

Mandatory audit firm rotation: A structured literature review

24107779

A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy (Evidence Based Management).

30 June 2025

Abstract

This systematic literature review responds to the calls in previous literature to understand how Mandatory Audit Firm Rotation (MAFR) evolved post-its implementation. The review further examines the theoretical perspectives used to understand the development of MAFR and the factors that motivate the decisions made by various stakeholders regarding the implementation of MAFR. The main motives behind MAFR implementation are as follows: reduced audit market concentration, improved audit quality, and enhanced auditor independence.

This review follows the methodological approach outlined in the SPAR-4-SLR protocol, which enables the systematic assembly, arrangement, and assessment of peer-reviewed academic articles. It employs thematic analysis to analyse the data.

The findings reveal that the research has focused predominantly on audit quality, followed by auditor independence, and then audit market concentration. Audit market concentration was the least researched area, but the scholarship finds that MAFR is not the best antidote to resolve it; rather, it intensifies it. Regarding audit quality and auditor independence, the debate remains inconclusive, with no consensus reached on whether MAFR is the most effective solution to address these issues. This review contributes to the MAFR literature by identifying emerging themes and the theoretical drivers that add to the field.

Keywords: Mandatory Audit Firm Rotation, Auditor independence, Audit Quality, Audit Market Concentration, Structured Literature Reviews

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy [Evidence Based management] at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

30 June 2025

Table of Contents

1. Introduction and background	1
1.1 Problem Statement	3
1.3 Review questions	6
1.4 Strategies, contribution and future direction	6
2. Methodology	7
2.1 Assembling	7
2.1.1 Domain	7
2.1.2 Research questions	7
2.1.3 Source types	9
2.1.4 Source quality	9
2.1.5 Acquisition	9
2.1.6 Search period	10
2.1.7 Search keywords	10
2.2 Arranging	10
2.2.1 Organising codes	10
2.2.2 Purification	11
2.3 Assessing	11
2.3.1 Analysis method	11
2.3.2 Limitations of the methodology	12
3. Findings from the Literature Review	15
4. Synthesis of literature review	29
4.1.1 Publication period	29
4.1.2 Geographical focus	30
4.1.3 Publishing journals and quality ranking	30
4.1.4 Type of studies and research methods	31
4.2.1 Audit market concentration	31
4.2.2 Audit quality	33
4.2.3 Auditor independence	36
4.4.1 Construct development	38
4.4.2 Recent SLR in MAFR	39
4.4.3 Change of keywords and periods	39
4.4.4 Review protocols	40
4.4.5 Limitations	40
5. Formulation of Questions for Future Research, and Conclusion	41
5.1 Avenues for future research	41
References	44

List of Tables

Table 1: List of prior year studies	5
Table 2: Publishing journals and quality ranking	16

List of Figures

Figure 1: SPAR-4-SLR protocol	14
Figure 2: Number of articles published.....	15
Figure 3: Geographical focus of the literature	16
Figure 4: Type of studies used	18
Figure 5: Theories used	19

1. Introduction and background

Information asymmetry exists between the company's owners and those running it. To mitigate this gap, external third parties – independent public accounting firms are hired (Corbella et al., 2015). Auditors must be competent, remain independent from the client, and produce high-quality audits (Kalanjati et al., 2019). The role of the auditors is to ensure that the financial statements do not have any material financial irregularities (Federsel, 2025). If auditors are not independent in fact and appearance, they will miss substantial misstatements, lowering audit quality (Horton et al., 2021).

The audit deficiencies noted from regulator inspection reports, the global financial crisis of 2007–2008, and other corporate scandals raised concerns about auditors' independence and audit quality. Even the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) of the United States (U.S.) has found that auditors have become too friendly with management, thereby impairing their level of objectivity and scepticism (Keyser, 2021).

Multiple jurisdictions embarked on reforms to protect against future failures. These included joint audits, mandatory auditor rotation (MAR), which can be categorised into two: mandatory audit partner rotation (MAPR) and mandatory audit firm rotation (MAFR), as well as the prohibition of offering non-assurance services (NAS) to audit clients. Engaging quality control reviewers, conducting peer reviews, providing training, implementing performance audits, establishing audit committees, and issuing annual transparency reports were other key regulatory initiatives (Corbella et al., 2015).

These reforms are often unique to each region and have been successful in some countries while failing in others. These audit firm rotations help bring a new perspective, the famous "fresh look" (Federsel, 2025). Currently, the duration of an auditing firm's engagement tenure with a client is not limited by the International Auditing Standards (Judge et al., 2024). Hence, every jurisdiction strives to develop its audit tenure duration.

To help bring back public trust in the auditing profession, the U.S. Congress passed the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. Section 203 of the act established MAPR, while Section 207 called for research on MAFR (Chi, 2011). In 2011, PCAOB received 684 comment letters on its MAFR concept release, and approximately 94% of the commenters rejected the MAFR implementation (Reid & Carcello, 2017). These term limits have been the result of advocacy by the Big 4 audit firms, which have lobbied different legislators to vote against MAFR in the U.S (Ghosh & Siriviriyakul, 2018).

Interestingly, the year the U.S decided against MAFR implementation was also the year the E.U. had just passed it into law. Article 17 of the EU 537/2014 regulation, operationalised in 2016, requires the audit firm to rotate after 10 years (Hassan et al., 2024). With an extension

to 20 years where there was public tendering, or to 24 years where there is a joint audit (Hohenfels, 2016; Horton et al., 2021). This created a dual rotation regime, as MAPR was already in effect. The cooling-off period is four years, after which the firm can be eligible to tender again (Federsel, 2025). Before these regulatory reforms, MAFR in the EU was only established in Italy (de Jong et al., 2020).

Italy was among the first to adopt MAFR in 1975, followed by Brazil in 1999 and Singapore in 2002, with the latter limiting its application to domestic banks (Corbella et al., 2015). Other nations, such as South Korea and Indonesia, had it before and then repealed it for various reasons (Kim et al., 2019). Many other countries, including South Africa, China, and Australia, require only mandatory rotation of audit partners. In China, only a five-year MAPR is required, and two audit partners should sign the financial statements (Liu et al., 2021).

In South Africa, MAFR was introduced in 2017 by the Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors (IRBA), with a maximum term of 10 years. Based on this announcement, many companies began implementing MAFR until May 2023, when the promulgation by the IRBA was put aside. South Africa's potential course of action following the May 2023 court rulings, which put aside the intention to implement MAFR, is uncertain. In Spain, the MAFR policy only lasted for seven years, ending in 1995 (Lennox et al., 2014).

These changes have put MAFR under the spotlight, making it a very hotly contested rotation type; hence, I focus on it in this review. This is also because it remains the famously recommended intervention to protect against the auditor's independence impairment (Reid & Carcello, 2017). Furthermore, unlike partner rotation, which is extensively practised, audit firm rotation has not been generally adopted to the same extent (Federsel, 2025). Additionally, there is a paucity of prior research on partner rotation, which is not the case with MAFR.

The debate

The existing studies yield mixed results, with two schools of thought on MAFR, each supported by a substantial body of research (Malagila et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2018). MAFR proponents argue that the rotation will increase quality through a fresh look (Brooks et al., 2022) It also aligns with economic incentives and a competitive environment, serving as an additional type of peer review that prevents the potential for becoming too close to management, thereby strengthening the perceived independence (Keyser, 2021).

Longer relationships with auditors typically result in higher quasi-rents, which benefit the auditor economically; this can lead to cohabitation with management, potentially compromising auditor independence (Hohenfels, 2016). Central to the arguments for MAFR is that extended tenures make auditors more familiar with clients, resulting in weaker independence, quality, and efficiency (DeFond & Zhang, 2014; Kalanjati et al., 2019).

Opponents of MAFR, however, argue that longer tenures lead to greater experience, higher quality, and better results for auditors. They find that implementing MAFR lead to high costs, which outweigh the benefits, and is impractical to implement, leading to unintended consequences (Hohenfels, 2016; Keyser, 2021). MAFR increases monitoring costs for audit committees to ensure there is no collusion between management and the auditor. Unfortunately, the audit committees can no longer reward auditors who perform well with increased appointments (Chi, 2011).

PCAOB also acknowledges that the exiting auditor may not work hard at the end of his tenure since he will not be reappointed, and that new auditors may fail owing to learning curves (Cameran et al., 2015). These unresolved arguments underscore the need for the SLR to fully comprehend these nuances, as these debates appear to be endless (Cameran et al., 2016).

MAFR, as a discipline, has matured as the discussions regarding its implementation have been brewing for decades (Wilson et al., 2018). This is especially true when viewed geographically, by region, such as the U.S. and the EU. Keyser (2021) posits that in 2011, when PCAOB issued a concept release in the U.S., it was the fourth time the MAFR was brought for a public closer look and debate.

However, the 2011 impetus for the PCAOB's consideration of MAFR, along with the calls made by the UK Financial Reporting Council, the European Commission, and South Africa in 2016, makes this debate more recent (Fontaine et al., 2016; Jenkins & Vermeer, 2013). This makes the MAFR study an intermediate field of study. Additionally, since it may be relatively new in other regions, such as Africa and Asia, this resurgence in this context makes it an intermediate discipline. MAFR can be examined primarily through two distinct lenses: meso and macro. I cement this SLR at a rather macro level because this is the level at which the research has dominantly lensed MAFR at (Wilson et al., 2018).

1.1 Problem Statement

The literature on MAFR is still relatively fragmented and country-based (Florio, 2024). Hassan et al. (2024) state that they are the first to conduct an SLR on EU auditing literature developments over the past decade. SLRs bring rigour, a structured framework, and make sense of fragmented and overlapping literatures (Clark et al., 2021).

This study builds on Florio's (2024) recommendations for future research, emphasising the need to assess the impact of global audit reforms, particularly in countries such as the EU. To understand why MAFR thrives in some situations but fails in others. To answer the call by Florio (2024) to ascertain the impact of the 2016 introduction of MAFR on audit market concentration across the EU.

Interestingly, Reid & Carcello (2017) noted that PCAOB 2011 concept release attracted a very high number compared to other releases on other audit topics since 2009, signifying how topical and important this issue has been. The debate about MAFR is inconclusive, and the scholarship is divided over whether it is an appropriate mechanism for addressing independence and quality issues.

Prior research has focused more on empirical, archival, experimental, and analytical approaches to this construct. Most published SLRs are on internal audit instead of external audit (Hassan et al., 2024). The most recently published SLRs do not delve deeply into the theoretical perspectives emerging from empirical studies. This SLR should go beyond empirical synthesis to address theoretical gaps (Paul et al., 2021).

This SLR bridges this gap by systematically identifying and analysing the theoretical contributions embedded in the empirical literature. One of the observations Hiebl (2023) made was that many high-ranked articles do not merely summarise past studies but instead focus on building or refining theoretical frameworks, which is my intervention in this study.

1.2 Prior literature shortcomings

The literature on MAF and MAFR had been growing slowly until 2011. Since then, empirical studies have been published at a high rate, unpacking MAFR from different angles. Different publications have focused on various MAFR antecedents, such as the effects of MAFR on investors' confidence, its impact on Earnings, Key Audit Matters, its impact on fees, and audit committee reactions. Others have examined it from the perspective of audit market concentration.

As stipulated in Table 1, the Florio (2024) and Hassan et al. (2024) literature reviews are the most recent, comprehensive, and methodologically sound, having followed established research protocols. The other reviews fall short of being regarded as SLRs. They are not recent, have not been published in high-rated journals, are not peer-reviewed, and some are not journal articles (see Table 1).

Hassan et al. (2024) SLR focuses on auditing development in general, not just MAFR, and is restricted to the EU. It covered themes like NAS, joint audits, audit committees, transparency reports, MAR, and Key Audit Matters (KAMs). The SLR's primary interest was understanding factors affecting auditing development in the EU. MAFR is just a small coverage in their SLR, showing a need for my SLR. However, there are calls made in their SLR, which this SLR responds to. Florio (2024) SLR is comprehensive, replicable, reliable, and critical in its analysis, Fan et al. (2022).

This SLR is built on the foundational work of (Florio, 2024) responding to the calls made in that study. Which I considered to be a separate research effort. I focus on firm rotation as a single construct rather than whole auditor rotations because MAFR and MAPR have frequently been studied separately, and one may not draw cautious conclusions from the empirical evidence (Horton et al., 2021).

The results of any research depend upon the research questions, the context being examined, the methodology employed, and the duration of the study. Florio (2024) used databases like Google Scholar, which covers non-journal content and has received enormous academic criticism (Hiebl, 2023). It includes articles published in lower-ranking journals, raising concerns over the quality of the study. It spans the period from 2000 to 2022, and considering the rapid evolution of research on these regulatory issues, new studies may have emerged beyond that period. My SLR adopts a distinct approach to address these concerns.

Table 1: List of prior year studies

Reviewers	Review purpose	Type of review	Review Period
Florio (2024)	Examines MAR effectiveness in enhancing audit quality and audit independence.	SLR	2000 - 2022
Hassan et al. (2024)	Reviews the literature on general auditing development in the EU over the past decade.	SLR	2012 - 2023
Velte & Loy (2018)	To evaluate the literature on how auditor rotation, auditor firm rotation, and non-audit services affect audit quality.	SLR	2004 - 2017
Cameran, Pettinicchio, et al. (2015)	Summarises the pros and cons of MAFR and focuses on the benefits and costs of the rule.	Narrative review	Not mentioned
Velte & Freidank (2015)	Explores MAR through a theoretical lens using agency theory.	Narrative review	Not mentioned
Jenkins & Vermeer (2013)	Reviews the empirical papers on the effects of MAR on audit quality.	Narrative review	Not mentioned
Casterella & Johnston (2013)	Reviews the literature on MAFR and makes suggestions to the regulators.	Narrative review	Not mentioned

Ewelt-Knauer et al. (2012)	Reviews the literature on MAFR to inform policy making.	Narrative review	Not mentioned
Pott et al. (2009)	Focuses on empirical and experimental literature on auditor independence	Narrative review	Not mentioned

Source: Author's creation

1.3 Review questions

This SLR uses the following research questions, guided by the principles suggested by Massaro et al. (2016) which emphasise that the research questions should be insightful, critiqued, and focused, and lead to fundamental future changes.

RQ1. How has MAFR research evolved globally since its implementation, particularly in regions such as the EU, since 2016?

RQ2. What theories have emerged in MAFR studies?

RQ3. What is the MAFR's future for research?

1.4 Strategies, contribution and future direction

This review employs an inductively sound methodological thematic analysis to yield rich, informative, and trustworthy findings (Nowell et al., 2017). It uses the SPAR-4-SLR review protocol by Paul et al. (2021) to assemble, arrange and assess the data. As suggested by Fan et al. (2022) this review methodology contributes to the different phases of scoping, linking, and crystallising the components of the literature.

