




“Effect of government policy and controller’s connection with relevant parties on information quality of Vietnamese audit firms in the context of COVID-19”

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EFFECT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY AND CONTROLLER'S CONNECTION WITH RELEVANT PARTIES ON INFORMATION QUALITY OF VIETNAMESE AUDIT FIRMS IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

Abstract

Accounting information provides the financial state, performance, cash flow, and notes to the enterprise's financial statements. Information quality plays an essential role for stakeholders in making business decisions. The study examines the impact of government policy and the controller's connection with relevant parties on the information quality of Vietnamese audit firms in the context of COVID-19. The surveyed subjects include 347 controllers of audit firms in Vietnam. The paper uses quantitative methods, specifically the exploratory factor analysis method, and the ordinary least squares are used to test the model's hypotheses. Agency and stakeholder theories are used to explain the basis of the study's theory. The results show that the government policy and the controller's connection with relevant parties positively affect the information quality of Vietnamese audit firms. The level of correlation between factors is appropriate, between 0.126 and 0.618. Government policy is one of the most influential factors in information quality (0.412). Relevant parties include audit firms, relatives, and the community, and the level of connection between the controller and relatives and the community (0.298) is better than that of audit firms (0.183). The study proposes policies to connect controllers and relevant parties in cooperation and mutual support to ensure strict control activities and improve the information quality of Vietnamese audit firms.

Keywords

quality report, financial information, government policy, professional ethics, social distancing, audit, stakeholders, control activity

JEL Classification

M41, M42, G18

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 appeared at the end of 2019 and spread around the world. The government of some countries imposed social distancing practices. Many businesses have to convert work from home, and the control activity is no exception. Control activities related to evidence collection, judgment, and data inventory are significantly affected. It changes the nature of the controller's work and approach (Erer, 2020; Kaka, 2021; Amy et al., 2022). This affects working conditions and the effectiveness of control activities.

Under the impact of the pandemic, both audit firms and controlled enterprises are affected. Controllers are always under pressure from the connection between relatives and the community. It affects control operations due to the insecurity and stress of controllers. Controllers' activities are mostly disturbed by changes in processes, procedures,



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methods, and techniques. The change in control activities has affected the information judgment of controllers. Controllers must work in unusually fluctuating conditions so control activities cope with unusual changes. It leads to certain difficulties in evaluating and judging information (Amiruddin, 2019; Agusiady et al., 2023). The pandemic is one of the major challenges for controllers to ensure the quality of information of audit firms during COVID-19.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

The COVID-19 pandemic affects the surrounding physical environment, such as living, learning, working, and entertainment environments. The social connections and cultural foundations in which groups of people are defined as functioning and interacting with each other have been impacted by the pandemic. Factors influenced by the pandemic include the labor market, working processes, human and health services, and connections between relatives, community, and the government (Casper, 2001). Pandemics depend on many aspects and are partly constituted by human social processes. The pandemic influences many aspects, including family, business, and workplace connections (Herda & Lavelle, 2022). Toscano and Zappala (2020) argue that pandemics can be viewed in terms of material, spiritual, and social relations. The pandemic affects the way the workplace is organized and the state's policies to create order in life. Zheng et al. (2020) believe that pandemics affect both static and unchanging aspects (human nature and culture) and dynamic, almost constantly changing aspects (material and spiritual life). The more society develops, the greater the impact of the pandemic on each family and individual.

Information quality is a complex issue and does not have a universally accepted definition. It is the ability of the controller to express an opinion on the quality of the financial statements based on sufficient and appropriate evidence obtained by the service team. Information quality can be achieved when the control team ensures that the quality control process is strictly followed by the law and provides useful and timely reports (IAASB, 2014). According to Vietnamese regulations on quality control of financial statements, information quality is the level of satisfaction of users with control results regarding the objectivity and reliability of the control. At the same time, information quality

satisfies the controlled firm's expectations about the controller's comments to improve business performance (Ministry of Finance of Vietnam, 2012). Besides, the information quality is difficult to observe, measure, and check because it depends on the perspectives and approaches of service providers and users of the finance report. Therefore, there are many concepts of information quality. DeAngelo (1981) expresses the view of information quality from the perspective of users of the finance report. DeAngelo (1981) also recognizes that information quality is the likelihood that a given controller detects a misstatement in the client's accounting system and reports such irregularities. Johnsson and Persson (2021) consider that information quality is the degree of conformity with controlling standards from the view of service providers and the state.

