

## An Exploration of Accounting Student's Perspective on Factors Influencing Audit Career Choice

Nor Aishah Mohd Ali, Khair Syakira Bustamam\*, Amilia Saidin, Siti Azrina Adanan, Ai'eshah Abdullah Sani  
Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Melaka, Kampus Alor Gajah, Melaka, Malaysia  
aishah72@uitm.edu.my, \*ksyakira069@uitm.edu.my, amilia580@uitm.edu.my, azrina@uitm.edu.my,  
aieshah124@uitm.edu.my

Corresponding Author: Khair Syakira Bustamam

**Abstract:** This study aims to explore the factors influencing undergraduate accountancy students at Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka branch to pursue careers in auditing. A structured questionnaire, distributed to participants via Google Forms, was employed to gather feedback from the students. The participants, categorized based on their academic levels, represent various stages of both theoretical and practical exposure to auditing subjects. The research team administered a questionnaire to evaluate accounting students' perceptions and intentions on the factors influencing careers in auditing. There is a strong positive correlation between job security and career intention followed by career development and a moderately significant positive correlation between job satisfaction and financial reward toward students' intention to become auditors. A general lack of interest in the profession and concern about work-life balance contribute to the challenges of not pursuing a career in audit. Students perceived that real exposure to the auditing profession via academic visits, engaging experts through seminars, and interactive teaching methods could bridge the gap between academic learning and professional practice. Enhancing the alignment of educational offerings with industry requirements and students' career aspirations with curriculum development, enhancing teaching methods, and partnerships between academia and industry will assist accounting students in developing a positive view of auditing careers and better preparedness for their future careers in this field.

**Keywords:** *Auditing, auditing education, career, accounting students*

---

### 1. Introduction

The role of auditors is very crucial in achieving financial transparency and accountability in the ever-changing business world. It's also among the most prevalent concerns on how to attract and retain young professionals as they are key players who will shape tomorrow's accounting profession. Nonetheless, the number of trained accountants joining public practice continues to decline and this shortage may grow worse in the future. According to the AICPA 2023 Trends Report, bachelor's degree completions in accounting declined 7.8% between 2021 and 2022, following a consistent decline of 1-3% every year from 2015-2016. Consequently, audit firms could encounter substantial challenges in retaining staff and keeping graduates on the audit path for a sufficient duration (Pauzi et al., 2021). There is a significant shortage of accountants in the country. This is due to increasing regulatory pressures, as well as challenges in hiring and bringing in talent. Accounting and auditing jobs are often viewed as lower-paying, less valued, and less exciting compared to careers in tech, investment banking, and private equity (Poo, 2024).

Prior studies revealed that accounting students may not intend to pursue a career in auditing due to numerous factors. Factors such as the high workload and pressure associated with auditing roles, insufficient professional training opportunities, negative perceptions of auditing as stressful and monotonous, and a mismatch between students' personalities and the characteristics required for auditing roles contribute to their lack of interest in pursuing an auditing career (Kurniawati, 2022; Tetteh et al., 2022). According to the Malaysian Economic Transformation Program in 2010, stated that Malaysia aimed to produce 60,000 accountants in the nation by 2020. However, subsequent data from the Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA) revealed that, as of June 2023, there were more than 38,500 members in its registry (Poo, 2024). The data is almost half of the expected number required which imperatively could be worse in the future. Auditing, as an integral part of the accounting degree curriculum, plays a vital role in shaping the education and professional development of aspiring accountants where its strategic component is designed to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and ethical foundation necessary for a successful career in accounting. The inclusion of auditing as a required subject for accounting students at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia (UiTM) is a strategic and foundational aspect of the curriculum. For the Bachelor of Accountancy program at UiTM, students will enroll in auditing subjects in semester 4 (Basic Auditing), semester 6 (Advanced Auditing), and semester 7 (Internal Auditing).

This requirement is to provide students with well-rounded theoretical knowledge and prepare them for the multifaceted challenges they will encounter in professional practice. Auditing is often a key component for professional accreditation and certification in the field of accounting. Professional accounting bodies such as the Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA), emphasize the importance of auditing knowledge for aspiring accountants. By making auditing a requirement in the bachelor program curriculum, UiTM ensures that graduates are well-positioned to pursue professional certifications and memberships once they graduate.

In this regard, the primary objective of this study is to explore factors that influence accounting students' intentions to choose auditing as their profession. Secondly, the study aims to examine the perceived challenges in choosing an auditing career. By exploring the motivations, influences, and perceived barriers that students experience when thinking about auditing careers, this research will help in understanding what motivates individuals into this professional practice. By addressing these questions, this study seeks to provide insights relevant to academia, policymakers, and industry players helping them understand further what makes students opt for certain careers. The results of this research could lead to improvements in curriculum design strategies, outreach initiatives by industry, or even mentoring strategies that could enhance learning and create future auditors capable of adapting to the business environment.

The remaining part of this article is structured as follows. The following sections provide a review of pertinent literature, followed by a discussion of the methodology. Next, the findings and discussion section address the results of the study, while the concluding section explores the conclusion, drawbacks, and recommendations for future research.