I am unaware of any SLR that assessed MAFR's impacts after implementation. This is the first SLRA to review these advances, to my knowledge. The findings contribute to the scholarship responding to Florio (2024) call to ascertain the impact of the 2016 implementation of MAFR across the EU on audit market concentration. It further unpacks the theoretical underpinnings of MAFR literature, which were previously lacking in prior studies. It also suggests directions for future research, which will help regulators, scholars, and all stakeholders interested in these debates.

The remaining sections of the paper are organised as follows: Section two looks at the methodology, which describes the process of data identification, acquisition, organisation, purification, evaluation and reporting. Section three presents the findings and the descriptive analysis of the literature reviewed. Section four synthesises, connects and compares the findings from the literature review. It critically analyses the literature using integrative visuals to show the contribution to the body of knowledge. Section five directs future research and concludes.

2. Methodology

One of the fundamental principles and prerequisites of a high-quality review article is that it should follow a transparent methodology that systematically identifies and analyses articles (Snyder, 2019). For SLRs, there are not many prominent protocols available. Researchers performing SLRs typically depend on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis protocols (PRISMA-P) (Shamseer et al., 2015). However, there is a debate that these protocols are often general and offer less guidance on reporting (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020; Paul et al., 2021).

Hence, I followed the Scientific Procedures and Rationales for Systematic Literature Reviews (SPAR-4-SLR) protocol by (Paul et al., 2021). The SPAR-4-SLR protocol allows for the systematic assembly, arrangement, and assessment of peer-reviewed academic articles. It provides an important checklist and guides to ensure the completeness of all the required data (Sauer & Seuring, 2023).

I used the SPAR-4-SLR because any other SLR conducted using this protocol should provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge in the literature and help stimulate the research agenda for the future. See Figure 1, which summarises the review methodology, explaining and disclosing each methodological choice.

2.1 Assembling

This is the primary stage, which identifies and acquires the articles to be synthesised. The identification sub-stage primarily encompasses the domain of the construct, including research questions formulated to guide the review process, the types of sources, and the quality of the literature. The acquisition sub-stage involves search mechanisms, material acquisition, the search period, and the keywords I used for the systematic literature review (SLR).

2.1.1 Domain

MAFR falls within the domain of social sciences. It is a multidisciplinary subject that can be studied not just in accounting and auditing but also in governance, regulation, corporate social responsibility, and organisational ethics. I focus on auditing because audit firms are the most direct targets of any potential benefits or drawbacks of MAFR implementation. There is a consensus among scholars that the costs of imposed MAFR will outweigh the benefits and will directly affect audit firms (Fontaine et al., 2016; Harber & Maroun, 2020; Reid & Carcello, 2017).

2.1.2 Research questions

These research questions are exploratory, intended to map, synthesise, and understand the state-of-the-art MAFR knowledge, rather than test hypotheses or draw causal relationships.

The following formulated research questions are guided by the principles suggested by Massaro et al. (2016) which emphasise that the research questions should be insightful, critiqued, and focused, and lead to fundamental future changes.

RQ1. How has MAFR research evolved globally since its implementation, particularly in regions such as the EU, since 2016?

As Massaro et al. (2016) point out that this question provides insights into how the literature has developed, is historical, and helps to unpack where the field stands today. The decision to implement MAFR by the EU, SA, and in some parts of the world, after 2011, centred on three main pillars: auditor independence, audit quality, and market concentration.

A plethora of studies have been conducted on auditor independence and audit quality, rather than on market concentration. One of the main concerns of the EU green paper was whether there is a fair and conducive market for all audit firms, including small ones, to participate. The rotation was intended to ease the barriers to market entry (de Jong et al., 2020). This first research question aims to examine the current state of knowledge on some of these MAFR antecedents.

RQ2. What theories have emerged in MAFR studies?

This review does not begin with a predefined theoretical research question. Instead, in alignment with the synthetic principles and inductive thematic analysis, it allows for theoretical underpinnings to emerge. Rouse et al. (2025) enunciate that this is often the case with most of the qualitative research, where probable theoretical contributions are often not clear at the beginning of the work and emerge as the project evolves.

It does go beyond listing theories as Breslin et al. (2020) caution against. This can be achieved through exploring new perspectives, evaluating assumptions, refining models, developing constraints, testing hypotheses, and considering systems and other dynamics (Post et al., 2020) Through willingly accepting a deep tension and divergent views in the MAFR literature, some caveats and idiosyncratic behaviour are noted, seeding conceptual advancement (Nadkarni et al., 2018).

The most recent SLRs fail to provide the state of knowledge regarding the theoretical drivers of MAFR. Understanding the current state of knowledge concerning the theories used is paramount. The theory is fragmented; deployed and illustrated theories rarely inform subsequent research. The excessive dependence on only a few theories indicates a theoretical deficiency that requires remediation. (Crawford & Jabbour, 2024). This review contributes to the debate on MAFR by examining the theoretical underpinnings of the MAFR literature.

RQ3. What is the MAFR's future for research?

This is the transformative question which brings all three questions together (Massaro et al., 2016). It is through this question that this SLR will contribute to the evolution of academic discourse.

2.1.3 Source types

I searched for the articles written in English to avoid translation problems and language restrictions (Deepal & Jayamaha, 2022). I refined the search to only peer-reviewed academic journals to ensure the papers' high quality and achieve the highest transparency standards (Kraus et al., 2020; Paul et al., 2021; Zahoor et al., 2020). I excluded grey literature from the review for quality purposes (Kraus et al., 2020). I also limited my search to the final articles for quality purposes.

2.1.4 Source quality

I used the Chartered Association of Business Schools Academic Journal Guide (AJG) and the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) Journal Quality List to measure quality. I also used Scopus and Web of Science to assess the quality of the literature. For all these platforms, only articles ranked high (4*, 4, A*, A, Q1, and Q2) were included, as I wanted to maintain quality throughout. The main objective was to unpack the most original and rigorously produced knowledge, the trademark of highly ranked journals (Kraus et al., 2022).

2.1.5 Acquisition

I used a database-driven approach because it typically covers more literature than journal-driven approaches (Hiebl, 2023). I searched the literature across three databases: Web of Science (WOS), Scopus, and Business Source Complete (EBSCOhost). I chose WOS and Scopus, which are well known for high quality, are the most comprehensive literature sources which aggregate many management journals and span across disciplines (Paul et al., 2021; Pranckutė, 2021; Sauer & Seuring, 2023).

To increase the breadth of my articles, I added EBSCOhost. Also, the more databases, the more balanced the sensitivity and specificity (Siddaway et al., 2025). This database combination also yielded the highest results (Hiebl, 2023; Rousseau, 2024). I searched for all the fields in WOS and EbscoHost. I limited the Scopus search to article title, abstract, and keywords only, because Scopus encompasses a wide variety of subject areas and categories, and it also excludes predatory journals Paul et al., 2021), which would otherwise yield many unwanted results. For instance, it retrieves any other article containing the word "mandatory", even though it is irrelevant to the research query, a similar approach taken by (Korica et al., 2017).

I include only Business, management, and accounting subjects because these areas are closely related to the auditing field (Mattei et al., 2021; Salmon et al., 2023). As Torraco (2005) encourages, I also included tables, endnotes, and appendices in the literature to make the review more impactful.

2.1.6 Search period

I limited the period from 2010 to 2025 because that is when the debate about the audit reforms was revived Wilson et al. (2018) and significant events unfolded, leading to immense research in MAFR. This selected period exceeds the minimum of ten years recommended by Paul & Criado (2020), increasing the review's robustness and comprehensiveness.

2.1.7 Search keywords

I searched for the following keywords: Mandatory Audit Firm Rotation and related terms, such as tenure and partner rotation. Another keyword, partner rotation, was added to avoid missing publications that compare MAFR with MAPR. To prevent irrelevant findings Snyder (2019), I omitted phrases like "voluntary rotation". Boolean operators such as "NOT" and "OR" were included, and "AND" was excluded because it is limiting (Paul et al., 2021). I used the "OR" Boolean operator to increase the search results, and quotation marks were used for precision (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020).

Query in the databases: "Mandatory" OR "Audit" OR "Firm" OR "Rotation" OR "Mandatory" OR "Audit" OR "Firm" OR "Tenure" OR "Mandatory Audit Partner Rotation" AND NOT "Voluntary Rotation". The search yielded a total of 325 articles, comprising Scopus (n=133), Web of Science (n=99), and EBSCOhost (n=93).

2.2 Arranging

This is the second stage of the protocol, which involves organising the literature into codes and frameworks. The second purification stage involves the inclusion and exclusion criteria, which facilitate the subsequent analysis.

2.2.1 Organising codes

Coding involves naming data and is crucial because it allows simplicity, attention to specific data characteristics and reflection with data (Naeem et al., 2023; Nowell et al., 2017). I created a coding framework to develop relevant codes based on my research questions and thematic analysis approach. I used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to code data according to the authors, year of publication, journal, geographic focus, cultural factors addressed, antecedents, decisions, outcomes, theories used, methodology, level of analysis, period (pre- or post-2016), and key findings. The rigour was increased when the exact contents were consistently coded, leading to reproducibility and improved accuracy (Fan et al., 2022).

2.2.2 Purification

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

After the search, I exported the results to working files using RefWorks (RIS) file types. Subsequently, I imported these files into Mendeley Reference Manager, created a collection file, and removed the duplicates. Siddaway et al. (2025) recommend using software to export references to a citation manager to collate the search results and remove duplicates. The results were still not clean, so they were exported to Microsoft Excel, and the duplicates that Mendeley Software could not remove were manually removed. This resulted in 148 articles.

As suggested by Paul & Criado (2020), the first move was to remove articles by reading their titles, abstracts, and lists of keywords. This also involved removing conference papers, books, and predatory titles with the same name, as well as other articles that are not empirical, such as editorials and reviews. Removing nonempirical articles helped ensure the results could be verifiable, data-driven, and based on current knowledge, thereby maintaining research rigour and objectivity.

I removed those written in languages other than English, of which I am unfamiliar, to avoid translation problems (Deepal & Jayamaha, 2022). This first cycle reduced the number to 77 articles. The second stage was to rank the articles according to the journal rating criteria above and remove those ranked low. Finally, I conducted a thorough in-text review, which resulted in the removal of additional articles, yielding a final sample of 50 articles.

2.3 Assessing

This is the final stage of the SPAR-4- SLR methodology. It is centred on evaluation (analysis methods, agenda proposal method, and reporting (reporting conventions, limitations and any source of support, if any). This is the stage at which the 50 articles were evaluated and reported (Paul et al., 2021).

2.3.1 Analysis method

The type of SLR and the research questions determine the methods appropriate for the analysis. Because SLR aims to understand the state of knowledge, it becomes an exploratory, qualitative research approach. Nowell et al. (2017) submit that thematic analysis is a suitable and realistic qualitative tool for evaluating extensive qualitative data sets. Braun & Clarke (2019) posit that this kind of research is about meaning and the meaning making, presenting stories and not necessarily discovering and being empirical to find the truth.

This analysis followed Naeem et al. (2023) six thematic analysis processes of identifying quotations, keywords, coding, themes, conceptualisation and development of a conceptual model. Thematic analysis enables the identification of the themes relevant to research

questions, context, theoretical underpinnings, and other essential issues emerging from the dataset (Roberts et al., 2019).

Approaches involved included observing the phenomena as the reader is collecting and interpreting data, brainstorming what would be codes and themes and making rough statements that will be refined into the final product (Naeem et al., 2023). The themes that result from coding data become the categories for analysis (Roberts et al., 2019). Theme construction involves a robust appreciation of the literature; they cannot be found in the data or analysis, but were retrieved and deduced from the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Thereafter, I did the analysis using inductive approaches.

Rigour (trustworthiness, reliability, and validity) should be reported in any review (Paul et al., 2021). Trustworthiness was established throughout each phase of the thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity were key considerations when evaluating trustworthiness (Lim, Kumar, et al., 2022). I achieved this criterion through discussions with my supervisor (expert check). I employed additional strategies, including data triangulation, researcher triangulation, and persistent observation.

To measure the future research agenda of MAFR, thematic analysis is used for the agenda proposal method (Lim, Rasul, et al., 2022). I addressed this in detail by reviewing question three, which is presented at the end of the article. The results are presented in several tables, figures, and charts to support the literature findings and reporting conventions.

2.3.2 Limitations of the methodology

Like many SLRs, this study is subject to methodological limitations, which must be acknowledged.

Search strategies

This SLR overlooks other search methods, such as the journal-driven approach, seminal work-driven approach, manual searches, and cited research items. Because the journal-driven approach focuses on a predefined set of journals, Hiebl (2023) argues that it is quick, less costly, transparent, and has an audit trail. I could have expanded my sample with backwards snowballing and manual search.. Backward search methods can be complemented with forward searches, which look into new research items (Webster & Watson, 2002). A manual search could have improved the results and helped avoid publication bias (Siddaway et al., 2025).

Publication types

Analysis was only on peer-reviewed articles from high-rated journals. While this enhances credibility, it may result in a limited sample size. Hiebl (2023) cautions that highly valuable

studies may be excluded simply because they are published in lower-ranked or non-indexed journals. Additionally, this approach excludes grey literature, including working papers, books, policy reports, and industry studies. While exclusion improves quality control, it limits the diversity of perspectives and the potential to capture novel insights often found in non-academic publications (Adams et al., 2017; Tranfield et al., 2003).

Database scope

Searches are limited to Web of Science (WOS), Scopus, and EBSCOhost. Despite being the most comprehensive, these databases may have excluded pertinent studies from ProQuest, Google Scholar, SSRN, or regional databases. This restriction may cause coverage gaps.

Language barriers

The search was restricted to papers published exclusively in English, which may have constrained potential insights from omitted articles in other languages.

Time period

This review focuses on studies published between 2010 and 2025. While this timeframe ensures relevance by capturing recent research, it excludes earlier foundational studies that may still hold theoretical and empirical significance.

