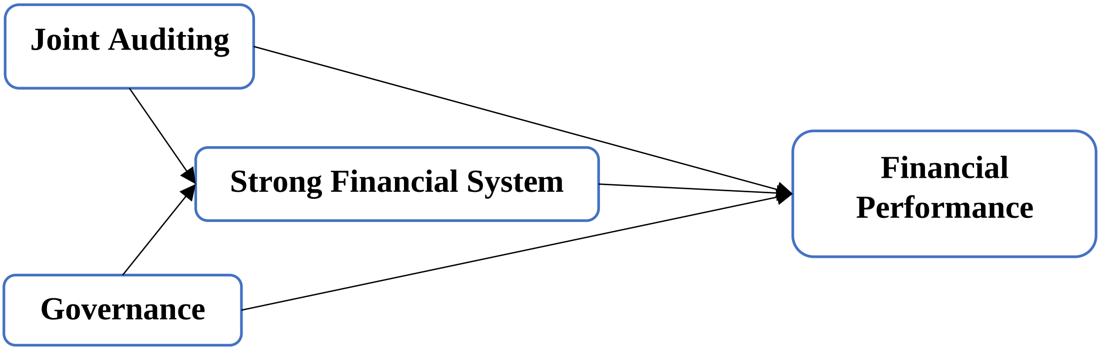


**Figure 1:** Research model

## Research Findings

The findings show the convergent validity that exposed the correlation among items. The outcomes indicated average variance extracted (AVE) and factor loading values are larger than 0.50. In addition, the outcomes also exposed Alpha values are larger than 0.70. Finally, the results exposed that the AVE values are larger than MSV and ASV. These outcomes indicated that a high correlation among items. These values are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Convergent validity**

| Variables | Items | | | Loadings | CR | AVE | MSV | ASV |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Joint Auditing | JA1 | <--- | JA | 0.989 | 0.915 | 0.688 | 0.077 | 0.042 |
| | JA2 | <--- | JA | 0.698 | | | | |
| | JA3 | <--- | JA | 0.985 | | | | |
| | JA4 | <--- | JA | 0.705 | | | | |
| | JA5 | <--- | JA | 0.714 | | | | |
| Governance | GV1 | <--- | GV | 0.830 | 0.904 | 0.612 | 0.581 | 0.339 |
| | GV2 | <--- | GV | 0.845 | | | | |
| | GV3 | <--- | GV | 0.812 | | | | |
| | GV4 | <--- | GV | 0.661 | | | | |
| | GV5 | <--- | GV | 0.785 | | | | |
| | GV6 | <--- | GV | 0.746 | | | | |
| Strong Financial System | SFS1 | <--- | SFS | 0.996 | 0.936 | 0.754 | 0.681 | 0.298 |
| | SFS2 | <--- | SFS | 0.632 | | | | |
| | SFS3 | <--- | SFS | 0.998 | | | | |
| | SFS4 | <--- | SFS | 0.630 | | | | |
| | SFS5 | <--- | SFS | 0.992 | | | | |
| Financial Performance | FP1 | <--- | FP | 0.526 | 0.837 | 0.513 | 0.261 | 0.162 |
| | FP2 | <--- | FP | 0.809 | | | | |
| | FP3 | <--- | FP | 0.605 | | | | |
| | FP4 | <--- | FP | 0.804 | | | | |
| | FP6 | <--- | FP | 0.789 | | | | |

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The findings show the discriminant validity that exposed the correlation among variables. The outcomes of Fornell Larcker indicated that the first value in the column larger than the other values in the same column. These outcomes indicated that a low correlation among variables. These values are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Discriminant validity**

| | SFS | JA | GV | FP |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SFS | 0.868 | | | |
| JA | 0.140 | 0.830 | | |
| GV | 0.625 | 0.277 | 0.782 | |
| FP | 0.440 | 0.175 | 0.511 | 0.716 |

The findings also show the model good fitness. The results indicated that the RMSEA value is lower than 0.05 while TLI and CFI values are larger than 0.90. These values exposed model is good fit. These values are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Model good fitness**

| Selected Indices | Result | Acceptable level of fit |
|---|---|---|
| TLI | 0.909 | TLI > 0.90 |
| CFI | 0.917 | CFI > 0.90 |
| RMSEA | 0.001 | RMSEA < 0.05 good; 0.05 to 0.10 acceptable |