## 2. Literature Review

### Nature and Scope of Audit

Auditing is essential in financial and corporate governance fulfillment, as it offers stakeholders an impartial assessment of internal control systems, operational activities, and financial statements to evaluate their accuracy, completeness, and compliance with relevant standards and regulations (Sapiri, 2024). The process is evidence-based, utilizing the accumulation and analysis of verifiable data to conclude. Audit activities should be carried out by qualified and independent auditors. Auditors' independence pertains to their ability to perform their responsibilities without any unwarranted influence or conflicts of interest, therefore maintaining impartiality and objectivity (Cohen, Krishnamoorthy, & Wright, 2019). Subsequently, an opinion is conveyed regarding the reliability of financial records or the efficacy of internal processes through auditing. The auditor's opinion is one of the primary results of an audit. This typically takes the form of an audit report that states whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, in the context of financial audits. The opinion may be unqualified (clean), qualified, adverse, or a disclaimer, contingent upon the findings. However, the audit process only serves to provide reasonable assurance but does not guarantee the correctness of the financial statements.

In the new business era, auditing's role has expanded and diverse. Audit may include business risk assessment and addressing complexities in financial instruments which helps in financial crisis identification and prevention (Sapiri, 2024). In addition to this, Saeed et al., (2024) explored the auditing role in ensuring sustainability in corporate practice. The study suggests that high audit quality in external governance assists companies in minimizing their waste generation, thus promoting better sustainability. The Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA) also highlighted the importance of sustainability knowledge among accountants to accommodate the wide practice of sustainability activities among firms in Malaysia. The institute has supported the agenda by facilitating the implementation of the sustainability blueprint, promoting stability within the profession, and supporting efforts to enhance professional skills. Next, with the increasing numbers of Shariah compliance firms, there is a need for competent and qualified Shariah auditors to conduct audits for these institutions. This requires a certain set of abilities, particularly in developing an understanding of *fiqh muamalat* (Ali, Shahimi & Shafii, 2018).

In light of the evolving contemporary function of auditing which imposed several challenges to the auditing profession, it necessitates a diverse range of abilities among young and experienced auditors. Therefore, skill development should commence at the university throughout the classroom learning session. Through their

university education, graduates will acquire theoretical knowledge of audit procedures and enhance their skills through internship which has been embedded in the curriculum. It is necessary to augment such talents among students to meet the demands of the present business environment. Furthermore, academic institutions should actively promote and support students in their pursuit of a profession in auditing. By demonstrating and reinforcing the favorable outcomes associated with the role of an auditor, educators can assist students in their decision to pursue a career in auditing (Tetteh et al., 2022).

### **Factors Influencing Undergraduates' Choice to Pursue a Career in Auditing**

A branch of accounting that is distinct from financial reporting, taxation, risk management, and other disciplines is auditing. Auditing is a distinct area of expertise within the subject of accounting that entails scrutinizing financial records and statements to verify their precision and adherence to regulatory standards. Comprehending the determinants that drive accounting graduates to choose auditing professions is crucial for educational institutions, companies, and legislators. This literature review examines a range of internal and external factors that impact the choices made by graduates when deciding to pursue a career in auditing. Furthermore, this section synthesizes findings from empirical studies, offering insights into the motivations, deterrents, and influences that shape their career decision. Among others, the review covers a broad spectrum of factors, including financial reward, opportunity for career development, job security, job satisfaction, and parental and peer influence.

**Financial Reward:** Numerous factors influence the decision to pursue a career in auditing, and financial incentives are frequently a significant factor. Extensive research suggests that financial compensation has a crucial role in shaping career decisions among graduates (Bhatt & Khan, 2023; Wang & Wang, 2022; Kong, Ngapey, & Qalati, 2020). Financial rewards motivate employees through monetary compensation, including money, bonuses, allowances, benefits in kind, pension funds, or, in the Malaysian case, Employees Provident Fund (EPF) contributions by employers. These awards are given to employees who have made significant contributions to the company through their work, talents, and performance, aiding the organization in achieving its goals.

Accounting graduates perceived the accounting, including auditing, profession as akin to the potential for substantial financial rewards and high earnings. There exists a direct and substantial correlation between financial reward and the selection of a profession among accounting graduates, which extrinsically motivated them to pursue the career, (Tantular, Mardi & Fauzi, 2023; Marsintauli, Situmorang & Suminar, 2022; Kong, Ngapey, & Qalati, 2020; Uzman & Abeyrathna, 2021; Amarathunga & Ajward, 2018). The graduates also view the audit profession as demanding and professional, with exacting standards, and as a respected career due to its high pay despite being hectic and uninteresting (Wang & Wang, 2022). The perceived long-term lucrative nature of auditing as a profession serves as a strong incentive for students to choose it as a career path (Amondarain, Aldazabal, & Espinosa-Pike, 2023). For example, research affirmed that there is financial gain in pursuing a career in auditing, because, due to its legal requirement, auditors enjoy a consistent stream of revenue and are financially prosperous. The studies also indicated that auditors earn a substantial income because of the high fees associated with their profession, rendering it a lucrative occupation, and indicated that financial gain was the primary and first motivation for these students to consider pursuing a career in auditing (Tetteh et al., 2022).

On the other hand, some of them are not interested in auditing because they fear that it is a high-pressure job and does not pay well. In this regard, Pauzi et al., (2021) conducted a study and found out that though there is only a small number of students who have a passion for becoming professional auditors; others dislike it due to working under pressure and getting less remuneration. Additionally, students with minimal interest in auditing express a preference for alternative career paths such as entrepreneurship or business consulting. These findings highlight the need for industries such as auditing firms to address issues like working environment and competitive remuneration to attract and retain talent.