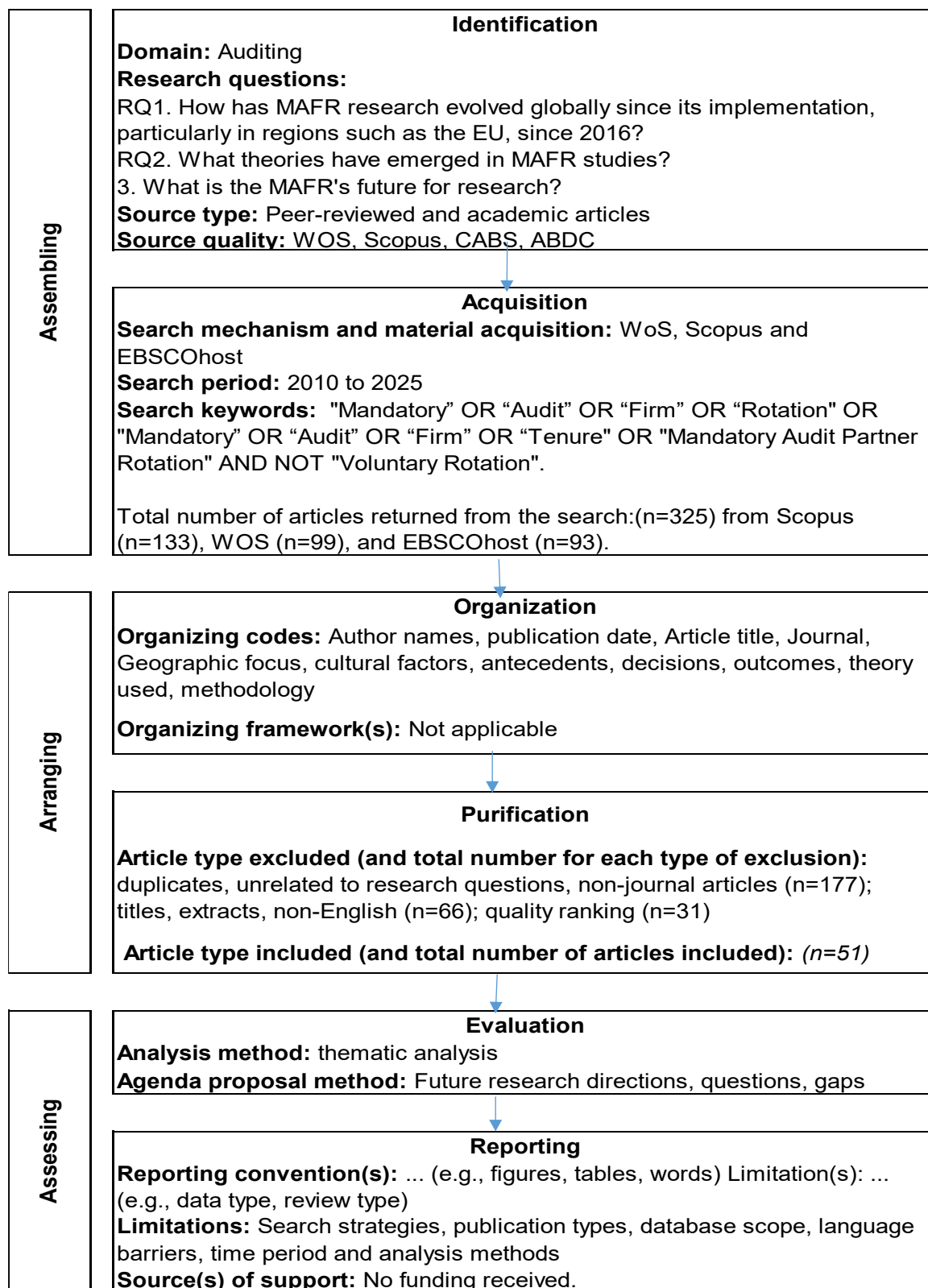
Analysis methods

This SLR employs thematic analysis as the primary method of qualitative synthesis.. Meta-narratives and meta-ethnography could have enhanced empirical findings, research concepts, and hypotheses with pragmatic, pluralistic, and historical insights. (Jones & Gatrell, 2014). Content analysis could have helped assess the knowledge basis and explore topics for which quantitative data are limited (Gaur & Kumar, 2018).

Sources of support

No funding was received, as this review was an academic requirement and based on secondary data.

Figure 1 below summarises the SPAR-4-SLR review methodology I adopted.



Source: Author's own creation

Figure 1: SPAR-4-SLR protocol

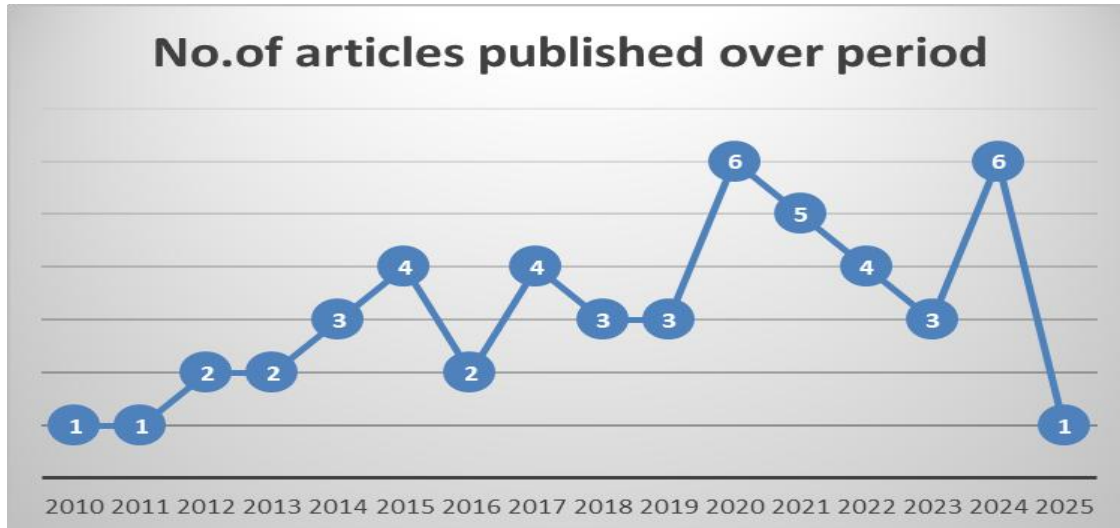
3. Findings from the Literature Review

The results of this review demonstrate the breadth, the depth and divergent views on the research regarding MAFR. In the following sections, I present the descriptive findings from the search results from two perspectives. The descriptive analysis analyses the clear characteristics of the articles (Xia et al., 2018). Firstly, through the publication years, geographical focus, publishing journals, and their ratings, as well as the theories and research methods used (Sauer & Seuring, 2023). Secondly, based on the actual content of the reviewed papers, including research questions, themes, and other nuances.

3.1 Descriptive analysis

3.1.1 The evolution of MAFR over time

Figure 2 below shows the number of articles published from 2010 to 2025, which remained as the final sample after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined above. Publications peaked in 2020 and 2024 with an average of six articles each, while 2021 came in second with five articles. This can be further divided into two critical periods: the pre-2016 period, before the EU implemented MAFR, and the post-implementation period. Figure 2 below illustrates that the number of publications increased significantly after 2016, compared to the period before, indicating a growing interest in research on MAFR.



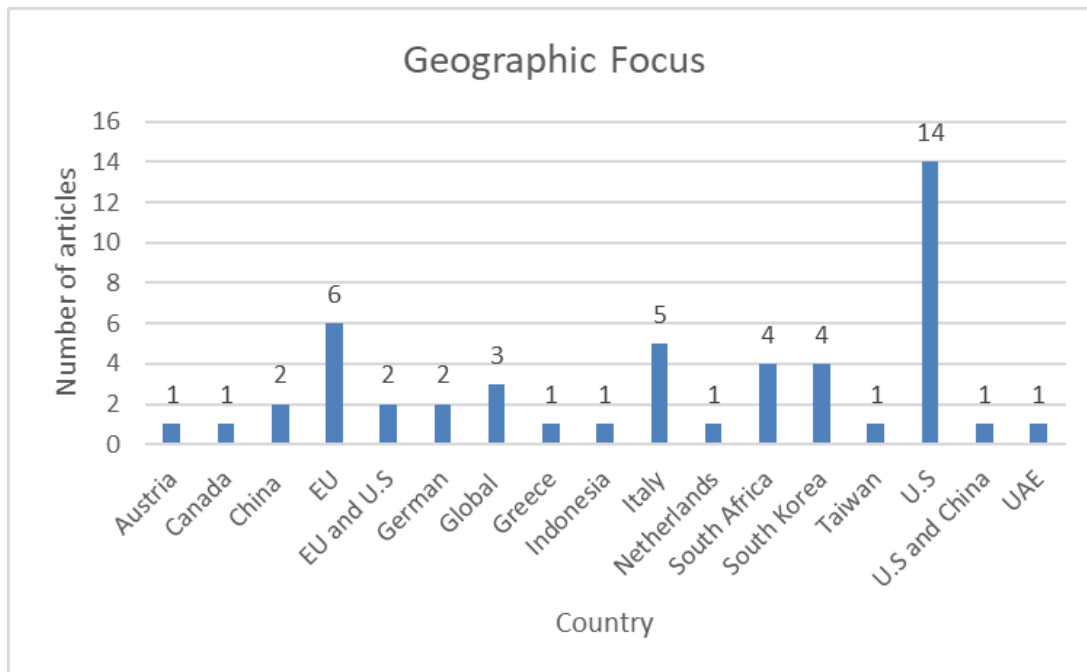
Source: Author's creation

Figure 2: Number of articles published

3.1.2 Geographical focus

Figure 3 below shows the focus of the literature on MAFR. While studies focusing on the U.S. alone (14 papers) appear to dominate, the combination of EU literature coverage and other

individual EU member states, however, surpasses this number to make 15 papers. Nonetheless, the difference is trivial.



Source: Author's Creation

Figure 3: Geographical focus of the literature

3.1.3 Publication journals and their ranking

Table 2: Publishing journals and quality ranking

	Number of articles	Ranking			
		AJG2024	ABDC 2022	WoS	Scimago
Accounting Forum	1	3	B	Q2	Q1
Accounting Historians Journal	1	2	B		Q1
Accounting Horizons	2	3	A	Q2	Q1
Accounting in Europe	1			Q1	Q1
Accounting Research Journal	1	2	B		Q2
Asian Review of Accounting	1	2	B		Q2
Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory	2			Q2	
Australian Accounting Review	1	2	B	Q1	Q2
European Accounting Review	3			Q2	Q1

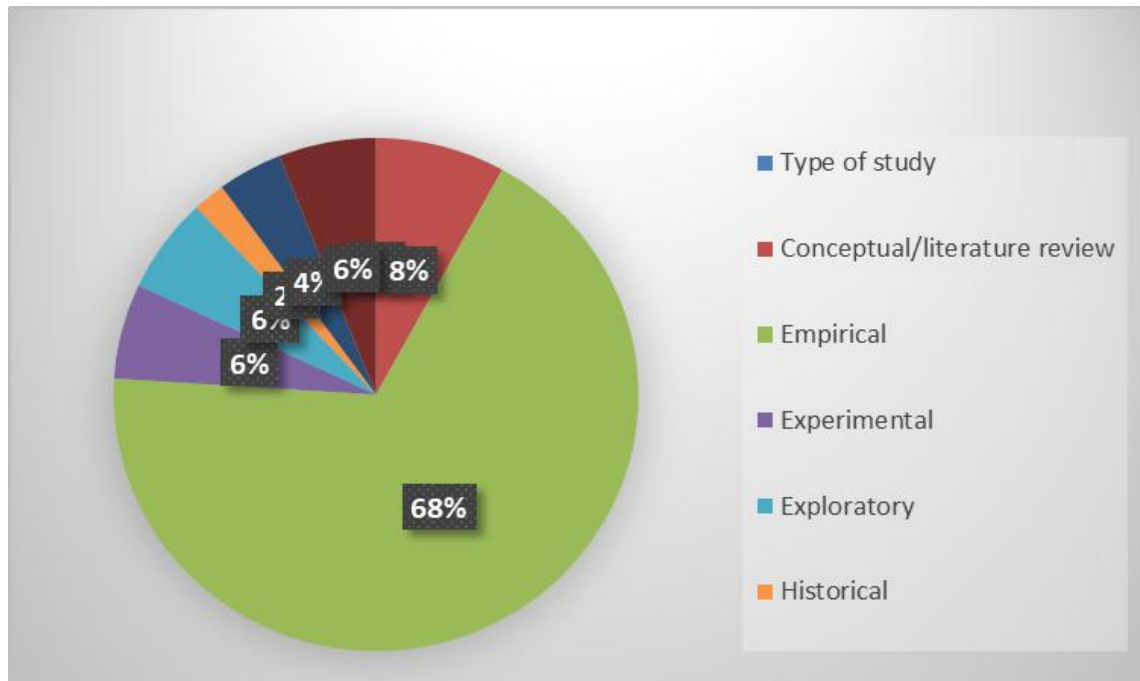
European Business Organisation Law Review	1			Q1	Q1
International Journal of Auditing	4	2	A		Q1
International Journal of Disclosure and Governance	1	2	B		Q2
Journal of Accounting Auditing & Finance	3	A			Q1
Journal of Accounting in Emerging Economies	1	2	B		Q1
Journal of Financial Reporting and Accounting	1			Q1	Q1
Journal of International Accounting Research	1	2	A		
Journal of International Accounting Auditing and Taxation	2		Q1		Q2
Journal of International Financial Management & Accounting	2	2	B		Q1
Journal of Management and Governance	1	1	C		Q1
Journal of Management control	1				Q2
Managerial Auditing Journal	5	2	A	Q2	Q1
Oeconomia copernicana	1			Q1	Q1
OR Spectrum	1				Q1
Research in Accounting Regulation	1		B		
Journal of Risk and Financial Management	1		Q2		Q2
Sustainability	2				Q1
The Accounting Review	6	4*	A*		Q1
The British Accounting Review	1	3	A*		Q1
The Journal of Corporate Accounting & Finance	1				Q2

Source: Author's creation

Table 2 above shows the total number of journals from which I retrieved all the articles based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria I used. From the above, all the articles are at least level 3 in AJG or Q2, according to Scopus and WoS, as a minimum. Which, as a golden rule, the ranking from "A" to "C" should be embraced (Kraus et al., 2020). As Hiebl (2023) notes, it is not always possible to include the complete list of articles I reviewed due to space limitations; however, Hiebl (2023) further emphasises the disclosure of the research items, as shown in Table 2.

The remaining articles cited in this review, except for the 50 articles mentioned, are used for other purposes, including during the development of the protocol stage.