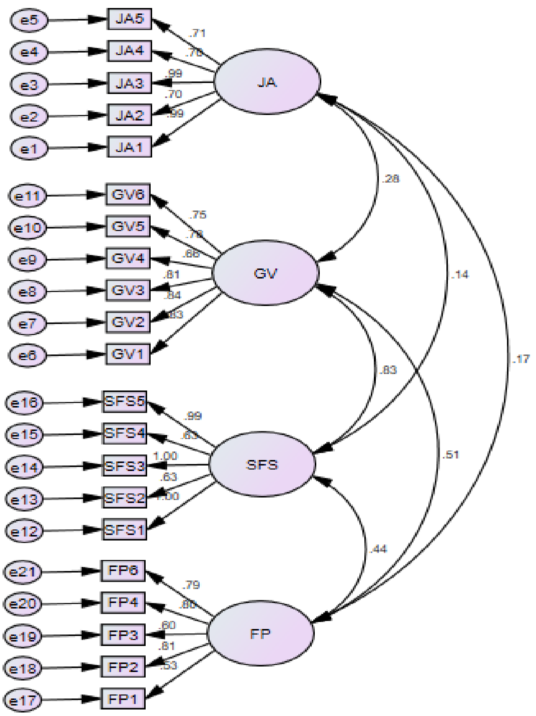


**Figure 2:** Measurement model assessment

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The results of direct path analysis show the direct associations among variables. The outcomes of direct path analysis indicated that joint auditing and governance have a positive association with the financial performance of Iraqi banks and accept H1 and H2. These associations are given in Table 4.

**Table 4: Direct path analysis**

| Relationships | | | Beta | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strong Financial System | <--- | Joint Auditing | 0.031 | 0.014 | 2.214 | 0.049 |
| Strong Financial System | <--- | Governance | 1.021 | 0.038 | 26.769 | 0.000 |
| Financial Performance | <--- | Strong Financial System | 0.199 | 0.069 | 2.897 | 0.004 |
| Financial Performance | <--- | Joint Auditing | 0.033 | 0.014 | 2.357 | 0.021 |
| Financial Performance | <--- | Governance | 0.162 | 0.073 | 2.219 | 0.047 |

The results of indirect path analysis show the indirect associations among variables. The outcomes of indirect path analysis exposed that a strong financial system significantly mediates among joint auditing, governance and financial performance of the Iraqi banks and accept H3 and H4. These associations are given in Table 5.

**Table 5: In direct path analysis**

| | Governance | Joint Auditing | Strong Financial System |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strong Financial System | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Financial Performance | 0.239 | 0.008 | 0.000 |

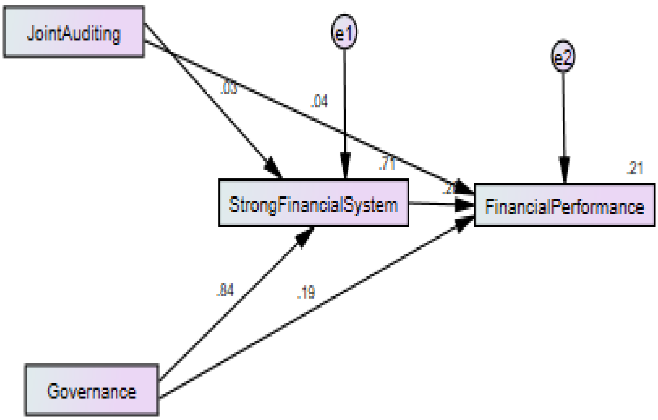


**Figure 3:** Structural model assessment

## DISCUSSIONS

The study provides a detailed and comprehensive examination that digs into the various aspects influencing Iraqi banks' financial landscape. The study finds that governance arrangements inside financial institutions, together with the rising practise of joint audits, play critical roles in shaping the financial system and, as a result, overall performance. Governance emerges as a prominent subject in the study as the foundation of institutional decision-making and ethical behaviour (Mökander et al., 2021). Iraqi banks, operating in a historically volatile geopolitical environment, confront unique challenges that highlight the importance of competent governance (Abed et al., 2022). The study examines the existing governance structures within Iraqi banks, assessing their compliance with international norms as well as their effectiveness in promoting openness and accountability. This analysis' conclusions provide a complete overview of the current status of governance inside Iraqi banks, indicating areas of strength as well as possible areas for improvement.