**Career Development:** The auditing profession is widely recognized for its demanding nature and vital function in assuring financial accountability and transparency. Students perceived that the auditing field offers more career opportunities (Graschitz, Holzknicht, & Steller 2023; Marsintauli, Situmorang & Seminar 2022). Students' intentions to pursue careers in auditing are influenced by job development opportunities, including

career advancement, learning new skills, and professional growth. A study conducted in Ghana among accounting graduates posits that they are motivated to think about pursuing careers in accounting following graduation by opportunities for job advancement (Amaning, et al., 2020). In comparison to other professions, the respondent believes that the accounting field offers excellent prospects for advancement. Students also generally held a favorable impression of the audit profession and were confident in their ability to have successful careers in auditing (Pelzer & Nkansa, 2022).

The opportunity to have professional training also creates prospects for career development. It is a process of an organization providing and improving the skills of both potential and current employees, which offers direct advantages to employees in achieving the company's objectives efficiently and effectively. The study findings suggest that professional training plays a significant role in motivating students to choose careers as auditors as they are exposed to the real work environment. A survey, distributed by Saidin et al., 2023 to all employers of 230 interns, revealed that employers reported elevated levels of satisfaction with the accounting interns' technical, functional, communication, and organizational management skills. The positive feedback loop encourages more students to believe that their efforts in developing these skills will be recognized and rewarded in the workplace, making the profession of auditing more attractive to students who are deciding on a career path, as it suggests a supportive and appreciative work environment.

Accounting graduates anticipate receiving job training before commencing employment, both within and outside the school, to enhance their professionalism and get diverse work experiences (Wardayati, Wahyuni, & Arif, 2021). A study conducted in Vietnam by Thuy, Hanh & Hong (2022) found that students describe the auditing profession as an intriguing job that offers several prospects for professional growth, involves various activities, and makes major contributions to the community. They also view auditing as a challenging job that requires rigorous adherence to responsibilities. The data also indicates that auditors are perceived as very competent and ethical.

Although auditing careers offer perceived benefits in terms of employment development chances, there are also persistent obstacles. For example, the fast-paced advancement of auditing technologies and regulatory frameworks requires auditors to continuously enhance their skills and acquire new knowledge. Thus, recognizing and acknowledging the existence of obstacles is crucial for maintaining ongoing progress in the field.

**Job Security:** One of the most crucial factors when selecting a career is job security, especially for professions like auditing where changes in regulations and the economy can have an impact. Research constantly confirms that job stability and security are fundamental considerations for graduates when choosing to pursue a career in various branches of accounting, including auditing. Theoretical frameworks, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, offer a basis for comprehending how job security fulfills essential safety needs and influences career choices. Accounting students also hold the belief that the auditing profession provides employment stability, leading them to possess an ardent desire to obtain a professional auditing certificate and venture into this profession (Ilias et al., 2022; Jenkins & Camillo 2011).

Uzman & Abeyrathna (2021) reported that accounting graduates' decision to pursue a career in accounting is favorably and considerably influenced by employment stability. Comparable results depicted by Amarathunga & Ajward (2018) indicate that job security and stability have a positive and significant impact on accounting graduates' decisions to pursue careers in the field. In addition, Mustapha & Hassan (2012) conducted a study of final-year accounting students at a public university in Malaysia and discovered the choice of respondents to become professional accountants was found to be positively and significantly correlated with job security and stability, which in turn greatly motivated them to pursue professional qualifications.

Students' intentions to pursue careers in auditing are significantly influenced by their employment perceived stability and security. Students view the auditing profession as a secure and viable career path because of perceptions of stability, regulatory compliance requirements, and career growth chances. Talented students who value job security and long-term career stability in auditing can be drawn to and retained by auditing firms and educational institutions by addressing these characteristics.

**Job Satisfaction:** Job satisfaction among auditors plays a vital role in an organization because it will help to make sure that the productivity and performance of the company achieve targets or expectations. Auditors have essential roles in an organization because they have the right to declare in the audit report whether the financial statements of the company are prepared according to standards and with a true and fair view. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory is a prominent framework for assessing job satisfaction, emphasizing motivators and hygiene factors. The theory posits those factors like growth potential, promotion, praise, and achievement function as motivators, positively influencing job satisfaction (Chachar, Lothi & Naz 2022). About job motivation, the theory says that internal causes, including factors like accomplishments, advancement, the work itself, acknowledgment, and growth, promote job motivation. Job satisfaction is attributable to external factors such as the company's policies, the relationship with peers, the level of work security, the relationship with one's supervisor, the amount of money, and the working circumstances.

Saat, Halim, & Rodzalan (2021) applied Herzberg's Two Factor Theory to examine the factors that contribute to job satisfaction among auditors in Malaysia. The study found that there are strong positive correlations between job satisfaction and both internal and external determinants of motivation about job satisfaction. When it comes to job satisfaction, "achievement" and "growth" are the most important internal factors of motivation, while "company policy" and "relationship with supervisors" are the most important external factors of motivation. Additionally, Byrne, Willis, & Burk (2012) evaluated how well financial benefits, professional advancement, and job happiness are balanced. Their findings suggest that, although monetary rewards play a significant role in luring skilled individuals, job satisfaction is indispensable for preserving job contentment among accounting graduates.

Eventually, job satisfaction significantly influences students' inclination to pursue a profession in auditing. Factors such as the work environment, task completion, ability to accomplish challenging tasks, and organizational culture have a substantial impact on how students consider auditing as a career choice, affecting their job satisfaction. To boost overall job satisfaction within the auditing profession, auditing businesses and educational institutions can better prepare students for auditing careers by comprehending these dynamics.

**Family and Friends Influence:** Other than previous factors, graduates' job decisions are also influenced by social and cultural variables such as family expectations, peer influence, and public opinions of auditing as a respectable profession. From a Malaysian perspective, social impact does affect an accounting graduate's decision to work in that field (Muhamad et al., 2020).