3.1.4 Types of studies



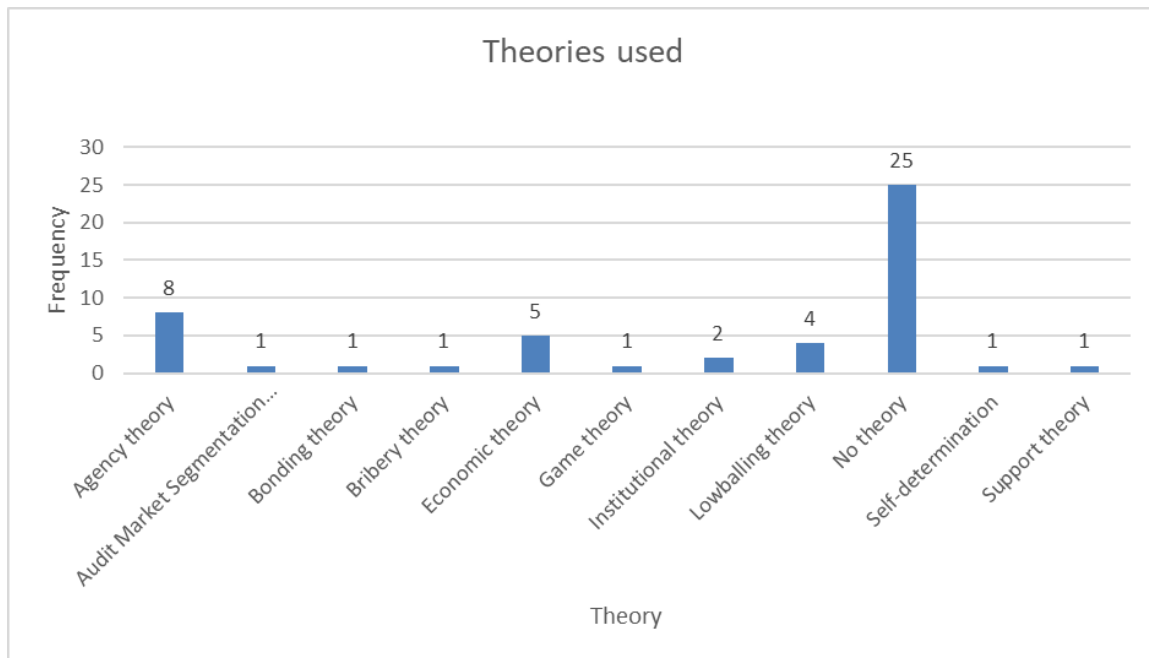
Source: Author's creation

Figure 4: Type of studies used

Figure 4 shows that 68% (34 out of 50) of the articles are empirical, indicating that the research in MAFR studies leans more heavily on data collection and real-world experience. These are followed by conceptual studies, which account for 8% of the total. As I have already articulated, only two articles (4%) fall under SLRs, strengthening the observation that MAFR is still an intermediary study.

3.1.5 Common theories used

The second research question of my systematic literature review (SLR) inquires about the development of theoretical frameworks in the literature. According to the review, a total of 25 theoretical frameworks are identified among 50 papers. Figure 5 below shows that 50% (25 papers) do not mention any theory, while 16% (eight papers) applied one or more theories. A 25% rate is high, indicating a theoretical gap in the literature. The most commonly used theories are agency theory, accounting for 16% (eight papers), lowballing theories with 8% (four papers), and economic theory, which accounts for 10% (five papers). The various theoretical underpinnings will be discussed in detail in the coming chapter.



Source: Own creation

Figure 5: Theories used

3.2 Actual content of the papers on key antecedents

The first research question focuses on the development of MAFR in places where it has been implemented. 2016 was an exciting period because that is when a primary jurisdiction, such as the EU, ordered the implementation of MAFR. The discourse on MAFR revolves around three main antecedent areas: audit market concentration, audit quality, and auditor independence. The following sections will delve into the details of the findings on these three core constructs in the MAFR literature.

3.2.1 Audit market concentration

In most countries, the non-Big Four audit firms face barriers to entry into the audit market, especially the audit of the public interest entities (PIE) (Bleibtreu & Stefani, 2018). The "Big 4" refers to the four leading global firms: Deloitte, PwC, KPMG, and EY. In the EU audit market, the Big Four's market share exceeds 95% (Garcia-Blandon et al., 2020). The regulators' concerns are to dilute the high concentration in this market to manage systemic risk.

A failure by any of these great blocks could result in serious repercussions in the financial system, hence the move towards deconcentration (Bleibtreu & Stefani, 2018). The main motive is also to open the playing field and create opportunities for mid-tier and other small firms to compete with these giants (Köhler et al., 2016). In South Africa, the motive was also to respond to the government's calls for black economic empowerment policies (Harber & Maroun, 2020)

Unlike other MAFR antecedents, which give inconclusive mixed views, the review on market concentration yields nearly identical results. Of the 50 papers I reviewed, 30% (15 papers) explicitly discuss the MAFR's impact on market reaction, whilst the remaining 70% (35 papers) do not engage with the subject. Upon further analysis, I divided these 15 papers into two groups. The first 14 papers find that implementing MAFR will not decrease market concentration as thought, but will instead exacerbate it (Bleibtreu & Stefani, 2018; Cameran, Jere, et al., 2015; de Jong et al., 2020; Friedrich et al., 2023; Garcia-Blandon et al., 2020; Harber et al., 2020; Harber & Maroun, 2020; Hennes et al., 2014; Kamarudin et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2024; Polychronidou et al., 2020; Reid & Carcello, 2017; Santos-Jaén et al., 2023; Velte, 2012).

The reasons commonly advanced include the fact that the rotation is likely to occur within these Big Four firms, as smaller firms may lack the capacity to audit larger, more complex companies (de Jong et al., 2020; Harber & Maroun, 2020; Reid & Carcello, 2017). And that the market structure is a cause of economic factors, prompting the public to call for improved regulation and oversight, as well as increased compliance costs for auditors (de Jong et al., 2020). Therefore, non-Big Four firms may struggle to comply with these regulations, as they often lack established networks. De Jong et al. (2020) make an example of Grant Thornton UK LLP, where they announced their departure from the market because of a lack of muscle to compete with the Big Four.

Another observation is that MAFR will cause the Big-4 companies to rotate among themselves, creating an oligopolistic market (Velte, 2012). They are likely to be selected because of their high-quality work. The other obstacle is considered to be the high costs of entry into the market, as auditing large public interest companies requires compliance with regulatory requirements. This makes it cumbersome for small firms, which do not have a global network, to compete with Big Four companies, creating structural constraints (Cameran et al., 2015; de Jong et al., 2020; Garcia-Blandon et al., 2020; Hennes et al., 2014; Kamarudin et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2024; Polychronidou et al., 2020; Reid & Carcello, 2017).

Audit market concentration has been highly criticised for promoting lowballing by the Big Four audit firms (Velte, 2012). Lowballing is a pricing strategy where auditors set lower prices during tendering processes to win the client. The goal is to secure an appointment initially and negotiate a fee escalation later (Harber et al., 2020). Due to having the resources and experience to audit high capital-intensive companies, entry into the market remains challenging (Velte, 2012). This is the penetration strategy employed by the Big Four, rendering

the compulsory rotation of auditors a futile exercise (Bleibtreu & Stefani, 2018; Cameran et al., 2015; Harber et al., 2020).

Whereas Santos-Jaén et al. (2023) further posit that audit market concentration is not necessarily the problem, if quality is maintained, but rather emphasise more on ethical culture over imposed regulatory changes. And lastly, the literature finds the joint audits as an often possible intervention on market deconcentration (Hassan et al., 2024; Quick, 2012). Secondly, there is the group that takes a neutral stance. They argue that the introduction of MAFR, including its antecedents, does not necessarily bring either positives or negatives associated with such a rotation (Horton et al., 2018).

Firms are unlikely to dismiss Big Four auditors even if material misstatements are found in the financial statements (Hennes et al., 2014). In contrast, these other non-Big Four auditors are easily dismissed. Consequently, showing market rigidity caused by the Big Four dominance. Therefore, Hennes et al. (2014) remain the only ones so far to corroborate the regulators' expectations that MAFR will effectively dilute the audit concentrated market, paving the way for smaller firms.

3.2.2 Audit quality

Audit quality is the most studied MAFR antecedent. It has been defined using proxies, as it lacks a universal definition (DeFond & Zhang, 2014). These proxies include, but are not limited to, abnormal accruals, misstatements, Key Audit Matters, working capital accruals, audit fees, audit hours or effort, risks, timeliness, earnings and the likelihood of issuing qualified reports.

Out of the sample, I find that 42% (21 papers) oppose MAFR based on quality. These papers reveal that implementing MAFR will not necessarily improve audit quality. Approximately 26% (13 papers) demonstrate a positive response to aligning with the regulator's call for the MAFR. 24% (12 papers) do not discuss this topic, while the remaining 8% (4 papers) take a neutral stance, indicating the ongoing, inconclusive, and conflicting views on the MAFR topic.

The arguments advanced on why MAFR cannot be seen as an antidote to poor audit quality stem from a myriad of reasons. The most common concerns include the fact that imposing MAFR increased the cost for both clients and audit firms, without an increase in audit quality (Cameran et al., 2015). The primary bone of contention is that introducing compulsory tenure limits undermines the client-auditor relationship, which has a direct impact on quality (Hohenfels, 2016; Mali & Lim, 2018). They find that auditors often miss identifying issues due

to inadequate experience with the client, which increases the well-known detection risk, and they end up relying on the client's representations (Kwon et al., 2014).

Adding to the argument Cameran et al. (2015) find that the quality of the audited profits is lower in the initial three years after rotation compared to later years. The primary cause is the learning curve effect, which improves with time. They also found that in the later years, the auditors have a motive to clean up the financial statements before rotation (Cameran et al., 2015).

Brooks et al. (2017) estimate the rotational point considered balanced for the auditor tenure. They use the turning point, which is the point at which audit quality begins to deteriorate, and the reference point, which is the point at which they believe the MAFR should start (Brooks et al., 2017). One key quality measure that they use to strengthen their argument is investor protection. Based on their hypothesis, they posit that the reference point is longer for countries with strong investor protection, which, in turn, reduces the client-auditor relationship argumentatively (Brooks et al., 2017). Consequently, premised on this alone, conclude that MAFR is unnecessary.

Reid & Carcello (2017) add to the discourse, arguing that the one-size-fits-all approach is inappropriate for implementing MAFR. They say that one crucial factor to consider is the auditor's characteristics, especially the size. They use "absolute value of abnormal accruals" as a proxy for quality. Based on their analysis, they conclude that markets react negatively to the dates of MAFR possibilities (Reid & Carcello, 2017). They also find that the Big Four may often have industry experts involved in the audits and therefore cannot compromise audit quality, which may not be the case for non-Big Four firms (Reid & Carcello, 2017). Thus, every case should be handled separately.

Another interesting submission made by Aschauer & Quick (2018) is that, where a regime already precludes the auditor from offering non-audit services, such as taxation work, MAFR does not improve audit quality. They argue that banning auditors from providing non-audit services improves audit quality; therefore, rotation reduces auditor-client knowledge, resulting in opposing effects (Aschauer & Quick, 2018). Bleibtreu & Stefani (2018) use the specific client importance, scaled by the ratio between the contribution received from that client and the total auditors' earnings. They argue that MAFR prioritises strengthening auditors' independence at the expense of the client by downplaying the client's importance, resulting in a conflict in achieving this goal (Bleibtreu & Stefani, 2018).

On the other hand, regarding opposing views, the literature finds that the causes of poor quality include a lack of communication between the predecessor and successor auditors

Kalanjati et al., 2019). They link effective communication with improved specific client knowledge because such knowledge is transmitted effectively. Key to Kalanjati et al. (2019) study is that, with individual partners, there is improved communication and transfer of knowledge. Therefore, the firms fail in quality because, during rotation, there is no effective communication between the incoming and outgoing auditors. This is where the regulator should strengthen their regulation, as noted by Kalanjati et al. (2019).

Adding to the discourse and perhaps as one of the few studies conducted in Africa, Harber & Maroun (2020) concur that MAFR will not improve audit quality. Their submission is premised on several concerns, such as the additional time, effort, and costs required to explain their business to the new auditors, as they would be unfamiliar with it. They instead propose strong sound governance processes, detailed guidelines on engagement quality control reviews for auditors, and, lastly, a robust review of monitoring and inspection of files by the regulator Harber & Maroun, 2020).

Garcia-Blandon et al. (2020), contrary to MAFR, also reject the notion that audit decreases with longer tenures. They instead contend that quality even improves for firms that pass the 10-year or 20-year tenure. Mazza et al. (2025) hold the same view that short-horizon adds to lower quality, observable through higher proportions of strange accruals. On the same rotation length, the main argument is that the regulators should consider reducing the frequency of auditor switches because they have an impact on audit quality and cause opinion shopping (Cowle et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2024).

Garcia-Blandon et al. (2020) view MAFR contributing to audit firms increasing audit fees to recoup their expenses, resulting in higher auditing costs. They use three quality surrogates: discretionary accruals, firms that achieve or forgo profit thresholds, and accounting restatements. And these three work well over a period, not just a short one (Garcia-Blandon et al., 2020). The main argument against MAFR is the loss of client knowledge and experience, audit delays, disturbance, interruptions and commitments on time (Burnett et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2022; Dordzhieva, 2022; Harber et al., 2020). Dordzhieva (2022) further cautions that an inadvertent mistake made by an inexperienced auditor may result in a precarious situation if the auditor anticipates a penalty upon the revelation of the error.

Horton et al. (2021) take a different approach to argue that earnings as a quality measure improve when rotations affect partners only; they do not find any marginal benefits with firm rotations. Continuing on the same debates on MAFR, Santos-Jaén et al. (2023) take it from the theoretical perspective. They argue that, contrary to the theory of influence, which postulates that a prolonged client-auditor relationship may jeopardise audit quality, long auditor rotation, in their view, improves the credibility of the audit (Santos-Jaén et al., 2023).

They go on to relate higher audit fees to enhanced financial reporting quality, lending credence to segmentation theory (Santos-Jaén et al., 2023).

Just as with those who oppose MAFR based on audit quality, several reasons are advanced in support of it in the 13 papers I reviewed. The most popularly cited term by MAFR proponents is the "Fresh Look" view that comes from the new auditors (Federsel, 2025; Kim et al., 2019; Polychronidou et al., 2020). Kim et al. (2019) further, state that the cost of equity remains negative when considering the industry effect.

One of the most material claims submitted by the adversaries of MAFR is that it results in high switching costs, a position which Hennes et al. (2014) oppose vehemently. They assert that new auditors often discover material restatements that must be made in the financial statements following rotation (Hennes et al., 2014). Notably, the market reacts optimistically with the dismissals of the auditor following such restatements, regardless of the costs associated with such dismissals.

Building on this position, Corbella et al. (2015) reveal that MAFR helps increase audit quality work without the incremental cost of audit fees for companies audited by non-Big Four auditors. This observation happens only to non-Big 4, with the Big Four only audit fees dropping (Corbella et al., 2015). Extending the findings, Bowlin et al. (2015), premise their discussions on the honesty or dishonesty of the managers. They contrast that if the manager is honest, MAFR will increase audit quality because of the sound judgments such a manager will make. However, managers' dishonesty in audit judgements can reduce the audit quality (Bowlin et al., 2015).