The origin of agency theory was formulated by Ross (1973) and later developed by Jensen and Meckling (1976). This theory emphasizes the connection between the principal and the agent through the contract. The agent will perform some tasks on behalf of the principal, including delegating a degree of decision-making authority to the principal. Meanwhile, the principal must provide a better choice for the agent. The performance of the delegated party's tasks will be reviewed by an independent third party performing the role of monitoring and evaluating individuals. The theory also assumes that both parties want to maximize their interests, leading to the problem of conflict of interest (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Based on the agency theory, the stakeholder theory was developed by Freeman (1984). This theory not only recognizes the connection between the principal and the agent but also identifies the link between the enterprise and other economic sectors, including shareholders, investors, creditors, and state agencies. The theory states that the existence and development of the enterprise need to harmonize interests with stakeholders. Agency and stakeholder theories

are derived from economic principles, and they are also the basic theory used to explain control needs (Ishak & Shalehah, 2022). One of the essential elements in monitoring principal-agent connections is the audit firm. Any party wishing to influence the financial statements favorably is excluded during the control. Controlling acts as a third-party intermediary to resolve conflicts of interest and asymmetric information of stakeholders (Nurcahya & Diah, 2021).

DeAngelo (1981) performed the first study of information quality, and since then, studies on the factors affecting information quality have been widely carried out around the world. With a strong outbreak of the pandemic, the application of a policy of travel restrictions is a premise for studies related to the impact of COVID-19 on the information quality of audits. Typically, Albitar et al. (2021) consider the impact of social distancing policies on the quality audit. The article used the desk-based research method to explore the factors. The results indicate that the consequences of COVID-19 cause a decrease in audit fees, challenges in assessing the continuity of operations, low levels of reliability and effectiveness of audit evidence, and audit human resources (knowledge, skills, and qualifications). The study also highlights the possibility of huge loss of staff due to illness or isolation and salary cuts that affect the quality of the audit process.

Using the exploratory factor analysis of the effect of the pandemic on information quality of audits, Saleem (2021) collected data on six international audit firms by telephone through in-depth interviews to test the impact of COVID-19 on information quality in Jordan. The article used exploratory factor analysis to test the hypotheses. The study concludes that information quality is affected by the spread of COVID-19. Controllers face many challenges in obtaining appropriate audit evidence from controlled firms due to restrictions on portability due to government policy. Akrimi (2021) studied the impact of COVID-19 on information quality in Saudi Arabia and Nigeria. The results explore five factors affecting information quality, including audit fees, the problem of assuming continuous operation, the audit process, the audit human resources, and the remuneration of the control

team. The study also analyzes the pandemic's impact on information quality and explores perceptions of other groups, such as investors, directors, and employees' working conditions.

Munidewi et al. (2020) determined the impact of independence, budget pressure, audit time, audit fee, and workload on information quality due to the impact of COVID-19 in Bali. The population of the study was controllers at sixteen registered audit firms. The study received 114 responses using purposive sampling. The data were analyzed with multiple linear regressions. The results show that independence has a significant influence on information quality, while time pressures, audit fees, and workloads do not significantly affect information quality. Reyes et al. (2021) used a desk study method to determine the impact of COVID-19 on controllers in Indonesia. In this analysis, outstanding issues need to be focused on, including fees, audit time, laws and regulations, and assessment of ongoing concerns, clients, tenures, and experiences that affect information quality during COVID-19. The study also finds that controllers and remote clients are unable to speak directly to clients, physically check documents and reports, or observe the specific application of controls.