The research then investigates the broader consequences of governance frameworks on the financial system. Naciti et al. (2022) exposed that a strong governance structure not only instils trust in the institution, but it also adds to the overall stability of the financial system. The interaction between governance practises and the financial system is especially important in Iraq, where economic revival is linked with the requirement for sustainable financial institutions (Ng et al., 2020). The study investigates how governance structures, when aligned with worldwide best practises, operate as catalysts for the development of an Iraqi financial system that is open, accountable, and morally sound. The paper also explores the collaborative auditing practises being embraced by Iraqi banks, easily transitioning into the area of joint auditing. Joint auditing, which involves different audit firms, brings a new viewpoint to the standard audit process (Krieger et al., 2021). The report acknowledges that joint auditing is not without complications, particularly in a climate where the financial landscape is changing, and institutional capacities differ. It does, however, argue that the collaborative character of joint auditing provides a unique chance to improve the credibility and dependability of financial reporting within Iraqi institutions.

Another important aspect of the study is the impact of joint auditing on the financial performance of Iraqi banks. It is suggested that collaborative financial statement inspection, aided by joint auditing, contributes positively to the overall robustness of the audit process (Hamza & Damak-Ayadi, 2023). The study investigates how the convergence of different audit firms' diverse viewpoints, experience, and procedures leads in a more thorough and well-rounded assessment of an institution's financial health. This collaborative methodology according to Dafri and Al-Qaruty's (2023) research, not only reduces the risk of oversight, but it also fosters an accountability and transparency culture within the audited institution. As a result, the positive influence of joint auditing is likely to be felt not just in financial reporting accuracy, but also in internal controls and ethical financial management. The study acknowledges that the favourable impact of joint auditing on financial performance is dependent on the overall strength of the financial system. A strong financial system is proposed to operate as a bridge between joint auditing practises and financial performance. According to Liu et al. (2022), it enables

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the smooth integration and implementation of joint auditing by guaranteeing regulatory alignment and providing the infrastructure required for audit firm collaboration. According to the study, joint auditing collaboration is most effective within a resilient financial system, which functions as a stabilising force, assisting institutions in navigating risks and generating a conducive climate for positive financial results.

As the study discussion progresses, the interconnectivity of governance structures, joint auditing practises, and the financial system emerges as a crucial focal point. The favourable influence of these variables on financial success is a complex interplay in which each component strengthens and moderates the others.

## Implications

This study's implications are broad and multifaceted, providing useful insights for both academics and practitioners in the fields of financial management, governance, and auditing practises. The study adds to the expanding conversation on the complexities of governance arrangements, joint auditing, and their aggregate influence on financial institutions, particularly in the context of Iraqi banks. It lays the path for additional research by enabling scientists to explore deeper into the subtleties of these elements and their applicability in a variety of global situations. The report offers policymakers, regulatory agencies, and financial institutions in Iraq valuable insights for improving governance frameworks, optimising joint auditing practices, and reinforcing the larger financial system on a practical level. The findings have the potential to influence strategic decision-making by fostering a culture of transparency, accountability, and collaboration, which is essential in navigating the issues of financial landscape. Furthermore, the study's implications are felt globally, as the lessons learned from Iraq's experience can help to develop best practices and contribute to the continued evolution of financial governance and auditing standards around the world. The study assists the policymakers in formulating new policies related to improve the financial performance of the banks using effective joint auditing and governance systems.

## LIMITATIONS

Despite its thorough approach, this study has certain limitations. One noteworthy limitation is the possible difficulty in obtaining real-time data, which may limit the study's capacity to give the most up-to-date examination of governance arrangements, joint auditing practises, and their implications for financial performance in Iraqi banks. Because the study relies on historical data and the current economic and geopolitical conditions at the time of the research, its findings have a temporal component. Furthermore, given the potential constraints on transparency and disclosure, the study may confront problems in gaining a thorough picture of the internal governance structures and joint auditing processes within particular banks. Furthermore, the study recognises the complexities of geopolitical variables and their impact on the economic environment, which may make correctly assessing their impact difficult. Despite these constraints, the study intends to alleviate them by rigorous methodology, transparency in reporting, and a complex discussion of the potential consequences of these constraints on the study's conclusions.

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