Raising a new nuance to the discourse, de Jong et al. (2020) find that MAFR began to be rejected because people were afraid of the unknown. They posit that different stakeholders, including auditors, consider MAFR attractive now that it has been implemented (de Jong et al., 2020; Harber et al., 2024). These dissenting views on MAFR are exaggerated and may have even been expressed by those who lack experience in MAFR practices (Harber et al., 2024). The misstatements are only highly prevalent in the first years of the audits (de Jong et al., 2020). Malagila et al. (2020) introduce the element of trust into the discourse and assert that MAFR is essential for audit quality, thereby boosting confidence in the process.

Extending this argument, Kamarudin et al. (2022) combine MAFR with the strength of International Financial Reporting Standards and International Auditing Standards to enunciate that they all play a pivotal role in fostering audit quality. Auditors, through their work, have promised the public to provide high-quality services, ensuring that these services remain unchanged due to regulatory changes (Friedrich et al., 2023). Friedrich et al. (2023) use theoretical considerations to advance the discussions. They argue that markets are already

characterised by high audit quality work and predict that auditors from the supply side will have motivations to provide high-quality work (Friedrich et al., 2023).

Despite these tensions in the scholarship, some studies suggest the middle ground. They find non-proportionality at different point intervals when measuring audit quality; it increases at one point and decreases, giving mixed results (Jenkins & Vermeer, 2013). They therefore conclude that either side's argument may hold (Dao & Pham, 2014; Jenkins & Vermeer, 2013). Horton et al. (2018) concluding on this discourse, find that, unlike in the US, investors in the EU do not consider MAFR as a costly intervention and did not react materially to MAFR proposals. Brooks et al. (2022) also find that MAFR may increase perceived or actual audit quality even though it will decrease corporate social responsibility reporting quality.

3.2.3 Auditor independence

Auditor independence is regarded as the hallmark of the auditing profession, as it underpins the public's trust in the testifying function (Quick, 2012). Auditor independence becomes the second most studied antecedent in the literature. I find that out of the sample of 50 articles, 24 papers, which account for 48% do not comment on the topic. In contrast, 28% (14 papers) comment negatively towards MAFR as an antidote to improved Auditor independence. Only 18% (Nine papers) comment positively about MAFR as the tool to enhance auditor independence, and 6% (3 papers) develop a neutral stance.

Offering a critical lens on MAFR, Velte (2012) find that rotating external auditors will not achieve independence; instead, it will come at the expense of disrupted learning and inexperience. Their main argument is that the EU did not embark on either theoretically or empirically established economic grounds (Velte, 2012). The audit committees, as essential stakeholders, also opposed MAFR because they conceive it as a threat to their own agency role, which they play on behalf of the shareholders (Fontaine et al., 2016). They believe that MAFR weakens their governance power and ability to make decisions on appointments and the rotation of auditors (Fontaine et al., 2016).

Investors react negatively to the deliberations of MAFR, as they believe any gains, such as strengthened independence, would be offset by related direct or indirect costs (Aschauer & Quick, 2018; Reid & Carcello, 2017). Long tenures facilitate a more profound understanding of the client and experience; therefore, there is no evidence that short tenures will impair auditor independence (Aschauer & Quick, 2018; Garcia-Blandon et al., 2020). Bleibtreu & Stefani (2018) put more emphasis on client importance, arguing that these measures create direct tensions between client importance and the auditor's goal of maintaining independence. Therefore, there is no correlation, and implementing MAFR becomes unnecessary.

Contributing to this debate, Kalanjati et al. (2019) add that Pseudo-rotations also impair auditor independence. These are the rotations that occur when a firm is rotated; however, it is found that the previous audit partner, who was working on the just-rotated audit firm, is now working on the new firm Kalanjati et al. (2019). Taking this debate further, Harber & Maroun (2020) take a more nuanced approach to utter that existing structures, such as audit committees, regulators, and auditors, should be equipped for independence.

Disputing the assumed benefits of MAFR, Horton et al. (2021) find that firm rotations do not have an incremental effect. They contend that in a jurisdiction like the EU, characterised by dual rotations, what works is rather a partner rotation than firm rotations. Chen et al. (2022) find that auditor competency alone surpasses any other concerns about independence relating to prolonged rotations.

Taking the debate further Dordzhieva (2022) posit that the compulsory rotations for now and the probable prospective appointments weaken the overall disciplinary effect. She argues that MAFR makes market reactions diminish because the auditor misses the chance to build an enduring connection with the client (Dordzhieva, 2022).

MAFR unintentionally undermines that independence, which is supposed to improve by eliminating a valuable indicator: the predecessor tenure that helps build trust and reinforces dedication in the audit process (Burnett et al., 2024). Culminating the debate, Lee et al. (2024) find that MAFR may increase opinion shopping, thus negating the intended benefits, as effective opinion shopping could be a sign of a compromised auditor.

In contrast to the previous arguments, Daniels & Booker (2011) find that loan officers believe MAFR improves views on auditor independence. In the same vein, the literature suggests that investors also reckon that lengthy auditor tenures impair the auditor's independence; they find that rotation brings a fresh look effect (de Jong et al., 2020; Federsel, 2025; Friedrich et al., 2023; Harber et al., 2024; Hohenfels, 2016; Kim et al., 2019; Malagila et al., 2020; Polychronidou et al., 2020).

3.3 Theorising MAFR

Agency is the predominant theory in the MAFR literature, with some papers employing it in conjunction with other theories or applying it alone. The purpose of the audit is to enhance investor trust in the reliability of the financial statements and minimise agency costs by limiting managers' ability to manipulate reporting (Hennes et al., 2014). Therefore, as agency costs

rise, the need for audit quality also strengthens (Hennes et al., 2014). The auditor's role is to act as a "double agent" between the board and the shareholders (Velte, 2012). This means that the auditor's role is to protect the interests of the shareholders. MAFR functions as a bonding tool for fixing agency issues (Kim et al., 2019).

In addition, the auditor's contribution appears from his help for the audit committee regarding the internal oversight of management (Velte, 2012). The agency theory is the foundation on which auditor independence stems. Auditors can only achieve the goal of minimising agency hurdles when they are independent, skilled, and provide high-quality audits (Kalanjati et al., 2019).

Expanding more on the discourse, Velte (2012) and Cameran et al. (2015) add more depth by showing how lowballing may further worsen auditor-to-client relations in MAFR developments. He notes that asymmetric information distribution allows auditors to negotiate low prices to win clients, which might lead to report manipulation or opinion shopping, compromising independence (Velte, 2012).

Issues commonly associated with lowballing include the tendency for auditors to subsequently charge premium fees and generate substantial profits after several years of audit work, potentially resulting in economic ties between the auditors (Cameran et al., 2015; Friedrich et al., 2023; Velte, 2012). Statistically speaking, the findings indicate a lowballing of 33%, which is made up of a fee discount of 16% and extra hours, which remained the same, which are 17% more in the initial engagement year (Cameran et al., 2015). This advantageous pricing in the final year results in an anomalous 7.4% increase in fees, which is a cost to MAFR (Cameran et al., 2015).

Another problem is that these increased costs will set the fees for future audits, increasing the market's entry costs (Velte, 2012). This has overarching effects even on audit quality throughout rotation, as high unusual accruals are noted (Cameran et al., 2015). Lowballing theory transitions into economic theory because the auditor would have enjoyed the quasi rents and would want to remain with the client, and this has an adverse effect on the auditor's independence (Ghosh & Siriviriyakul, 2018; Velte, 2012).

Economic theory is also prevalent in the literature. It states that the audit firm has an incentive to manipulate the pricing and earnings of the audit assignments (Ghosh & Siriviriyakul, 2018). As the clients grow, the auditor may escalate fees to reflect the growth and also because they anticipate losses resulting from rotation legislation, which will be reflected in the MAFR cost (Ghosh & Siriviriyakul, 2018).

Economic bonding also arises from long tenures, which can impair independence (Dordzhieva, 2022; Ghosh & Siriviriyakul, 2018). Therefore, limiting autonomy in auditor choice, controlled MAFR may modify economic benefits for both the auditor and the client (Lee et al., 2024). Another interesting theoretical lens explored in the literature on economic bonding is that of switching costs. High switching costs establish a financial connection between the auditor and the client, which can impair auditor independence (Dordzhieva, 2022). She finds that the auditor may decide to remain with the bad client if the switching costs are elevated, and that may also harm independence (Dordzhieva, 2022).

Contributing to the discourse, Federsel (2025) brings institutional theory, which contrasts with the earlier discussions. He posits that because institutions themselves have the same policies, the same internal rules and the same cultural norms, rotations of the same partner within one institution do not bring a fresh look (Federsel, 2025). Therefore, MAFR, based on institutional theory, may help to overcome these challenges. This is a contrasting view given that the critics of MAFR centre their arguments on the lack of institutional memory, leading to poor quality audits (Brooks et al., 2022).

Approaching this issue from a different angle, Fontaine et al. (2016) further contribute by discussing MAFR in relation to self-determination theory. They use self-determination theory to understand the behaviour of the audit committee members towards MAFR implementation. Using self-determination theory Fontaine et al. (2016) find the audit committee members opposing MAFR implementation. They believe that MAFR will strip them of their shareholder-embedded powers, rendering them less autonomous and less authoritative, and argue that their own decisions are effective in ensuring auditor independence and objectivity (Fontaine et al., 2016).

Extending the debate, Bowlin et al. (2015) linked the support theory to the discourse. In their views, the support theory states that an assessment frame focused on honesty or dishonesty will cause the auditors to overrate managers' honesty or dishonesty, subject to the auditors' self-perception as knowledgeable in assessing managers in this manner (Bowlin et al., 2015). So, depending on either assessment, MAFR may decrease or increase audit effort, ultimately affecting audit quality

Rounding off the discourse, Santos-Jaén et al. (2023) additionally, incorporate the theory of market segmentation into the debate. They argue that extended auditor rotation results in higher audit fees, which instantly increases the quality of the financial reports and therefore oppose MAFR (Santos-Jaén et al., 2023). This theory and position contradict several theories, like bonding theory and bribery theory, which stipulate that high fees compromise the auditor's independence (Santos-Jaén et al., 2023).

4. Synthesis of literature review

This section answers the main question, so what, based on the reported findings from the previous chapter. I unpack and critique the literature based on the three main questions: a) How has MAFR research evolved globally since its implementation, particularly in regions such as the EU, since 2016? b) What theories have emerged in MAFR studies? c) What is the MAFR's future for research? The analysis has yielded salient findings about the body of knowledge on MAFR and future directions for research.

RQ1. How has MAFR research evolved globally since its implementation, particularly in regions such as the EU, since 2016?

I analysed the literature, premised on three core themes, for MAFR scholarship, which are a) Audit market concentration, b) Audit quality and c) auditor independence. The review indicates that the literature has expanded significantly since the last review was conducted.

4.1 Descriptive analysis discussion

4.1.1 Publication period

The number of articles published since 2010 has grown exponentially. Figure 2 illustrates the increase in publications and the corresponding rate of growth. The trend is not straight, though; there is a steady increase from 2010 to 2015, followed by some upward and downward shifts from 2015 to 2019, a spike in 2019 to 2020, and a sudden fall thereafter to 2023. This lack of overall consistency can be attributed to several factors.

The increase in 2010 followed two major economies, the US and the EU, expressing interest in MAFR policy and releasing a concept for public comment on whether it should be implemented. Countries like South Korea once implemented MAFR from 2006 to 2010, and dropped it (Kwon et al., 2014). Many studies since then have made South Korea a unique setting for their case, as they sought to understand the reasons for this reversal and to have insights into the effect of post-MAFR implementation on influencing current debates (Kim et al., 2019; Kwon et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2024; Mali & Lim, 2018).

There is also a spike from 2019 to 2020, which could be attributed to the transition from speculative research, typically conducted through proxies, to the use of actual MAFR data grounded in implementation. After 2016, both the EU and the US had decided on directions to take, so many papers were now published based on actual results, not just hypotheses. The decline from 2020 to 2023 could be attributed to the impact of COVID-19, which led to a

scarcity in various areas, including global research, as attention was diverted to the pandemic itself. This view may indeed hold because we see immediate renewed interest post that period.

4.1.2 Geographical focus

The geographical focus, as shown in Figure 3, indicates a high research output in Western countries. This is to be expected, considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the studies included in the literature review. Most journals from emerging countries are low-ranked journals and fail to meet high-quality ranking criteria.

Another reason could be that these two economies have been the pioneers in MAFR policy, hence most publications in that region. In 2016, the EU issued directives to member countries to implement MAFR, so the research in this area can be expected to grow exponentially. The sharp difference in opinion on these two powerful jurisdictions also contributes significantly to the literature, as the scholarship seeks to understand why they differ so sharply (Bleibtreu & Stefani, 2018). So, because the auditor rotation is not mandatory in most places outside these regions, it reduces academic research on the topic.

Another notable finding is that the literature on MAFR is more prevalent in countries where it was once implemented or is still in use. Looking at Italy, South Africa, and South Korea, these are the countries where MAFR once existed, or, in Italy's case, still exists. South Africa is the only country in Africa that represents the continent, while South Korea represents the Asian countries. For South Africa, since MAFR was set aside in 2023 following court rulings, perhaps it is a good time to reflect on and assess the EU in terms of whether MAFR addresses the calls it was intended to answer.

Countries like Austria, Canada, Greece, Indonesia, Netherlands, Taiwan, and the United Arab Emirates have only one paper per country. Germany has only two papers, whereas it is a distinctive Continental European jurisdiction (Friedrich et al., 2023). For non-EU countries, this could mean a lack of research in such countries, which is often driven by priorities, resources, and interest. While this disparity may be expected in emerging economies, these statistics suggest a growing global interest in the topic and present opportunities for future research.

4.1.3 Publishing journals and quality ranking

Among the publications returned by this search, *The Accounting Review*, published by the American Accounting Association, accounts for 12% (six articles) of the total sample. In contrast, the *Managerial Auditing Journal*, published by Emerald Publishing Limited, makes up 10% (five articles). Followed lastly by the *International Journal of Auditing*, with four articles

making up 8%. These other journals, approximately 19 in number, each provide one article, while seven provide two or three articles.

The Accounting Review is a top-tier journal; therefore, a 12% representation rate indicates that a reasonable position in the literature stems from high academic platforms, which are influential. The same goes for the Managerial Auditing Journal. Geographically, most study originates from Western countries, suggesting that other locations may have more to learn about the construct.

4.1.4 Type of studies and research methods

Most studies were empirical, accounting for 68% of the sample. This is not surprising given the search criteria of my SLR. The findings revealed that archival data dominated the other research, a finding consistent with prior studies. There were limited conceptual, experimental and exploratory studies creating a gap for future research.

4.2 Themes discussion

This section transitions from descriptive discussions to a more critical examination based on the content of the articles. It explains how the articles I reviewed collectively inform the understanding of MAFR nuances, especially in its intended and unintended results. The discussions will also delve further into unpacking the common themes noted under each antecedent and highlighting the intersections, complements and contradictions of the literature.