Recently, several studies have focused on audit characteristics to evaluate the impact on information quality of control and audit process in audit process in the context of COVID-19. Hazaea et al. (2022) researched the impact of COVID-19 on information quality, assessing audit fees, audit procedures, and controllers' salaries in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Data were collected from fifty-five online survey responses and eleven interview responses. The results show that information quality significantly affects audit fees, audit procedures, and audit salaries. Amaning et al. (2022) employed quantitative research by sending a survey and receiving 289 responses from employees working at audit firms in Ghana. The aim was to determine the safeguards adopted by controllers to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on information quality. Factors affecting information quality include technology and government policies. Fadillah and Pramudyastuti (2023) examine how independent auditing affects information quality and procedures due to the impact of COVID-19. Yuniarwati and Ardana (2023) conducted a survey

of controllers in Indonesia in 2022. The results indicate that audit fees, audit firm personnel, processes, and procedures affected information quality accounting during COVID-19. Agusiady et al. (2023) examined the effect of COVID-19 on information quality. The article interviewed 37 controllers in Bandung Raya, China. The results show that process, cost, work pressure, and controller skepticism positively affect information quality. Alharasis and Mustafa (2023) surveyed 200 Jordanian companies from 2005 to 2020 to examine information quality during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results show that family firms have better control capabilities to ensure information quality.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in Vietnam caused difficult challenges not only for controlled firms but also for audit firms and controllers. Until now, there has been no thorough study on its potential impact on information quality, considering changes in policies and the living and working environment in Vietnam. Huy (2022) considered the factors affecting audit quality during COVID-19, but this study only considers some factors that impact information quality, such as audit fees, assessment of ability to continue operation, audit evidence, human capital audit, and the salary of the audit staff.

Some previous studies have shown factors of the COVID-19 pandemic that affect the information quality of audit and control activities. Accordingly, it is necessary for in-depth research to explore and supplement empirical research on the pandemic to the information quality of Vietnamese audit firms in the context of COVID-19. The study summarizes previous studies related to factors of the pandemic affecting information quality, specifically as follows.

First, information quality is affected by government measures, such as mandatory lockdowns. Controllers have difficulty obtaining appropriate information due to social distancing. It threatens the information quality (Amaning et al., 2022). Due to the government's pandemic regulations, the statutory control report's publication deadline is affected. Regulatory bodies assist in extending the disclosure period of financial statements to ensure audibility (Albitar et al., 2021). Professional

associations guide control work to support controllers in COVID-19 to ensure information quality (Saleem, 2021; Nurcahyono et al., 2021). From previous studies, lockdown and travel restrictions affect the controller's work. Therefore, the government's policy during COVID-19 is a factor affecting information quality.

Second, working from home during the COVID-19 period is directly affected by close connections like audit firms, teams, and controllers. The audit firm has a policy to support the needs of employees while working from home (Awada et al., 2021). Interaction is important for working from home arrangements and ensuring job performance (Akrimi, 2021). Working from home is also influenced by factors related to social connections with the team and controller. It is addressed to ensure quality work when working from home, which includes motivation, the ability to work independently, and a sense of responsibility for control work (Albitar et al., 2021). Controllers' work from home makes the exchange connections in society and affects the quality of work (Mustajab et al., 2020; Agusiady et al., 2023). Working from home for controllers and control teams increases the workload, so incentives are needed to stay motivated. To deal with temporary work for the control period, audit firms must divide work in the form of response that will affect the information quality (Hazaea et al., 2022).

Third, close connections between individuals and families also affect the quality of work when working from home during COVID-19 (Galanti et al., 2021). The controller's work from home can also be affected by the workspace where there is no physical availability or equipment. It impacts information quality (Munidewi et al., 2020). The controller must complete the work assigned by the audit firm and must complete the family role. The conflict between work and family is found to have an impact on work performance (Olimpia & Rachmawati, 2021; Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). It is difficult for controllers to balance work and family time in arranging and working from home, which is one of the obstacles that controllers face during the control process. The conflict is one of the impacts on information quality (Chopra et al., 2020; Agusiady et al., 2023). It is a challenge to the mental and physical health of the controllers.

Information quality is affected by the controller's performance (Akrimi, 2021).