Previous literature also suggests that undergraduates choose to pursue a career in auditing due to a complex interplay of intrinsic motivations, educational experiences, social influences, and perceived career benefits and deterrents. Thus, parental or peer influences influence accounting students' intention to pursue a career as a professional accountant (Srirejeki et. al, 2019). Kong et al., (2020) reported in their studies that family members significantly influence students' motivation to pursue a career in accounting. In addition, a study conducted from an Indonesian perspective discovers that family members who already have established careers in accounting may significantly, guide the students' interest and inclination toward following a similar career path as their relatives as such influence these students to choose a career in accounting (Hasiara et al., 2023).

The current study's findings suggest that students' propensity to pursue a career in auditing is impacted by their beliefs about their capacity to uphold ethical standards and their expectations of achieving favorable results, such as higher salaries and social status. Furthermore, the study shows that the factors that prevented students from choosing auditing as a career were self-efficacy beliefs, notably job stress and accounting stereotypes.

### 3. Methodology

This section explains the methodology used in this study. To gather data, a quantitative approach was employed. A structured questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to gather data from third- and final-year undergraduate accounting students at the Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka branch. The sample is limited to one institution to allow for more accurate analysis and controlling extraneous variables such as

differences in academic structures, teaching methods, and student services (Barra & Zotti 2017). According to Donina & Hasanefendic (2019), studies carried out in a single institution can produce more reliable findings because they eliminate the complexity brought about by various institutional governance systems and educational programs. The total 239 participants were divided into three groups, which are semesters 6, 7, and 8, ensuring a comprehensive insight into the diverse perspectives and experiences at various stages of their academic and practical exposure to auditing. Semester 6 students are currently enrolled in the Advanced Auditing course, which provides basic knowledge and insights into initial reactions and perceptions of the auditing field. Semester 7 students, who have completed the Advanced Auditing course and are currently exploring other elective subjects, such as Internal Auditing, also offer a retrospective evaluation of the impact of auditing education on their career aspirations. Semester 8 students, on the other hand, who are presently engaged in internships at auditing or accounting firms, will contribute real-world experiences and the influence of practical exposure on their career inclinations.

The questionnaire is divided into three main sections to ensure a comprehensive collection of data. The first section, Section A, encompasses demographic information. Section B employs a Likert scale question evaluating students' interests, motivations, and intentions to pursue a career in auditing. A 5-point Likert scale denotes 1 as representing "Strongly Disagree" and 5 representing "Strongly Agree". This section is integral to assessing the impact of educational experiences on students' views on the auditing profession. The responses may provide a correlation between factors influencing audit career choices, offering insights into the effectiveness of the current curriculum in fostering a positive perception of the auditing career. The last section, Section C, comprises two (2) open-ended questions eliciting qualitative insights into the factors influencing students' career choices. This section will provide a platform for participants to express their perspectives on the auditing subject learned. Once data was collected, the data was tested to determine its normality and reliability. The reliability test indicates that all items exhibit more than the acceptable range test of 0.7. Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7 are believed to indicate strong internal consistency. as the correlation between scales provided evidence for concept validity (Chung et.al, 1998). Further analysis using Stata software is done to present the findings and address the research questions of this study.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

##### Demographic information

The data were collected from 239 participants, comprising semesters 6, 7, and 8 students of the Faculty of Accountancy undergraduates of Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka branch, each representing various stages of exposure to auditing education and knowledge. Most of the respondents were female (178, 74.5%) with a significant total respondents of semester 6 students (126, 52.7%), followed by semester 7 (72, 30.21%) and semester 8 (42, 17.6%). The age distribution is uniform, with most students falling between the ages of 20 to 24 years old, the standard age for undergraduates in Malaysia. The demographic information is depicted in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Distribution of participants**

|               | Semester 6 | Semester 7 | Semester 8 | Total       |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| <i>Gender</i> |            |            |            |             |
| Male          | 32         | 23         | 6          | 61 (25.5%)  |
| Female        | 94         | 48         | 36         | 178 (74.5%) |
| <i>Age</i>    |            |            |            |             |
| 20- 24        | 126        | 71         | 38         | 235         |
| Above 24      | -          | -          | 4          | 4           |

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents' scores on their perception of factors influencing auditing careers. Based on the table, the respondents strongly agree with the statement "The auditing profession is challenging." (M=4.49, SD=0.04). The highest mean score for career development is represented by "IT skills and knowledge are important in pursuing the auditing profession" (M=4.30, SD=0.04),

while the lowest score among this respondent's career development presented by "I have participated in practical auditing projects or internship" (M=2.95, SD=0.08). This lower mean is explained by the lower number of semester 8 respondents. As for financial reward and job security, the mean score is the same (M=4.05, SD=0.05) for items "Salary prospects influence my interest in an auditing career" and "A competitive job market could be a barrier to pursuing an auditing career". The lowest mean score for job satisfaction shows "I have a good understanding of auditing principles" (M=3.74, SD=0.04) followed by "The challenge and variety of work influence my interest in an auditing career" (M=3.82, SD=0.05).