4.2.1 Audit market concentration

Florio (2024) conducted an SLR that identified only seven papers discussing MAFR. This SLR has doubled the figure since I identified 15 articles that discuss audit market concentration as a key subjection of MAFR policy. The primary objective of this initiative is to create an open market where all audit firms, including both the Big Four and non-Big Four firms, can compete for clients. The regulators believe the current oligopoly market is discriminatory, as only the Big Four have access and hold a high share of the market.

Audit Market concentration is one area of interest or focal point in this review because it was the area least explored in the past. This SLR find that instead of answering the call through fostering competition, the discourse inadvertently strengthens it by favouring the Big Four firms. Consistent with previous research, 14 out of 15 papers take this stance.

There is a consensus on scholarship that MAFR will not achieve its intended objectives, but it will instead worsen the status (Bleibtreu & Stefani, 2018; Cameran et al., 2015; de Jong et al., 2020; Friedrich et al., 2023; Garcia-Blandon et al., 2020; Harber et al., 2020; Harber & Maroun,

2020; Hennes et al., 2014; Kamarudin et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2024; Polychronidou et al., 2020; Reid & Carcello, 2017; Santos-Jaén et al., 2023; Velte, 2012). There is only one study which takes a neutral stance (Hennes et al., 2014).

Common themes in the Audit Market Concentration antecedent

Rotation within the Big Four

There is a recurrence in the scholarship that, while it was thought that the MAFR would open entry to non-Big Four firms, the results are the opposite. This trend indicates that MAFR is reinforcing, rather than weakening, established market structures (de Jong et al., 2020; Harber & Maroun, 2020; Reid & Carcello, 2017). The cause for this can be attributed to several factors, including market structures, capacity issues, and complex company structures.

Non-Big Four firms often struggle to audit large, complex clients and lack a global reach that would enable them to benefit from resource sharing and capacity building (de Jong et al., 2020; Harber & Maroun, 2020; Reid & Carcello, 2017). This development undermines the policy's goal of diversifying the audit market and restricts the competitive advantages of rotation. These results have significant scholarly implications, as they raise the question of whether MAFR can effectively alter market dynamics in its current form.

High market entry costs

The common finding across these three antecedents is that MAFR is costly to all stakeholders, including the cost of entering the market (Cameran et al., 2015; de Jong et al., 2020; Garcia-Blandon et al., 2020; Hennes et al., 2014; Kamarudin et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2024; Polychronidou et al., 2020; Reid & Carcello, 2017). These costs include compliance costs, market structural costs, and tendering costs resulting from rotation. The Big Four have created their oligopoly market, and mid-tier firms struggle to climb the ladder and penetrate due to their small size. This synthesis highlights key areas for further investigation, particularly in adapting regulatory frameworks to support new entrants.

Low-balling practices

This practice also appears to raise concerns, as market players set prices very low to win clients, thereby defeating the MAFR's purpose (Bleibtreu & Stefani, 2018; Cameran et al., 2015; Harber et al., 2020; Velte, 2012). These findings suggest a fresh examination of the interplay between audit pricing procedures, rotation rules, and market fairness.

4.2.2 Audit quality

Under audit quality, I divide the synthesis into two perspectives, which oppose and support MAFR. I also categorise the discussions into emerging trends in the discourse under each of the two aforementioned categories.

Opinions Contrary to MAFR

Client–Auditor relationship interruption

The discourse on this theme reveals that MAFR introduces interruptions to the long-standing client-auditor relationship, which ultimately has direct repercussions for audit quality. The argument is that this results in a loss of organisational memory and trust built over time, such that auditors cannot make well-informed, nuanced decisions (Aschauer & Quick, 2018; Burnett et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2022; Dordzhieva, 2022; Harber & Maroun, 2020; Hohenfels, 2016; Kwon et al., 2014; Mali & Lim, 2018). These results lay a foundation for assessing the impact of relationship continuity on audit effectiveness and whether MAFR inadvertently undermines this aspect of quality.

Learning curve effect

The scholarship agrees that newly appointed auditors take time to understand the entity, and during the first years of engagement, audit quality is compromised (Cameran et al., 2015; Cowle et al., 2023; Harber & Maroun, 2020; Kwon et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2024; Mazza et al., 2025). This synthesis identifies critical areas for further research. Key includes addressing how firms facilitate knowledge transfer and onboarding during rotations. The second issue is whether, at the policy level, regulators have noted these costs associated with this policy.

One size fits all approach

This body of literature raises concerns that MAFR should have special considerations and should not apply a blanket approach (Reid & Carcello, 2017) . Firms differ in size, skills, and capabilities, so there must be exemptions. This creates a fascinating nuance which is similar to the application of International Reporting Standards (IFRS), which do have exemptions. It is interesting, therefore, for the scholarship to determine why MAFR policies cannot adopt the same approach. With IFRS, companies (clients) assess themselves and, based on their capabilities, decide whether to adopt IFRS or not.

Beyond these standards, even on stock exchanges, the regulators still decide who will participate and who will not. So Reid & Carcello (2017) bring a substantial sound argument to

say the Big 4 naturally have industry experts, and chances that their audit quality work will be compromised are slim compared to non-Big four; therefore, contend a blanket approach.

Lack of communication and handover problems

The literature indicates that there is poor communication between incoming and outgoing auditors in terms of file sharing and professional clearances (Kalanjati et al., 2019). These transition challenges impact audit quality. So, the call is for further understanding of the transitioning safeguards needed to enhance quality.

MAPR preference over MAFR

Some studies find that audit quality work is still achieved under partner rotation, and there is no need for dual rotations (Horton et al., 2021). Therefore, in terms of institutional knowledge, new partners will also provide fresh perspectives and benefits. This angle leans towards the US regulatory framework. These findings suggest a need for further exploration of hybrid models.

Switching costs and lowballing

These are common across these three antecedents and are explained similarly. The discourse notes with concern that the MAFR introduction increases switching costs (Aschauer & Quick, 2018; Burnett et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2022; Dordzhieva, 2022; Harber & Maroun, 2020; Hohenfels, 2016; Kwon et al., 2014; Mali & Lim, 2018). There is a general view that instead of curbing lowballing, MAFR intensifies it (Bleibtreu & Stefani, 2018; Cameran et al., 2015; Harber et al., 2020; Velte, 2012). These conclusions suggest that future research on audit fees is necessary to determine whether discussions on fee caps can be effectively integrated with MAFR.

Opinions in support of MAFR

Fresh look and enhanced audit independence

The proponents of MAFR contend it brings in fresh eyes, ready to engage with management, changing old ways in which clients were used to, and increasing professional scepticism (Federsel, 2025; Kim et al., 2019; Polychronidou et al., 2020). These findings suggest that the literature is far from being reconciled. More work is needed to corroborate these findings as the field matures over time.

Switching costs

There is a school of thought which finds that the switching costs are pretty negligible, considering the errors that are often seen during rotations (Bowlin et al., 2015; Corbella et al., 2015; Hennes et al., 2014). These scholars find that the initial disruption is mitigated by enduring enhancements in audit quality, particularly when organisations implement strong onboarding and transfer procedures. This means that this firm refusal or rejection of MAFR may be made without considering the long-term investments associated with it. Future research may target firms that have already been rotated in the EU or elsewhere in the world under MAFR to corroborate these findings.

Fear of the unknown

The synthesis further found that, following the adoption of MAFR in some jurisdictions, it has been widely accepted, despite initial resistance (de Jong et al., 2020; Harber et al., 2024). Even the stakeholders who vehemently opposed it began to sing a different song after its adoption (de Jong et al., 2020; Harber et al., 2024). This body of work poses significant questions and provokes new insights in the discourse.

Firstly, it suggests understanding the role of organisational learning and adaptation theories in understanding the enduring effects of MAFR on audit quality. Therefore, future studies may examine organisational learning theories through the lens of MAFR behaviour and uncover its meanings concerning adoption. The second nuance suggests that those resisting MAFR adoption, such as the US, may need to pilot it first, as seen in countries like South Korea, Singapore, Spain, and others that initially implemented it but later dropped it.

Another interesting perspective, which is not commonly found in the findings, is the differing views based on different jurisdictions or geographic locations. I would have thought and expected that, considering geographical positions and the divergent views of the two economies on the implementation of MAFR, the decisions and outcomes would also depend on the region.

However, this finding occurs sparingly, as I note the differences in views among investors. Investors in the US, for instance, find MAFR costly and unnecessary Brooks et al. (2017), whereas in the EU, they do not consider MAFR a costly intervention and are not significantly affected by its effects; instead, they focus on other proposals brought by the regulator at the time (Horton et al., 2018).

4.2.3 Auditor independence

Auditors' independence can also be discussed from two perspectives: the views of opponents and proponents.

Unlikely to achieve independence

The scholarly consensus is that the auditor independence is unlikely to be achieved, where it will be completed, it will be at the cost of disrupted learning, inexperience, and any benefits will be offset by direct rotation costs (Aschauer & Quick, 2018; Bleibtreu & Stefani, 2018; Burnett et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2022; Dordzhieva, 2022; Fontaine et al., 2016; Garcia-Blandon et al., 2020; Harber & Maroun, 2020; Horton et al., 2021; Kalanjati et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2024; Quick, 2012; Reid & Carcello, 2017; Vette, 2012). These findings establish a foundation for evaluating whether the operational interruptions induced by MAFR compromise the stability required for reliable and autonomous independent audit approaches. As discussed above, further empirical work is needed with the firms which have completed rotation cycles since 2016.

As discussed under audit quality, the reasons advanced by the scholarship are the same as those of auditor independence.

4.3 Theoretical implications

The second question of this SLR aims at discovering the theories that explain MAFR discourse. From a theoretical perspective, the use of multiple lenses has undoubtedly contributed to the evolution of this field, highlighting pertinent features. The most dominant theories noted in the literature were agency theory, economic theory and lowballing theory. There are several other theories, such as institutional theory, support theory, self-determination theory, and market segmentation theory, but the most dominant appear to be the three mentioned above.

The agency theory defines and cements the role of external auditors in the tripartite relationship among the auditor, the client, and the shareholders (board). MAFR functions as a bonding tool for fixing agency issues (Kim et al., 2019). While agency theory builds governance structures and supports MAFR as it enhances auditor independence and audit quality, the audit committee members, who are oversight members and should support the auditors' independence and audit quality, seem to oppose MAFR through self-determination theory (Fontaine et al., 2016).

The audit committee members perceive MAFR as taking away their governance powers, which are bestowed upon them through agency theory. The self-determination theory is defined as a comprehensive theory of motivation that integrates both internal (e.g., intrinsic

motivation) and external variables (Boivie et al., 2012). This means the theory supports policies that are driven internally, rather than being imposed by external regulations. This, therefore, creates a tension between these two theories. In light of these tensions, future research could aim to determine if these tensions can be resolved, thereby reconciling these two theories.

There is a consensus in the underlying interpretations and meanings in the literature, which provides interesting perspectives. The lowballing refers to a practice where audit firms would set lower prices during tendering to win the client and increase fees later during the contract duration period (Cameran et al., 2015; Friedrich et al., 2023; Velte, 2012). This practice has an overarching result that defeats the same intentions for which it was formed to address. It further brings the fragmentation, widening the already existing tensions.

The lowballing theory suggests that auditor-client relations will be affected, potentially compromising the auditor's independence and quality. Because if the auditor can negotiate fees at the beginning of the engagement and later during the audit, the client can also benefit reciprocally by shopping for an opinion (Friedrich et al., 2023; Velte, 2012). The literature suggests that voluntary or unregulated settings are preferable because in such situations, the auditor doesn't know their fate on a given day and therefore cannot manipulate the process (Cameran et al., 2015).

In regimes like the US, where MAFR doesn't exist, lowballing practices are found to have disappeared (Cameran et al., 2015). Together, all these studies fail to corroborate the regulators' expectations. The theoretical interpretation thus renders the entire MAFR policy and regulations a futile exercise; therefore, regulators may need to revisit the policy.

Aware of the fragmentation in the discourse, other authors utilise economic theory to contribute to the theoretical landscape. Economic theory says that auditors earn quasi-rents during the audit tenure and would want to stay with the client (Ghosh & Siriviriyakul, 2018; Velte, 2012). The scholarship finds that two main motives can explain the auditor behaviour under economic theory. First, because they are earning good, lucrative returns, the auditors may find the rotation policy undesirable for them and would oppose its implementation (Dordzhieva, 2022; Ghosh & Siriviriyakul, 2018).

Secondly, because of rotation, auditors may increase fees due to the expectation of future losses resulting from the rotation (Ghosh & Siriviriyakul, 2018). This rise in fees to recoup costs

incurred or losses anticipated, theoretically complements the lowballing theory as the interpretations or motives behind auditors' actions are the same.

Additionally, they instead advocate for a partner rotation rather than audit firm rotation, because from the institutional theory, it means the firm will retain the client information, and therefore, the new partner from the same firm will benefit from that institutional knowledge Federsel (2025), and the audit will be less costly (Ghosh & Siriviriyakul, 2018). This economic self-interest has direct implications for auditor independence and audit quality. Thus, contrary to other perspectives developed before, this means the MAFR may help, therefore, in fighting these motives, which is the angle Federsel (2025) conclude on. This, therefore, led to contradictory findings.

Further conflicts are noted in the discourse, highlighting the depth of the literature's fragmentation. One notable dilemma I find is that MAFR will increase costs to both the clients and prospective auditors because the incumbent auditors would have increased costs due to lowballing and economic bonding (Cameran et al., 2015; Dordzhieva, 2022; Friedrich et al., 2023; Ghosh & Siriviriyakul, 2018; Velte, 2012). The theories, however, fail to come up with a consensus and complement each other, as from market segment theory, the higher the fees, the higher the quality (Santos-Jaén et al., 2023).

The literature has approached MAFR from different theories, although no consensus has been achieved; at least, different lenses have been used to explain why the world still views MAFR implementation in two distinct ways. These findings have generated interesting insights that help meet theoretical gaps in the discourse. Future research could reconcile these theories as the discourse matures, building on the arguments presented above.

4.4 Self-assessment of progress

4.4.1 Construct development

At first, my focus was on MAFR development in South Africa. This was because MAFR has been hotly contested since June 2017 in South Africa, when the Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors (2017) (IRBA) issued a rule prescribing that auditors of Public Interest Entities (PIEs) in South Africa (SA) must comply with mandatory audit firm rotation (MAFR) with effect from 1 April 2023. The main objectives, as argued by Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors (2017) were to enhance auditor independence, facilitate the accelerated transformation of the audit profession, and reduce audit market concentration. So, initially, my interest was to find out what South Africa's next move would be after that decision.