Finally, the significant interaction of the controller with the controlled firm is a condition for developing a connection. Controllers are having difficulty obtaining appropriate control evidence from controlled firms due to restrictions on mobility. It depends on the controller's perception of communication and support to gain acceptance from the controlled firm (Reyes et al., 2021). Most communication with controlled firms and confirmation letters to third parties during COVID-19 are done via email. It leads to a long time to receive and respond, or even impossible to carry out the confirmation procedure because the parties involved do not arrange enough personnel to work during COVID-19. Control procedures are limited by the controlled firm's ability to communicate with management. It may affect the adequacy of control evidence, affecting information quality (Saleem, 2021).

COVID-19 affects all sectors globally. It changes processes, procedures, and ways of doing things. The pandemic affects controllers' work because of the government's social distancing regulations and the connection between controllers and audit firms, relatives, communities, and even controlled firms. The purpose of the study is to examine the factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic that affect information quality in Vietnamese audit firms. Based on an overview of previous studies, the study proposes the hypotheses as follows:

- H1: Government policies impact the information quality of Vietnamese audit firms during COVID-19.*
- H2: The connection between controllers and audit firms impacts the information quality of Vietnamese audit firms during COVID-19.*
- H3: The connection between controllers, relatives, and the community impacts the information quality of Vietnamese audit firms during COVID-19.*
- H4: The connection between controllers and controlled firms impacts the information quality of Vietnamese audit firms during COVID-19.*

2. METHODOLOGY

The study conducted a survey of 347 controllers of Vietnamese audit firms in 2023. Survey subjects are controllers who participated in the control of financial statements during COVID-19. According to Table 1, 195 respondents are audit juniors (56.20%). Next, 88 are control team leaders (25.36%), and senior positions represented by managers, directors, and partners are indicated by 32, 24, and 8 respondents (18.44%).

Table 1. Statistics of survey participants

Respondents	Number	Rate (%)
Partner	8	2.31%
Director	24	6.92%
Manager	32	9.22%
Senior	88	25.36%
Junior	195	56.20%
Total	347	100.00%

The questionnaire consists of 26 questions, of which 21 questions represent four independent factors (government policy, the connection between the controller and the audit firm, the connection between the controllers, relatives, and the community, and the connection between the controller and the controlled firm) and five questions represent one dependent factor (information quality). The survey questionnaire is presented in Appendix A. Seven-point Likert is considered appropriate for measuring the representative factors of the study.

The study develops a scale from the controller's perspective because it is the object of direct implementation and monitoring of information quality. Besides, the controller's perspective is consistent with the study's survey. The study implements quantitative data through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and the ordinary least squares (OLS). Inheriting from previous studies, the study establishes the regression equation as follows:

$$QUALITY = \beta_1 \cdot POLICY + \beta_2 \cdot GROUP + \beta_3 \cdot WORK + \beta_4 \cdot CONTROL + \varepsilon, \quad (1)$$

where *QUALITY*: Information quality; *POLICY*: Government policy; *GROUP*: The connection between the controller and the audit firm; *WORK*: The connection between the controllers, relatives, and the community; *CONTROL*: The connection between the controller and the controlled firm; $\beta_{i(i=1,2,3,4)}$ – Coefficient of independent factors; ε – error.

3. RESULTS

To satisfy statistical significance, Cronbach's Alpha should be higher than 0.6, and the Corrected Item–Total Correlation higher than 0.3 (Watkins, 2008). Based on Table 2, all the factors of the model have Cronbach's Alpha coefficient higher than 0.769. The scale of the factors reaches the standard and has good reliability. All observed factors have Corrected Item–Total Correlation ranging from 0.531 to 0.771 (higher than 0.3), so the study concludes that 26 observed factors satisfy the conditions for conducting exploratory factor analysis.