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of factors influencing audit career choice.**

| Variable   | Questions   | Mean   | Std Dev |
|--|---|--|---------|
| Financial reward   | Salary prospects influence my interest in an auditing career  | 4.05   | 0.05    |
| Career development   | I believe a career in auditing offers attractive job prospects and career growth                                    | 4.29   | 0.04    |
|  | I am interested in pursuing further education or certifications related to auditing                                 | 3.82   | 0.05    |
|  | I have had the opportunity to engage with auditing professionals or firms during my undergraduate studies           | 3.42   | 0.06    |
|  | I have participated in practical auditing projects or internship  | 2.95   | 0.08    |
|  | Professional development opportunities influence my interest in auditing career                                     | 4.00   | 0.05    |
|  | Lack of experience could be a barrier to pursuing an auditing career  | 4.25   | 0.04    |
|  | Lack of professional networks could be a barrier to pursuing an auditing career                                     | 4.03   | 0.05    |
|  | IT skills and knowledge are important in pursuing the auditing profession   | 4.30   | 0.04    |
|  | Job security  | Job security influences my interest in auditing career | 3.97    |
| A competitive job market could be a barrier to pursuing an auditing career |   | 4.05   | 0.05    |
| Job satisfaction   | The auditing knowledge I have received in both Auditing 1 and 2 has been practical and applicable to the real world | 3.92   | 0.05    |
|  | I am confident in my understanding of the roles and responsibilities of auditors                                    | 3.93   | 0.04    |
|  | I feel that the auditing profession is valued and respected in society  | 4.25   | 0.04    |
|  | I am aware of the ethical and professional standards expected in the auditing profession                            | 4.31   | 0.04    |
|  | I have a good understanding of auditing principles  | 3.74   | 0.04    |
|  | I believe that auditing can offer a fulfilling and rewarding career   | 4.23   | 0.04    |
|  | I am concerned about the workload and stress associated with a career in auditing                                   | 4.42   | 0.04    |
|  | The auditing profession is challenging.   | 4.49   | 0.04    |
|  | The challenge and variety of work influence my interest in an auditing career                                       | 3.82   | 0.05    |

**Factors Influencing Accountancy Students' Career Choices in Auditing**

This section presents data to determine the factors influencing accountancy students' career choices in auditing. It is also aimed to determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between all factors with the audit career choice. Results are presented in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Correlation between factors influencing audit career choice**

|                    | Career Score     | Job satisfaction | Career development | Financial reward | Job Security |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Career Score       | 1.0000           |                  |                    |                  |              |
| Job satisfaction   | 0.6215<br>0.0000 | 1.0000           |                    |                  |              |
| Career development | 0.7062<br>0.0000 | 0.5316<br>0.0000 | 1.0000             |                  |              |
| Financial reward   | 0.6905<br>0.0000 | 0.3384<br>0.0000 | 0.4082<br>0.0000   | 1.0000           |              |
| Job Security       | 0.8264<br>0.0000 | 0.5552<br>0.0000 | 0.5200<br>0.0000   | 0.5588<br>0.0000 | 1.0000       |

Table 3 shows the association between job satisfaction, career development, financial reward, job security, and career score. The career score represents the intention of students in pursuing a career in audit. Schober & Schwarte (2018) is referred to in determining the relationship's strength using the Spearman Correlation coefficient. Based on the table, all factors are statistically significantly correlated ( $p=0.01$ ). There is a strong positive correlation at the significance level between job security and career score ( $r = 0.8264$ ). Career development also strongly correlated with career score ( $r = 0.7062$ ). Furthermore, there is a moderately significant positive correlation between other factors which are job satisfaction and financial reward with career score ( $r = 0.6215, 0.6905$ ).

Next, regression analysis is done to further understand the factors that influence students' audit career choices. The table below depicts the result.

**Table 4: Regression result between factors influencing audit career choice.**

| Career Score       | Coefficient | Std. error | t     | p> t  | [95% conf. interval] |          |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|-------|-------|----------------------|----------|
| Job satisfaction   | 1.059178    | 0.287164   | 3.69  | 0.000 | 0.493422             | 1.624935 |
| Career development | 2.170326    | 0.237917   | 9.12  | 0.000 | 1.701593             | 2.639059 |
| Financial reward   | 1.450414    | 0.163377   | 8.88  | 0.000 | 1.128536             | 1.772291 |
| Job Security       | 2.829376    | 0.223863   | 12.64 | 0.000 | 2.388332             | 3.270419 |
| _cons              | 1.770957    | 0.993644   | 1.78  | 0.076 | -0.18667             | 3.728589 |

The overall result shows that the model is highly statistically significant, meaning that each of these factors has a significant impact on explaining the variation in career score ( $\text{Prob} > F = 0.0000$ ). The high R-squared value ( $R\text{-squared} = 0.8474$ ) suggests a good fit for the model and provides meaningful insights. The result shows that all factors are found to be important in influencing audit career choices, where job security is the most important factor. Subsequently, the factors are followed by career development, financial reward, and job satisfaction.



Furthermore, the result of ANOVA discovered weak evidence on the different groups of respondents (semesters 6, 7, and 8) regarding their audit career choices (Prob > F = 0.0554), meaning that the variances across the groups are likely similar. This result suggests that the auditing knowledge level among the respondents does not influence their intention to pursue an audit career. The respondents still have a similar view on audit careers whether they have basic audit knowledge, exploring advanced audit knowledge, or have practical audit knowledge.