As I further unpacked this issue and researched the construct, I noted that the literature on this construct is scant, especially after 2023, posing a risk of not getting any articles to review. The second thought led me to expand my geographic horizons and refine my focus to Africa, which I also discarded due to the lack of publications in the region; I then concluded to focus globally.

MAFR is another construct that is studied through many different lenses. Others examine it from the perspectives of audit quality, independence, the financial effects of its implementation, audit market concentration, audit fees, investor confidence, and other antecedents. So, it became a challenge to decide which key aspects to focus on while refining my research question. I, however, overcame this problem by limiting the focus to Florio (2024) future research recommendations for the first question.

4.4.2 Recent SLR in MAFR

Initially, when I thought I was happy that I had modelled my research topic, and I was ready to proceed, I came across an SLR by Florio (2024) and I discovered that it is the most recent SLR, which, for some time, gave me a profound emotional impact. After further engagements with the literature and consultations, I noted that one cannot develop a new SLR after we have had the most recent one. This prompted me to reconsider my decision to focus on addressing the future research questions raised in this newly published systematic literature review (SLR) and also to fill in the gaps that I had noted.

4.4.3 Change of keywords and periods

One of the significant changes I made recently, following the last class presentation sessions, was the change in keywords. I had always excluded all the articles that mention other forms of rotation, such as MAPR, because I wanted to narrow the scope. However, one argument arose after class presentations that there could be instances where these two types of rotations are discussed and compared, and I will miss such debates if I disregard Audit Partner rotation in my search. This prompted me to initiate the entire search across all databases, which proved to be a mammoth task.

One key decision was to change time period. I had initially not put any restrictions based on the recommendations by (Fan et al., 2022). This I arrived at considered the reasons I have already raised in my inclusion and exclusion criteria.

4.4.4 Review protocols

I initially started the search using PRISMA by Shamseer et al. (2015) however, when going through the review of the literature based on the arguments made by (Paul et al., 2021) I decided to change the search protocol. My concern after this decision was that the protocol I have adopted is relatively new in the scholarship, and I may encounter challenges when implementing it. However, I later discovered that it has now been widely used in different publications.

Overall, based on the search process, findings reporting, and synthesis, I believe everything went well. There may be challenges in creating integrative visuals in the synthesis section, as this construct is inherently tied to regulatory frameworks. So, conceptualising such frameworks and contributing more to the discourse than I have done may be challenging. This is because regulatory frameworks are often driven by factors that sometimes extend beyond scholarship, such as politics.

I had initially considered using software, specifically Atlas.ti 25, for data coding to facilitate the reporting of findings. However, having read a mouthful of literature, I had to make a bold decision to leave it, even though that cost me so much. I had significant challenges with using Atlas.ti hence I dropped it.

Another thing to note, which may not have gone well, is the quality of the articles in this field. It was a challenge to find quality papers due to the scarcity of publications in the field. That made me consider manual searches or snowballing at one point, which are sometimes criticised for a lack of replication and other shortcomings compared to SLR.

4.4.5 Limitations

Similar to other studies, this SLR has several caveats. The primary one stems from the methodological approaches employed in this study, as I mentioned in Chapter Two. Notwithstanding these methodological and scope-related constraints, I believe that this research provides a valuable, reproducible, and comprehensive analysis of MAFR discourse, consistent with established best practices and methodological standards, from the events that occurred in 2010 to the implementation in other countries before and after 2016.

5. Formulation of Questions for Future Research, and Conclusion

5.1 Avenues for future research

This SLR responds to Florio (2024) call for further research into the developments of MAFR following its implementation, particularly after 2016, when the EU issued directives for MAFR implementation. To address this call, I focused on three main MAFR antecedents: auditor independence, audit quality, and audit market concentration. This SLR sheds light on several aspects.

The literature on MAFR has evolved significantly since 2010, and I found a satisfying number of articles that shape the discourse on these three antecedents. The significant growth is more noticeable in audit market concentration, an area that was previously underexplored. Nonetheless, several shortcomings remain that warrant future interventions.

First, although I observe a growth in the discourse, the findings remain inconclusive and are often geographically biased. For audit market concentration, the literature is unequivocal that MAFR will not help to deconcentrate the market but will instead intensify it. The inconclusive results stem from issues with audit quality and auditor independence.

Audit Market Concentration

Regarding audit market concentration, the literature reveals that high market entry costs and low bidding practices prevail. The first research question is why MAFR intensifies audit market concentration rather than diluting it? This is important because the results indicate that legislative efforts to address this issue are failing. The second question is, why does MAFR contribute to lowballing instead of curbing it? Are there alternative courses of action authorities can take? One finding is that the Big Four have created an oligopolistic market. Some future research questions may include: What roles can governments play in capacitating non-Big Four firms and levelling the playing field for competition?

Audit Quality

One main finding, which appears to be shared sentimentally under audit quality by the scholarship, is the interruption of the MAFR to the client-auditor relationship, which has been built over several years. Future research questions may need to corroborate the claims. Specific questions may include: Why does MAFR work in some jurisdictions and fail in others? Could it be geographical issues, socio-economic issues, cultural issues, political issues or what? This question will touch on all these other aspects of independence and quality.

Several other questions emerge from the themes as identified in the synthesis. These relate to the learning curve effect, so that the empirical question could be: Does the implementation of MAFR affect the learning curve effect? One research question can explore the specific interventions that governments need to implement in MAFR to avoid a blanket approach. A particular question could be: What can be done to serve different grouping tiers in MAFR implementation? What can be done to improve communication between successor and predecessor auditors to improve audit quality during transitions?

Regarding switching costs, the question arises: What can be done to mitigate the costs associated with implementing MAFR? With a fresh look and enhanced independence, the question arises: Does MAFR bring a fresh look effect? Does MAFR enhance audit independence? These questions will help deepen the evolution of MAFR discourse. They are precise and empirical.

Theories

The second research question aimed to discover the theories used in understanding MAFR discourse. Interesting issues emerged that future research may explore further. Another such theory is organisational learning and adaptation theories, which can be used to understand the enduring effects of MAFR on audit quality. So the future research question may be: how does organisational learning theory explain MAFR acceptance?

Several other theories, identified by this SLR, such as economic or bonding theory, lowballing theory, self-determination theory, agency and institutional theories, can be explored to uncover other hidden nuances in the discourse. Essential questions would relate to the appropriateness, perspective and focus one needs to have on MAFR literature.

The question's contribution to the academic field and practice

Academically, these questions fill in the gaps noted in the literature. They centre on the challenges the field faced during development. To some extent, these were teething problems, hence the positions developed from the synthesis. These questions aim to determine whether what I found is the interpretation of reality from the real world.

They advance the theoretical underpinnings of the literature, which presents a new perspective in the field. To the best of my knowledge, this SLR is the first to make two contributions, specifically responding to prior literature on the first question. Secondly, to bring theoretical explanations to the field. The past SLRs, as shown in Table 1, do not delve into

theories. What this therefore means is that even the related research questions contribute directly to the discourse.

The descriptive analysis reveals distinct trends in publication period, geographical focus, publishing journals and their quality rankings, as well as types of studies and research methods.

These attributes have different meanings and results, as discussed in the SLR.

A geographical focus may reveal the dominance of certain regions and a lack of research in other regions, creating an opportunity for future research to target settings with low research output.

The same applies to publishing journals; researchers need these statistics so that they can inform their decisions promptly when contributing to the ongoing literature on evolutionary auditing. Even the publication period helps, as researchers embark on research to determine which year the literature was at its peak and what that means for scholarship. The methods used in conducting the studies are also crucial for future research.

To the regulators, salient issues are raised that will need to be considered in making decisions on the adoption and review of MAFR. For academics and practitioners, the research questions provide avenues for future research. This systematic literature review fosters future discourse, offers evidence-based insights, and facilitates the application of theory in practice.

5.2 Conclusion

These suggested research questions, the findings from the SLR, contribute to the discourse in understanding the development in the field of MAFR. This SLR has compiled what we know about MAFR so far, highlighting both its intended benefits and unintended effects. The suggested research questions aim to address existing gaps and provide a plan for future research that is both academically rigorous and practical in real-life applications. As audit environments evolve, these questions must be addressed to create audit laws that are effective and responsive to specific situations, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

References

- Adams, R. J., Smart, P., & Huff, A. S. (2017). Shades of grey: Guidelines for working with the grey literature in systematic reviews for management and organizational studies. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 19(4), 432–454. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12102>
- Aschauer, E., & Quick, R. (2018). Mandatory audit firm rotation and prohibition of audit firm-provided tax services: Evidence from investment consultants' perceptions. *International Journal of Auditing*, 22(2), 131–149. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijau.12109>
- Bleibtreu, C., & Stefani, U. (2018). The effects of mandatory audit firm rotation on client importance and audit industry concentration. *Accounting Review*, 93(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.2308/accr-51728>
- Boivie, S., Graffin, S. D., & Pollock, T. G. (2012). Time for me to fly: Predicting director exit at large firms. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(6), 1334–1359. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.1083>
- Bowlin, K. O., Hobson, J. L., & Piercey, M. D. (2015). The effects of auditor rotation, professional skepticism, and interactions with managers on audit quality. *Accounting Review*, 90(4), 1363–1393. <https://doi.org/10.2308/accr-51032>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. In *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* (Vol. 11, Issue 4, pp. 589–597). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Breslin, D., Gatrell, C., & Bailey, K. (2020). Developing insights through reviews: Reflecting on the 20th anniversary of the International Journal of Management Reviews. In *International Journal of Management Reviews* (Vol. 22, Issue 1, pp. 3–9). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12219>
- Brooks, L. Z., Cheng, C. S. A., Johnston, J. A., & Reichelt, K. J. (2017). Estimates of optimal audit firm tenure across different legal regimes. *Journal of Accounting, Auditing and Finance*, 32(1), 3–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0148558X16641864>
- Brooks, L. Z., Gill, S., Wong-On-Wing, B., & Yu, M. D. (2022). Does audit firm tenure enhance firm value? Closing the expectation gap through corporate social responsibility. *Managerial Auditing Journal*, 37(8), 1113–1145. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MAJ-11-2020-2902>
- Burnett, B. M., Martin, G. W., Reppenhagen, D. A., & Tanyi, P. (2024). Incumbent auditor independence and predecessor auditor tenure. *Journal of Accounting Auditing and Finance*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0148558X241283554>

- Cameran, M., Francis, J. R., Ma, rra, A., & Pettinicchio, A. (2015). Are there adverse consequences of mandatory auditor rotation? Evidence from the Italian Experience. *Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory*, 34(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.2308/ajpt-50663>
- Cameran, M., Pettinicchio, A., & Negri, G. (2015). The audit mandatory rotation rule: The state of the art. In *The Journal of Financial Perspectives Article* (Vol. 3, Issue 2). <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3083484Electroniccopyavailableat:https://ssrn.com/abstract=3083484Electroniccopyavailableat:https://ssrn.com/abstract=3083484>
- Cameran, M., Prencipe, A., & Trombetta, M. (2016). Mandatory audit firm rotation and audit quality. *European Accounting Review*, 25(1), 35–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638180.2014.921446>
- Casterella, J. R., & Johnston, D. (2013). Can the academic literature contribute to the debate over mandatory audit firm rotation? *Research in Accounting Regulation*, 25(1), 108–116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.racreg.2012.11.004>
- Chen, C., Jia, H., Xu, Y., & Ziebart, D. (2022). The effect of audit firm attributes on audit delay in the presence of financial reporting complexity. *Managerial Auditing Journal*, 37(2), 283–302. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MAJ-12-2020-2969>
- Chi, W. (2011). An overlooked effect of mandatory audit-firm rotation on investigation strategies. *OR Spectrum*, 33(2), 265–285. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00291-010-0221-4>
- Clark, W. R., Clark, L. A., Raffo, D. M., & Williams, R. I. (2021). Extending Fisch and Block's (2018) tips for a systematic review in management and business literature. *Management Review Quarterly*, 71(1), 215–231. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-020-00184-8>
- Corbella, S., Florio, C., Gotti, G., & Mastrolia, S. A. (2015). Audit firm rotation, audit fees and audit quality: The experience of Italian public companies. *Journal of International Accounting, Auditing and Taxation*, 25, 46–66. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intaccaudtax.2015.10.003>
- Cowle, E. N., Decker, R. P., & Rowe, S. P. (2023). Retain or rotate: The association between frequent auditor switching and audit quality. *Accounting Horizons*, 37(3), 79–101. <https://doi.org/10.2308/HORIZONS-2022-018>
- Crawford, J., & Jabbour, M. (2024). The relationship between enterprise risk management and managerial judgement in decision-making: A systematic literature review. In *International Journal of Management Reviews* (Vol. 26, Issue 1, pp. 110–136). John Wiley and Sons Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12337>
- Daniels, B. W., & Booker, Q. (2011). The effects of audit firm rotation on perceived auditor independence and audit quality. *Research in Accounting Regulation*, 23(1), 78–82. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.racreg.2011.03.008>
- Dao, M., & Pham, T. (2014). Audit tenure, auditor specialization and audit report lag. *Managerial Auditing Journal*, 29(6), 490–512. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MAJ-07-2013-0906>

- de Jong, B., Hijink, S., & in 't Veld, L. (2020). Mandatory audit firm rotation for listed companies: The effects in the Netherlands. *European Business Organization Law Review*, 21(4), 937–966. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40804-020-00193-w>
- Deepal, A. G., & Jayamaha, A. (2022). Audit expectation gap: A comprehensive literature review. *Asian Journal of Accounting Research*, 7(3), 308–319. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AJAR-10-2021-0202>
- DeFond, M., & Zhang, J. (2014). A review of archival auditing research. *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, 58(2–3), 275–326. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jacceco.2014.09.002>
- Dordzhieva, A. (2022). Disciplining role of auditor tenure and mandatory auditor rotation. *Accounting Review*, 97(1), 161–182. <https://doi.org/10.2308/TAR-2018-0277>
- Ewelt-Knauer, C., Gold, A., & Pott, C. (2012). *What do we know about mandatory audit firm rotation?* Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS).
- Fan, D., Breslin, D., Callahan, J. L., & Iszatt-White, M. (2022). Advancing literature review methodology through rigour, generativity, scope and transparency. In *International Journal of Management Reviews* (Vol. 24, Issue 2, pp. 171–180). John Wiley and Sons Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12291>
- Federsel, F. P. (2025). Fresh-look effect of audit firm and audit partner rotations? Evidence from European key audit matters. *International Journal of Auditing*, 29(1), 160–187. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijau.12364>
- Florio, C. (2024). A structured literature review of empirical research on mandatory auditor rotation. *Journal of International Accounting, Auditing and Taxation*, 55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intaccaudtax.2024.100623>
- Fontaine, R., Khemakhem, H., & Herda, D. (2016). Audit committee perspectives on mandatory audit firm rotation: Evidence from Canada. *Journal of Management & Governance*, 20(3), 485–502. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10997-015-9308-2>
- Friedrich, C., Pappert, N., & Quick, R. (2023). The anticipation of mandatory audit firm rotation and audit quality. *Journal of International Accounting Research*, 22(1), 59–81. <https://doi.org/10.2308/JIAR-2021-095>
- Garcia-Blandon, J., Argilés-Bosch, J. M., & Ravenda, D. (2020). Audit firm tenure and audit quality: A cross-European study. *Journal of International Financial Management and Accounting*, 31(1), 35–64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jifm.12098>
- Gaur, A., & Kumar, M. (2018). A systematic approach to conducting review studies: An assessment of content analysis in 25 years of IB research. In *Journal of World Business* (Vol. 53, Issue 2, pp. 280–289). Elsevier Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2017.11.003>
- Ghosh, A. (AI), & Siriviriyakul, S. (Jackie). (2018). Quasi rents to audit firms from longer tenure. *Accounting Horizons*, 32(2), 81–102. <https://doi.org/10.2308/acch-52035>
- Gusenbauer, M., & Haddaway, N. R. (2020). Which academic search systems are suitable for systematic reviews or meta-analyses? Evaluating retrieval qualities of Google