Watkins (2008) acknowledges that Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) ensures statistical significance when it is higher than 0.5 and less than 1. The significance of Bartlett's test should be less than 0.05. Table 3 shows that the coefficient of Kaiser-Meyer-

Olkin is 0.864, which meets the requirements. Therefore, the scales included in the factor analysis are meaningful, and the research model is suitable for the proposed factors. Moreover, the results of Bartlett's test show a significance equal to 0.000 and less than 0.05. It means that the scales have a linear connection and are suitable for exploratory factor analysis.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.864
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1204.642
	df	294
	Sig.	.000

The convergence and dispersion values of the scales are based on the rotation matrix. These factor weights are all greater than 0.5 (Watkins, 2008). According to Table 4, these factor weights

Table 2. Summary reliability of the scales

Factors	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Cronbach's Alpha is 0.804				
POLICY2	11.6397	6.374	.604	.784
POLICY5	10.4812	6.845	.582	.716
POLICY3	10.7604	5.782	.607	.631
POLICY4	11.4451	6.679	.596	.705
POLICY1	10.6714	5.803	.531	.712
Cronbach's Alpha is 0.873				
GROUP1	18.4672	21.327	.712	.716
GROUP7	19.5386	22.681	.668	.851
GROUP3	19.6017	22.462	.754	.843
GROUP6	18.4892	21.504	.517	.824
GROUP5	19.3028	23.367	.765	.819
GROUP4	18.4682	22.441	.671	.846
GROUP2	19.1452	22.702	.771	.832
Cronbach's Alpha is 0.816				
WORK3	10.8345	9.316	.607	.708
WORK5	9.6048	8.527	.681	.684
WORK1	10.5816	9.664	.572	.751
WORK4	9.4791	9.973	.594	.647
WORK2	9.7406	8.962	.603	.781
Cronbach's Alpha is 0.769				
CONTROL1	7.2048	3.127	.605	.748
CONTROL4	8.3607	3.653	.738	.737
CONTROL3	7.0612	4.902	.549	.721
CONTROL2	7.4075	4.032	.601	.752
Cronbach's Alpha is 0.814				
QUALITY2	8.2074	4.712	.671	.743
QUALITY5	7.8602	4.508	.618	.687
QUALITY3	8.3174	3.336	.549	.764
QUALITY1	7.6143	3.604	.652	.628
QUALITY4	7.8072	3.597	.572	.804

are in the range of 6.82 to 8.54 and are indeed representative of those factors. Therefore, there are four factors, including government policies (POLICY) with five scales, the connection between the controller, the control team, and the audit firm (GROUP) with seven scales, controller connection with family (WORK) with five scales, and controller connection with the controlled firm (CONTROL) with four scales.

Table 4. Rotated component matrix

Factors	Component			
	1	2	3	4
POLICY1	.704			
POLICY2	.712			
POLICY3	.758			
POLICY4	.763			
POLICY5	.801			
GROUP1		.726		
GROUP2		.714		
GROUP3		.837		
GROUP4		.729		
GROUP5		.703		
GROUP6		.781		
GROUP7		.782		
WORK1			.791	
WORK2			.682	
WORK3			.746	
WORK4			.784	
WORK5			.794	
CONTROL1				.854
CONTROL2				.712
CONTROL3				.769
CONTROL4				.783

Linear correlations assess the connection between each independent factor and the dependent factor and between the independent factors. To ensure statistical validity, the significance level of the factors should be less than 0.05 (Watkins, 2008). Table 5 shows that the correlation level between

Table 5. Correlations

Factors		POLICY	GROUP	WORK	CONTROL	QUALITY
POLICY	Pearson Correlation	1	.126	.341	.264	.216
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.012	.000	.041	.000
GRO UP	Pearson Correlation	.126	1	.361	.457	.618
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012		.000	.000	.000
WORK	Pearson Correlation	.341	.361	1	.302	.402
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
CONTROL	Pearson Correlation	.264	.457	.302	1	.609
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	.000	.000		.000
QUALITY	Pearson Correlation	.216	.618	.402	.609	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	

variables ranging from 0.126 to 0.618 is appropriate. There is a positive connection between the pandemic and information quality with the significance of each factor being less than 0.05.

The adjusted R square of Table 6 is 0.716, which means that four independent factors explain 71.6% of the variation in information quality. Moreover, the coefficient of Durbin-Watson is 1.752 and satisfies the condition of being higher than 1 and less than 3. This means that the model does not correlate with the residuals (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 6. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Durbin-Watson
1	.816	.742	.716	1.752

The F-test is used to test the fit of the model and whether the dependent factor is linearly correlated with the entire independent factor. The following hypotheses are proposed:

H_0 : The factors included in the model do not affect information quality.