### **Factors Addressing Challenges for Students to Pursue Careers in Auditing**

From the questionnaires, 17 students (7.1%) expressed their hesitance to pursue a career in auditing, citing several reasons that universities and educators need to address to better prepare and motivate students for this field. The primary reasons include perceived difficulties in the profession, a general lack of interest, and concerns about maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

**Perceived Difficulties:** Some of the students express that auditing is challenging and stressful. They mention the difficulty of catching up with the rigorous demands of auditing, a perceived lack of ability to analyze and differentiate errors, and a general fear of not having the confidence to perform well. Students made comments such as *"It's hard," "Demanding and draining,"* and *"I cannot analyze and differentiate what is wrong"* indicating a need for enhanced support and confidence-building measures. This is in line with Wang & Wang (2022), who discover that accounting graduates perceive the audit profession as rather demanding with high standards and seen as dull and hectic. As such universities could address these concerns by integrating more practical training and real-life case studies into the curriculum, which can help demystify the auditing process and build student confidence.

**Lack of Interest:** A considerable number of students simply state a lack of passion or interest in auditing as found in a study by Pauzi et al. (2021). Responses such as *"Not my passion," "No reason, just not interested,"* and *"Because I want to be a teacher"* suggested that while the auditing profession is positively perceived, it may not align with every student's personal or career aspirations. To help these students choose pathways that are more closely aligned with their interests, universities should think about providing additional opportunities for job exploration in the early stage of the program. Furthermore, utilizing creative and interactive teaching strategies and seminars to deliver auditing in a more relatable and interesting way may pique the interest of students who are still unsure of their career path.

**Work-Life Balance and Compensation Concerns:** Among the responses received from the respondents are concerns about work-life balance and compensation. Responses such as *"No work-life balance and compensation too little unless working in a big company," "Too much workload,"* and *"stressful work"* highlight the perceived demanding nature and stereotype of auditing careers. This perception may deter students who value a balanced lifestyle (Kurniawati 2022, Tetteh et. al., 2022) or who are wary of burnout. To alleviate these concerns, universities might provide more transparent information about the various career pathways in auditing, such as employment in smaller firms or less typical settings that may provide better work-life balance. Furthermore, engaging guest speakers to share positive experiences and successful work-life integration tactics may help transform the narrative and stereotype around auditing careers.

### **Student Perception for Better Preparing for Careers in Auditing**

Open-ended questions were asked in the questionnaire for the students to voice their opinions about how universities can better prepare students for careers in auditing. From the 228 feedback received, responses are categorized into these four main categories namely, 1. Exposure to real-world auditing & Practical Experience, 2. Enhanced Curriculum & Skills development, 3. Educational Resources & Support, and 4. Industry Engagement & Networking

**Exposure to Real-world Auditing & Practical Experience:** Some of the opinions gathered stated that universities should take proactive steps to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application by organizing field trips to audit firms and collaborating with both private sector firms and government agencies for specialized programs and internships. For instance, students suggested initiatives such as *"having a field trip to an audit firm and give the student the opportunities to see how the environment is"* and *"having a study trip to any audit firm such as Jabatan Audit Negara to provide them with a tangible*

understanding of the auditing profession. As one student suggested, universities should "*bring students to the real industries to look and learn how auditors work*" & other students emphasized that "*students also can see clearly what an audit is.*" Another student agreed with this sentiment, emphasizing the need to "*provide practical programs for students to expose them to real-world environments.*"

Such practical exposure not only helps students gain a clearer understanding of auditing practices but also allows them to observe the day-to-day operations of professional auditors. As students transition from theoretical to real-world exposure, this knowledge is essential to help them make informed career choices and strengthen their confidence.

**Enhanced Curriculum & Skills Development:** To further enhance students' preparedness for auditing careers, the respondents highlighted the necessity of practical knowledge and firsthand experience within the university curriculum. This includes incorporating audit practice, real-life scenarios, and workshops that simulate the complexities of auditing work. Students emphasized the need for training in audit-specific software and tools, with particular attention to technologies like Excel, which are commonly used in the field. One of the recommendations given by the student is to "*integrate training on audit technologies more often,*" while another suggested "*need more exposure to Microsoft skills, especially Excel*" highlighting its function in performing auditing tasks. By providing such technical training, universities can equip students with the skills necessary to navigate the technological landscape of modern auditing. Other respondents stated that "*make audit subjects fun and easy to learn in class*" while others stated, "*Expose students to using audit software and audit fieldwork like vouching, not only theory or conceptual auditing just like in the syllabus*" signaling that students are looking for more engaging and practical approaches to learning auditing. This feedback highlights the desire for a curriculum that is not only informative but also interactive and relatable, thereby fostering a more enjoyable and effective learning environment. The inclusion of practical courses and workshops led by industry experts can further enhance this aspect of their education, as one student proposed, "*Invite industry experts for workshops, create courses with practical experience, and make auditing a compulsory subject.*"

**Educational Resources and Support:** Students reported that universities should provide sample audit documents and tutorials, incorporate real-life audit scenarios into coursework, enhance access to study materials and answer keys, and actively monitor and guide students during internships to bolster educational resources and support. As reported by one of the students, "*Universities could enhance audit preparation by incorporating more practical, real-world case studies, fostering critical thinking skills, and offering opportunities for internships or co-programs with auditing firms*". This could include analyzing financial statements, conducting risk assessments, and navigating through common auditing scenarios.

Furthermore, active monitoring and guidance during internships were highlighted as crucial elements of support. According to Jinkens & Camillo (2011), work-integrated learning (WIL) has emerged as a promising approach to better align accounting education with the demands of the profession. By providing students with authentic, practical learning experiences, institutions can enhance their career preparedness and engagement with the accounting industry.