- Scholar, PubMed, and 26 other resources. *Research Synthesis Methods*, 11(2).
<https://doi.org/10.1002/jrsm.1378>
- Harber, M., Duboisée de Ricquebourg, A., & Maroun, W. (2024). Costs and benefits of mandatory audit firm rotation: Initial engagement experience of audit committee chairs and engagement partners. *Accounting Forum*, 48(1), 63–89.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01559982.2022.2130812>
- Harber, M., & Maroun, W. (2020). Mandatory audit firm rotation: A critical composition of practitioner views from an emerging economy. *Managerial Auditing Journal*, 35(7), 861–896. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MAJ-09-2019-2405>
- Harber, M., Marx, B., & De Jager, P. (2020). The perceived financial effects of mandatory audit firm rotation. *Journal of International Financial Management & Accounting*, 31(2), 215–234. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jifm.12115>
- Hassan, M. I. A., Borbély, K., & Tóth, Á. (2024). The development of the European Union auditing research over the past decade: A systematic literature review and future research opportunities. In *Journal of Financial Reporting and Accounting*. Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFRA-03-2024-0124>
- Hennes, K. M., Leone, A. J., & Miller, B. P. (2014). Determinants and market consequences of auditor dismissals after accounting restatements. *Accounting Review*, 89(3), 1051–1082. <https://doi.org/10.2308/accr-50680>
- Hiebl, M. R. W. (2023). Sample selection in systematic literature reviews of management research. In *Organizational Research Methods* (Vol. 26, Issue 2, pp. 229–261). SAGE Publications Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428120986851>
- Hohenfels, D. (2016). Auditor tenure and perceived earnings quality. *International Journal of Auditing*, 20(3), 224–238. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijau.12069>
- Horton, J., Livne, G., & Pettinicchio, A. (2021). Empirical evidence on audit quality under a dual mandatory auditor rotation rule. *European Accounting Review*, 30(1), 1–29.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09638180.2020.1747513>
- Horton, J., Tsipouridou, M., & Wood, A. (2018). European market reaction to audit reforms. *European Accounting Review*, 27(5), 991–1023.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09638180.2017.1394203>
- Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors. (2017). Rule on mandatory audit firm rotation. *Government Gazette*.
<https://www.irba.co.za/upload/government%20Gazette%20with%20Final%20Rule%20-%201%20june%202017.pdf>
- Jenkins, D. S., & Vermeer, T. E. (2013). Audit firm rotation and audit quality: Evidence from academic research. *Accounting Research Journal*, 26(1), 75–84.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/ARJ-11-2012-0087>
- Jones, O., & Gatrell, C. (2014). Editorial: The future of writing and reviewing for IJMR. In *International Journal of Management Reviews* (Vol. 16, Issue 3, pp. 249–264). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12038>

- Judge, S., Goodson, B. M., & Stefaniak, C. M. (2024). Audit firm tenure disclosure and nonprofessional investors' perceptions of auditor independence: The mitigating effect of partner rotation disclosure. *Contemporary Accounting Research*, 41(2), 1284–1310. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1911-3846.12936>
- Kalanjati, D. S., Nasution, D., Jonnergård, K., & Sutedjo, S. (2019). Auditor rotations and audit quality: A perspective from cumulative number of audit partner and audit firm rotations. *Asian Review of Accounting*, 27(4), 639–660. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ARA-10-2018-0182>
- Kamarudin, K. A., Islam, A., Wan Ismail, W. A., & Jahan, M. A. (2022). The effect of mandatory audit firm rotation and the auditing and reporting standards on the auditor competition and audit fees relationship: Evidence from emerging markets. *International Journal of Auditing*, 26(2), 252–278. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijau.12276>
- Keyser, J. D. (2021). The recurring debate in the united states over mandatory firm rotation. *Accounting Historians Journal*, 48(1), 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.2308/AAHJ-19-012>
- Kim, S. M., Kim, S. M., Lee, D. H., & Yoo, S. W. (2019). How investors perceive mandatory audit firm rotation in Korea. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 11(4). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11041089>
- Köhler, A. G., Quick, R., & Willekens, M. (2016). The new European audit regulation arena: Discussion of new rules and ideas for future research. *International Journal of Auditing*, 20(3), 211–214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijau.12078>
- Korica, M., Nicolini, D., & Johnson, B. (2017). In search of 'Managerial Work': Past, present and future of an analytical category. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 19(2), 151–174. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12090>
- Kraus, S., Breier, M., & Dasí-Rodríguez, S. (2020). The art of crafting a systematic literature review in entrepreneurship research. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 16(3), 1023–1042. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11365-020-00635-4>
- Kraus, S., Breier, M., Lim, W. M., Dabić, M., Kumar, S., Kanbach, D., Mukherjee, D., Corvello, V., Piñeiro-Chousa, J., Liguori, E., Palacios-Marqués, D., Schiavone, F., Ferraris, A., Fernandes, C., & Ferreira, J. J. (2022). Literature reviews as independent studies: Guidelines for academic practice. *Review of Managerial Science*, 16(8), 2577–2595. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-022-00588-8>
- Kwon, S. Y., Lim, Y., & Simnett, R. (2014). The effect of mandatory audit firm rotation on audit quality and audit fees: Empirical evidence from the Korean audit market. *Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory*, 33(4), 167–195. <https://doi.org/10.2308/ajpt-50814>
- Lee, B., Gamble, G., Noland, T., & Zhao, Y. (2024). The effects of regulated auditor tenure on opinion shopping: Evidence from the Korean market. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 17(11). <https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm17110503>
- Lennox, C. S., Wu, X., & Zhang, T. (2014). Does mandatory rotation of audit partners improve audit quality? *Accounting Review*, 89(5), 1775–1803. <https://doi.org/10.2308/accr-50800>

- Lim, W. M., Kumar, S., & Ali, F. (2022). Advancing knowledge through literature reviews: 'What', 'why', and 'how to contribute.' *Service Industries Journal*, 42(7–8), 481–513. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2022.2047941>
- Lim, W. M., Rasul, T., Kumar, S., & Ala, M. (2022). Past, present, and future of customer engagement. *Journal of Business Research*, 140, 439–458. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.11.014>
- Liu, Q. L., Zhao, L., Tian, L., & Xie, J. (2021). Close auditor-client relationships: Adverse effects and the potential mitigating role of partner rotation. *Managerial Auditing Journal*, 36(6), 889–919. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MAJ-07-2020-2770>
- Malagila, J. K., Bhavani, G., & Amponsah, C. T. (2020). The perceived association between audit rotation and audit quality: Evidence from the UAE. *Journal of Accounting in Emerging Economies*, 10(3), 345–377. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JAEE-08-2018-0082>
- Mali, D., & Lim, H. (2018). Conservative reporting and the incremental effect of mandatory audit firm rotation policy: A comparative analysis of audit partner rotation vs audit firm rotation in South Korea. *Australian Accounting Review*, 28(3), 446–463. <https://doi.org/10.1111/auar.12206>
- Massaro, M., Dumay, J., & Guthrie, J. (2016). On the shoulders of giants: Undertaking a structured literature review in accounting. *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal*, 29(5), 767–801. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AAAJ-01-2015-1939>
- Mattei, G., Grossi, G., & Guthrie A.M, J. (2021). Exploring past, present and future trends in public sector auditing research: A literature review. In *Meditari Accountancy Research* (Vol. 29, Issue 7, pp. 94–134). Emerald Group Holdings Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MEDAR-09-2020-1008>
- Mazza, T., Azzali, S., Reichelt, K. J., & Fornaciari, L. (2025). Short horizon for audit partner and audit quality: Evidence from a dual-rotation regime. *Journal of Accounting, Auditing & Finance*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0148558x241293497>
- Nadkarni, S., Gruber, M., DeCelles, K., Connelly, B., & Baer, M. (2018). New ways of seeing: Radical theorizing. In *Academy of Management Journal* (Vol. 61, Issue 2, pp. 371–377). Academy of Management. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2018.4002>
- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). A Step-by-Step process of thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Paul, J., & Criado, A. R. (2020). The art of writing literature review: What do we know and what do we need to know? *International Business Review*, 29(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2020.101717>
- Paul, J., Lim, W. M., O’Cass, A., Hao, A. W., & Bresciani, S. (2021). Scientific procedures and rationales for systematic literature reviews (SPAR-4-SLR). *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12695>

- Polychronidou, P., Drogalas, G., & Tampakoudis, I. (2020). Mandatory rotation of audit firms and auditors in Greece. *International Journal of Disclosure and Governance*, 17(2–3), 141–154. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41310-020-00080-3>
- Post, C., Sarala, R., Gatrell, C., & Prescott, J. E. (2020). Advancing theory with review articles. In *Journal of Management Studies* (Vol. 57, Issue 2, pp. 351–376). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12549>
- Pott, C., Mock, T. J., & Watrin, C. (2009). Review of empirical research on rotation and non-audit services: Auditor independence in fact vs. appearance. In *Journal für Betriebswirtschaft* (Vol. 58, Issue 4, pp. 209–239). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-009-0043-0>
- Pranckutė, R. (2021). Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus: The titans of bibliographic information in today's academic world. In *Publications* (Vol. 9, Issue 1). Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI). <https://doi.org/10.3390/publications9010012>
- Quick, R. (2012). EC green paper proposals and audit quality. *Accounting in Europe*, 9(1), 17–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449480.2012.664398>
- Reid, L. C., & Carcello, J. V. (2017). Investor reaction to the prospect of mandatory audit firm rotation. *Accounting Review*, 92(1), 183–211. <https://doi.org/10.2308/accr-51488>
- Roberts, K., Dowell, A., & Nie, J. B. (2019). Attempting rigour and replicability in thematic analysis of qualitative research data; A case study of codebook development. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-019-0707-y>
- Rouse, E., Reinecke, J., Ravasi, D., Langley, A., Grimes, M., & Gruber, M. (2025). Making a theoretical contribution with qualitative research. In *Academy of Management Perspectives* (Vol. 68, Issue 2, pp. 257–266). Academy of Management. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2025.4002>
- Rousseau, D. M. (2024). Reviews as research: Steps in developing trustworthy synthesis. In *Academy of Management Annals* (Vol. 18, Issue 2, pp. 395–402). Academy of Management. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2024.0132>
- Salmon, E., Juan Francisco Chavez, R., & Murphy, M. (2023). New perspectives and critical insights from indigenous peoples' research: A systematic review of indigenous management and organization literature. *Academy of Management Annals*, 17(2), 439–491. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2021.0132>
- Santos-Jaén, J. M., Vázquez, G. M. de A., & Martínez, M. del C. V. (2023). Is earnings management impacted by audit fees and auditor tenure? An analysis of the Big Four audit firms in the US market. *Oeconomia Copernicana*, 14(3), 899–934. <https://doi.org/10.24136/oc.2023.027>
- Sauer, P. C., & Seuring, S. (2023). How to conduct systematic literature reviews in management research: A guide in 6 steps and 14 decisions. In *Review of Managerial Science* (Vol. 17, Issue 5, pp. 1899–1933). Springer Science and Business Media Deutschland GmbH. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-023-00668-3>
- Shamseer, L., Moher, D., Clarke, M., Ghersi, D., Liberati, A., Petticrew, M., Shekelle, P., Stewart, L. A., Altman, D. G., Booth, A., Chan, A. W., Chang, S., Clifford, T., Dickersin,

- K., Egger, M., Gøtzsche, P. C., Grimshaw, J. M., Groves, T., Helfand, M., ... Whitlock, E. (2015). Preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analysis protocols (prisma-p) 2015: Elaboration and explanation. In *BMJ (Online)* (Vol. 349). BMJ Publishing Group. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.g7647>
- Siddaway, A. P., Wood, A. M., & Hedges, L. V. (2025). University of Pretoria (ar-255004) IP: 154.59.124.54 On: Mon. *Annu. Rev. Psychol*, 70, 747–770. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418>
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333–339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>
- Torraco, R. J. (2005). Writing integrative literature reviews: Guidelines and examples. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4(3), 356–367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484305278283>
- Tranfield, D., Denyer, D., & Smart, P. (2003). Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *British Journal of Management*, 14(3), 207–222. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.00375>
- Velte, P. (2012). External rotation of the auditor. *Journal of Management Control*, 23(1), 81–91. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00187-012-0149-8>
- Velte, P., & Freidank, C.-C. (2015). The link between in- and external rotation of the auditor and the quality of financial accounting and external audit. *European Journal of Law and Economics*, 40(2), 225–246. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10657-012-9361-0>
- Velte, P., & Loy, T. (2018). The impact of auditor rotation, audit firm rotation and non-audit services on earnings quality, audit quality and investor perceptions: A literature review. *Journal of Governance and Regulation*, 7(2), 74–90. https://doi.org/10.22495/jgr_v7_i2_p7
- Webster, J., & Watson, R. T. (2002). Analyzing the past to prepare for the future: Writing a literature review. *MIS Quarterly*, 26(2), 11. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/analyzing-past-prepare-future-writing-literature/docview/218128975/se-2?accountid=14717>
- Wilson, A. B., McNellis, C., & Latham, C. K. (2018). Audit firm tenure, auditor familiarity, and trust: Effect on auditee whistleblowing reporting intentions. *International Journal of Auditing*, 22(2), 113–130. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijau.12108>
- Xia, N., Zou, P. X. W., Griffin, M. A., Wang, X., & Zhong, R. (2018). Towards integrating construction risk management and stakeholder management: A systematic literature review and future research agendas. *International Journal of Project Management*, 36(5), 701–715. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2018.03.006>