H_i : The factors included in the model affect information quality.

Based on Table 7, the analysis of variance results shows that the significance is 0.000 and less than 0.05. As a result, the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected. It means that the independent factors in the model fit the data set, or the regression model has general significance for the population (Hair et al., 2010).

For the model to have no multicollinearity, the variance inflation factor (VIF) should be less than 10 (Hair et al., 2010). Table 8 shows the variance

Table 7. ANOVA

	Model	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	77.508	18.604	175.858	.000
	Residual	13.663	.131		
	Total	91.171			

inflation factor is less than 2, so it confirms that the model does not have multicollinearity. The regression coefficients of the three independent factors are statistically significant and less than 0.05. The results also elicit that the factors of the pandemic and information quality are positive, such as government policy (POLICY), the connection between the controller and the audit firm (GROUP), and the connection between the controllers, relatives, and the community (WORK). From the above results, the standardized regression equation is determined as follows:

$$QUALITY = 0.412 \cdot POLICY + 0.183 \cdot GROUP + 0.289 \cdot WORK. \quad (2)$$

Table 9 concludes that H1, H2, and H3 are accepted, while H4 is rejected.

4. DISCUSSION

The results align with Saleem (2021), Akrimi (2021), Munidewi et al. (2020), Reyes et al. (2021), Hazaea et al. (2022), Amaning et al. (2022), and Agusiady et al. (2023). The paper explains the foundation theories with the role of a third-party intermediary, the audit firm, to perform control of financial statements to ensure the quality of infor-

mation for stakeholders. The results show that all three factors of the pandemic positively affect the information quality of Vietnamese audit firms in the context of COVID-19, including government policies, the connection between the controller and the audit firm, and the connection between the controllers, relatives, and the community.

Government policy is a positive factor affecting information quality, which is recognized by Saleem (2021) and Amaning et al. (2022). This result is appropriate to the COVID-19 context in Vietnam because the government's social distancing policy limits travel, making it difficult for controllers to perform control activities. Accordingly, it is matched by timely support policies from the Vietnamese government and professional associations. The active support of state agencies and professional organizations will contribute to increasing information quality. At the same time, the government's policy needs to flexibly adapt regulations on quality reports to suit the context of COVID-19.

For the connection between the controllers, relatives, and the community, the result is similar to Akrimi (2021), Munidewi et al. (2020), and Agusiady et al. (2023). This factor also positively affects information quality. That result reflects the

Table 8. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	2.743	1.051				
	POLICY	.506	.023	.412	.000	.684	1.461
	GROUP	.301	.016	.183	.000	.715	1.398
	WORK	.326	.034	.289	.002	.754	1.326
	CONTROL	.416	.262	.374	.586	.831	1.203

Table 9. Hypotheses testing results

Hypotheses	Results
H1 (Government policy)	Meaning (positive)
H2 (The connection between the controller and the audit firm)	Meaning (positive)
H3 (The connection between the controllers, relatives, and the community)	Meaning (positive)
H4 (The connection between the controller and the controlled firm)	No meaning

characteristics of people when they have to support each other during the COVID-19 pandemic. Controllers working from home have to balance work and family. They have to complete the tasks assigned by the business and have to complete the work and responsibilities to the family. Moreover, controllers must be flexible in scheduling time between professional work and family affairs. Regarding the responsibility and professional ethics of controlling, the control work is fully performed with the required control procedures carefully, thoroughly, and promptly for the relevant control regulations.

Finally, regarding the connection between the controller and the audit firm, the result is consistent with Akrimi (2021), Hazaea et al. (2022), and Agusiady et al. (2023). The paper shows a positive connection between this factor and information quality. Teams working from home need to increase the intensity of interaction and support each other to solve difficulties on time. The audit firms have quickly applied new and flexible working policies for the control team and controllers to be appropriate to ensure the quality of work. The attention and encouragement from the leader and control team to create motivation at work will help increase the efficiency of work quality.