**Industry Engagement & Networking:** Students perceived that universities should increase their engagement with the auditing industry through various initiatives to improve career guidance and awareness. According to MIA Sustainability Blueprint Report 2024, accountants in public practice will play a key role in attracting the next generation into the profession by sharing their experiences in sustainability and showcasing it as a dynamic career choice, offering significant growth opportunities and exposure to a wide variety of experiences. One student suggested that universities should "*invite representatives from auditing firms to give talks to the students,*" while another proposed organizing "*seminars or talks with expert auditors to share their experience with us.*" Such interactions can provide students with insights into the career paths available within auditing, the challenges they may face, and the skills they need to succeed.

## 5. Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the factors, perceptions, and challenges of undergraduate students at Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka regarding a career in auditing. The result of the study shows that job

security is the most important factor that influences students in choosing an audit career, followed by career development, job satisfaction, and financial reward. Besides that, it is found that the auditing career intention has similar views among students who have different auditing knowledge. While students have a positive perception of the auditing profession, their interest in pursuing a career in this field is rather moderate as they perceive it as challenging and daunting. Another highlight in the study is the perceived lack of practical application in auditing education, with students expressing a desire for more real-world exposure and practical experience. This is underscored by the limited participation in practical auditing assignments or internships, which students believe are essential for building confidence and competence in the auditing field. Furthermore, a small but notable group of students are hesitant to pursue a career in auditing due to concerns about the challenges facing the profession, lack of personal interest, and issues related to work-life balance.

The findings provide significant insights for universities to better align their curriculum with the realities of the auditing profession, potentially through more engaging and practical learning experiences, enhanced career guidance, and greater industry engagement. In conclusion, while students recognize the value and challenges of a career in auditing, there is a clear need for educational institutions to address gaps in practical experience and provide more comprehensive support to help students make informed career choices and succeed in the auditing profession. This study catalyzes future research and development in auditing education, aiming for a harmonious blend of academic learning and professional aspiration which can minimize the gap that arises.

This study has limitations that need to be considered. The data used is not comprehensive because it only covers respondents from one institution, which may not represent the whole accounting students' perception. As a result, the conclusions drawn may not be generalizable to the entire population. Given the limitations of the current study, future research could greatly benefit from more comprehensive data from other universities and cultural backgrounds to enhance the generalizability of the study. Further studies could integrate qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the contextual factors contributing to students' intention to pursue a career in auditing. Employing longitudinal studies and investigating the role of technological advancements in future research could further give valuable insights that influence career prospects and in shaping students' perceptions in choosing auditing as a career.

## References

- Ali, N. A. M., Shahimi, S., & Shafii, Z. (2018). Knowledge, Skills, and Characteristics Requirements for Shari'ah Auditors. *Asian Journal of Accounting and Governance*, 9, 171-185.
- Amaning, N., Anim, R. O., Kyere, A., & Amankona, G. P. (2020). Determinants of Career Intentions of Accounting Students. *International Business Research*, 13(12), 14-26.
- Amarathunga, D.T., and Ajward, R. (2018). Factors That Influence the Perceptions of a Professional Accounting Career Among Management Undergraduates in Sri Lanka. *CA Journal of Applied Research*, 2(1), 87-107.
- Amondarain, J., Aldazabal, M. E., & Espinosa-Pike, M. (2023). Gender Differences in The Auditing Stereotype and Their Influence on the Intention to Enter the Profession. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance*, 37, 100784.
- Barra, C., & Zotti, R. (2017). What We Can Learn From the Use of Student Data in Efficiency Analysis Within the Context of Higher Education? *Tertiary Education and Management*, 23(3), 276-303.
- Bhatt, M. A., & Khan, S. T. (2023). Determinants of Accounting Students' Decision to Pursue a Career as ACCA-Certified Accountants: A Case Study of Omani Students. *Management & Sustainability an Arab Review*, 2(3), 217-238.
- Byrne, M., Willis, P., & Burke, J. (2012). Influences on School Leavers' Career Decisions-Implications for the Accounting Profession. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 10(2), 101-111.
- Chachar, S., Lothi, F., & Naz, N. (2022). Comparative Study in the Light of Herzberg's Two Factor Theory of Job Satisfaction Among Academic Staff in Public and Private Sector Universities of Islamabad. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 61(2), 91-112.
- Chung, K. C., Pillsbury, M. S., Walters, M. R., & Hayward, R. A. (1998). Reliability and validity testing of the Michigan Hand Outcomes Questionnaire. *The Journal of Hand Surgery*, 23(4), 575-587.

- Cohen, J., Krishnamoorthy, G., & Wright, A. (2019). Audit committee financial expertise and financial reporting quality: The moderating role of auditor industry specialization. *Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory*, 38(1), 21-47.
- Donina, D., Hasanefendic, S., (2019). Higher Education Institutional Governance Reforms in the Netherlands, Portugal and Italy: A Policy Translation Perspective Addressing the Homogeneous/Heterogeneous Dilemma. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 73(1):29-44.
- Graschitz, S., Holzknicht, S., & Steller, M. (2023). Perceived Attractiveness of Tax Consultancy and Auditing Professions: Insights from a German-Speaking Area. *Sage Open*, 13(1), 1-25.
- Hasiara, L. O., Kinanthi, L., Rahman, F., & Hamdayani, S. (2023). The Influence of Family on Student Interests in Determining Careers in Accounting Professions. *SOSHUM: Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora*, 13(2), 137-145.
- Ilias, A., Baidi, N., Ghani, E. K., & Rahman, R. (2022). Factors Driving the Intention to Pursue Internal Auditing Certification and Career Among Future Graduates in Malaysia. *Universal Journal of Accounting and Finance*, 10(2), 549-558.
- Jinkens, R. C., & Camillo, A. A. (2011). Recruiting, Retention, and Succession Planning of Accountants: An Investigation of the Determinants of Career Choice for Accounting Students. *Working Paper Series*, from [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1907612](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1907612)
- Kong, Y., Ngapey, J. D. N., & Qalati, S. A. (2020). Effects of Financial Rewards, Parents and Peers, and Benefits and Costs on Choosing Accounting Career: A Global Perspective. *Journal of Asian Finance Economics and Business*, 7(11), 157-167.
- Kurniawati, K. (2022). Analisis Faktor-Faktor yang Mempengaruhi Minat Mahasiswa Jurusan Akuntansi dalam Memilih Karir sebagai Auditor (Studi Kasus pada Mahasiswa Akuntansi Angkatan Tahun 2019 Universitas Wahid Hasyim. *Journal of Mandalika Literature*, 3(4), 241-249.
- Marsintauli, F., Situmorang, R. P., & Suminar, S. R. (2022). Understanding the Drivers' Factors for Choosing an Accounting Student's Career as a Professional Accountant. *Business Economic Communication and Social Sciences (BECOSS) Journal*, 4(2), 133-144.
- Muhamad, H., San, O. T., Katan, M. B. H., & Ni, S. W. (2020). Factors Influencing the Personal Interest, and Behavioral Intention to Become an Accountant in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(2), 773-785.
- Mustapha, M., & Hassan, M. H. A., (2012). Accounting Students' Perception on Pursuing Professional Examination. *International Journal of Education*, 4, 1-15.
- Pauzi, N. F. M., Bustamam, K. S., Shamsudin, A., Roslan, N., Ahmad, K., & Karim, M. S. (2021). Accounting Graduates' Mindset towards Career in Auditing Profession. *International Journal of Academic Research in Accounting Finance and Management Sciences*, 11(3), 364-376.
- Pelzer, J. E., & Nkansa, P. (2022). Why Aren't More Minority Accounting Students Choosing Auditing? An Examination of Career Choice and Perceptions. *Accounting Education*, 31(4), 347-369.
- Poo, C. P. (2024). Malaysia is far from the 2030 target of 60,000 accounting professionals. *The Edge Malaysia*. <https://theedgemaalaysia.com/node/673451>
- Saat, M. M., Halim, N. S. A., & Rodzalan, S. A. (2021). Job Satisfaction Among Auditors. *Advanced International Journal of Banking, Accounting, and Finance*, 3(7), 72-84.
- Saeed, A., Zafar, M. W., Manita, R., & Zahid, N. (2024). The Role of Audit Quality in Waste Management Behavior. *International Review of Economics & Finance*, 89, 1203-1216.
- Saidin, A., Adanan, S. A., Sani, A. A., & Bustamam, K. S. (2023). Employer's Satisfaction on Accounting Internship in the Digital Learning Environment. *Information Management and Business Review*, 15(3(1)), 298-305.
- Sapiri, M. (2024). A Qualitative Analysis of the Role of Auditors in Preventing Financial Crises. *Golden Ratio of Auditing Research*, 4(2), 89-106.
- Schober, P., & Schwarte, L. A. (2018). Correlation Coefficients: Appropriate Use and Interpretation. *Anesthesia and Analgesia*, 126(5), 1763-1768. <https://doi.org/10.1213/ANE.0000000000002864>
- Srirejeki, K., Supeno, S., & Faturahman, A. (2019). Understanding the Intentions of Accounting Students to Pursue Career as a Professional Accountant. *Binus Business Review*, 10(1), 11-19.
- Tantular, A. P., Mardi, & Fauzi, A. (2023). The Role of Extrinsic Motivation as a Mediator between Job Market Considerations and Financial Rewards for Student Career Selection. *Luxury: Landscape of Business Administration*, 1(2), 61-77.

- Tetteh, L. A., Agyenim-Boateng, C., Kwarteng, A., Muda, P., & Sunu, P. (2022). Utilizing the Social Cognitive Career Theory in Understanding Students' Choice in Selecting Auditing as a Career: Evidence from Ghana. *Journal of Applied Accounting Research*, 23(3), 715-737.
- The 2023 AICPA Trends Report (2023). Professional Insights AICPA & CIMA. In <https://www.aicpa-cima.com/professional-insights/download/2023-trends-report>
- The Malaysian Institute of Accountants. (2024). MIA Sustainability Blueprint for The Accountancy Profession Integrating Sustainability into the Accountancy Profession. In <https://mia.org.my/mia-sustainability-blueprint-for-the-accountancy-profession-the-blueprint/>.
- Thuy, N. T. T., Hanh, D. T. T., & Hong, M. H. T. (2022). Students' Perception of the Auditing Profession in Vietnam: The Effect of Proximity and Knowledge on Auditors' Stereotypes. *Cogent Business & Management*, 9(1).
- Uzman, M. F. M., & Abeyrathna, G. (2021). Factors Influencing the Perception to Become a Professional Accountant (Special Reference to Students who are following Higher National Diploma in Accountancy at Advanced Technological Institute Kegalle). *Journal of Academic Sessions Advanced Technological Institute-Kegalle*, 14-22.
- Wang, X., & Wang, Y. (2022). Undergraduate Students' Perception of Audit Course: Based on The Interview of Accounting Students. *Advances in Social Science, Education, and Humanities Research*. Vol.653, 719-724.
- Wardayati, S. M., Wahyuni, N. I., & Arif, A. (2021). Career as an Internal Auditor: Analysis on Determinant Factors of Accounting Students' Choice Toward This Career Path. *Quality-Access to Success*, 22(185), 155-163.