Based on the research results, the study proposes some policies to maintain and improve the information quality of Vietnamese audit firms in the context of COVID-19 including state management agencies, relatives, the community, and audit firms.

First, the Ministry of Finance of Vietnam needs timely guidance to implement online control procedures and processes to ensure information quality. Due to the prolonged distancing period, the Ministry of Finance should allow audit firms and controlled firms to use electronic signatures on financial statements. In addition, it should allow

the postponement of the submission of audited documents to the financial statements to help audit firms have enough time to ensure information quality. The Ministry of Finance cooperates with audit firms to develop electronic control records and tools to adapt to work from home to match the trend of digital transformation.

Second, while working in groups, team members should increase interaction and communication among team members, especially with the leader. Controllers should increase the exchange of information, especially via video call during a certain period of the control period, about issues that arise so that the control team can resolve them on time. Leaders need to clearly define and communicate what is expected of team members and respect and encourage employee suggestions. Due to the pandemic situation, team members need to share and support each other's work. Moreover, the control team needs to be self-disciplined in updating specialized knowledge and researching new regimes and policies. The control team should have additional and alternative procedures in the control process to be able to ensure information quality.

Finally, audit firms should pay attention to improving control of human resources, and the remuneration and benefits of employees should be given due attention. To ensure benefits for employees, the audit firm should apply a flexible salary increase and reward regime for controllers who make great contributions. Audit firms also need to support sharing difficult issues of controllers on time and should regularly encourage the morale and work motivation of controllers. Audit firms need to build a convenient and secure data center to collect information and data from the controlled firm. Audit firms should invest in the development of control software suitable for the control programs of many audit firms in the world.

CONCLUSION

The quality of finance reports is important for information users when evaluating an enterprise's business activities. It is an essential basis for implementing the decisions of stakeholders. The study aims to test the impact of government policy and the controller's connection with relevant parties on the information quality of Vietnamese audit firms in the context of COVID-19. Exploratory factor analysis from the observed variables is extracted into four factors: government policy, connection with the audit firm,

relatives, the community, and controlled firm. The results demonstrate factors that positively affect information quality, where government policy has the strongest impact. The study also provides evidence that controllers' connection with the audit firm is lower than that of relatives and the community in the context of COVID-19. Meanwhile, the results do not find a connection between controllers and controlled firms. This result is consistent with the stakeholder theory in harmonizing interests to ensure information quality for relevant users.

The study also provides useful resources for controllers in audit firms about factors affecting information quality. It is a useful document for controllers interested in control activities. The analysis contributes to supporting stakeholders in understanding controllers' difficulties in special circumstances. Above all, coordination between relevant parties is needed to ensure information quality in any situation.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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APPENDIX A

Table A1. The scale of factors in the research model

Item	Survey content
The scale of the information quality	
QUALITY1	The reliability of information for users
QUALITY 2	Transparency and relevance of information
QUALITY 3	Consistent with auditing standards
QUALITY 4	Comply with relevant legal regulations
QUALITY 5	The ability to detect material misstatements in financial statements
The scale of government policy	
POLICY1	Travel restrictions according to state policy
POLICY2	The transfer and receipt of data/documents is interrupted
POLICY3	Implement quarantine when infected
POLICY4	Information technology support for working online
POLICY5	Limit contact with guests
The scale of the connection between the controller and the audit firm	
GROUP1	Unstable psychology of controllers
GROUP2	Doubt about career
GROUP3	Work support among control team members
GROUP4	Limitations in direct communication between controllers
GROUP5	Efficiency in team management
GROUP6	Attention from an audit firm
GROUP7	Pressure from an audit firm
The scale of the connection between the controllers, relatives, and the community	
WORK1	Working space
WORK2	Influenced by relatives
WORK3	Work-life balance
WORK4	Harmony between self and family
WORK5	Impacted by social community
The scale of the connection between the controller and the controlled firm	
CONTROL1	Limit communication with a controlled firm
CONTROL2	Information exchange is limited
CONTROL3	Lack of customer cooperation
CONTROL4	Customer interaction is not frequent