

**EFFECT OF AUDIT COMPLIANCE PARAMETERS ON REGULATORY FILING
TIMELINESS OF SOME SELECTED LISTED COMPANIES IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study examines the effect of audit compliance parameters on the regulatory filing timeliness of some selected listed companies in Nigeria. Regulatory filing timeliness is measured by the number of days between the financial year-end and the date the auditor signs the financial statements, while audit compliance parameters are represented by audit firm size, audit tenure, and audit committee size. Using a panel dataset of 42 firms over ten years (2012-2021), comprising 420 firm-year observations, the study employs a descriptive and correlational research design. Secondary data were collected using a convenience sampling approach and analyzed using Feasible Generalized Least Squares (FGLS) regression. The hypotheses tested explore the relationship between each audit compliance parameter and regulatory filing timeliness. The findings show that audit firm size, audit tenure, and audit committee size all have a positive and statistically significant effect on the regulatory filing timeliness of listed firms in Nigeria. The results of the study suggested that larger audit firms, longer audit tenures, and effective audit committees contribute to timely financial disclosures. The study recommends that firms engage reputable auditors, maintain stable auditor relationships, and strengthen auditcommittee composition to enhance timeliness in

financial

reporting.

Keywords: Audit compliance parameters, regulatory filing timeliness listed companies

1.0 Introduction

Timeliness in accounting refers to how quickly financial information is made available for decision-making. It is a vital qualitative attribute that directly impacts the relevance of financial reports. Even when financial statements contain accurate and complete data, their usefulness diminishes if the information is not delivered on time (IASB, 2018). In developing markets like Nigeria, where investor confidence is already fragile, timely financial reporting is essential for promoting transparency, supporting capital market efficiency, and encouraging sound investment decisions (Efobi & Okougbo, 2015).

Financial reports serve as a key source of information for investors and other market participants in assessing a firm's past performance and future prospects (Li, Zhang & Wang, 2014). In Nigeria, regulatory bodies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) have set statutory deadlines for submitting audited financial reports. For instance, the SEC mandates that listed companies submit their audited reports by March 31 following the financial year-end of December 31. The amended Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA, 2020) also requires firms to prepare and submit their audited accounts within three months of year-end. Despite these requirements, many firms continue to breach filing deadlines, resulting in penalties, reputational damage, and increased uncertainty for investors (Gbadeyanka, 2018; Komolafe, 2016).

Despite statutory mandates and corporate governance frameworks, persistent delays in regulatory filings remain widespread among Nigerian listed firms. Several reports have documented significant penalties imposed on companies for non-compliance. For example, the SEC and Nigerian Exchange (NGX) imposed fines of N64.9 million, N26.3 million, N10.5 million, and N148.3 million on defaulting firms in 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2017, respectively. In 2018 alone, 38 companies were penalized N429.5 million for late filings, affecting their capacity to declare dividends and eroding investor confidence (Asiriwuwa, Adeyemi & Uwuigbe, 2021).

While prior research has investigated determinants of financial reporting timeliness, much of it has focused on corporate governance, firm characteristics, or industry effects, with limited attention to audit-specific parameters. Studies by Adebayo and Adebisi (2016), Al Daoud et al. (2015), and Ahmed and Che-Ahmad (2016) examined the effects of board composition and firm profitability, but few have empirically assessed the direct impact of audit firm size, audit tenure, and audit committee structure on timeliness. Moreover, existing studies tend to over-represent financial sector firms, leaving out diverse sectors where regulatory filing behavior may differ significantly.

This study fills this gap by focusing on Audit Compliance Parameters, specifically, audit firm size, audit tenure, and audit committee size. and their effect on Regulatory Filing Timeliness among a cross-sectoral sample of listed firms in Nigeria. The study also contributes by employing panel regression using Feasible Generalized Least Squares (FGLS), while anchoring

the analysis on Resource-Based Theory, which explains how internal capabilities such as experienced auditors and committee structure may influence performance outcomes like disclosure timeliness.

Understanding the determinants of timely financial disclosure is crucial, not only for internal governance but also for investor confidence and market discipline. As Nigerian firms face growing scrutiny from both local and international stakeholders, strengthening the timeliness of their financial disclosures is essential for sustaining access to capital and aligning with global reporting standards. Section 3 discusses the methodology employed for the study. In section 4, the results of the data analysis are presented and discussed. Section 5 concludes the study by highlighting the findings and their policy implications.

2.0 Literature Review

This section reviewed relevant studies on Audit Compliance Parameters (using audit firm size, audit tenure, and audit on Regulatory Filing Timeliness

Audit Firm Size and Regulatory Filing Timeliness

Timely Financial Disclosure has been defined in various ways depending on the perspective of the study. Mohammed, Alrub, and Ntim (2013), describe it as the time difference between a firm's financial year end and the completion of the audit work by the independent auditor. Ashton, Graul and Newton refer to it as the audit delay, which represents the number of days it takes to complete an audit from the end of the fiscal year to the date the auditor signs the report.

Modugu, Eragbhe, and Ikhatua argue that larger audit firms, such as the Big Four, tend to reduce delays in audit completion due to superior resources and expertise. Pratama (2018), studied companies on the LQ45 index in Indonesia between 2012 and 2014 and found that profitability, operational complexity, and audit firm size all had a statistically significant impact on timely financial reporting. Larger audit firms were associated with more efficient processes and earlier filings. Similarly, in a related study, Hartwig, Hansson, Nielson and Sorqvist (2023) examined Swedish private firms and found that those audited by Big Four firms demonstrated better timeliness than those audited by smaller firms. Interestingly, they also observed that the presence of an audit improved timeliness when combined with profitability, but unaudited firms showed weaker performance on this front. Their findings reinforce the argument that firm-level audit resources and experience play a critical role in reducing audit lag.

Audit Tenure and Regulatory Filing Timeliness

The timeliness of financial reporting plays a crucial role in the decision-making process of financial statement users, as it impacts their economic decisions based on historical information. (Yuliasuty, Asmara and Situant, 2018) examine the influence of audit tenure and firm size on audit delay and its subsequent impact on timeliness. The population for this research comprises consumer goods companies listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX) from 2014 to 2016. Purposive sampling was employed, resulting in a sample of 30 companies

with a total of 90 observations over three years. The data collected consists of audited financial statements obtained from the Indonesian Stock Exchange. The analysis utilized both the outer model and inner model through the SmartPLS 3.0 software. The findings indicate that neither audit tenure nor firm size had a statistically significant effect on audit delay. However, the audit delay itself was significantly associated with the timeliness of disclosure, which suggests an indirect relationship.

Singer and Zhang (2018) investigated the relationship between audit firm tenure and audit quality, using the promptness of misstatement discovery as an indicator. They address the issue of endogeneity and find that longer audit firm tenure is associated with delayed detection and rectification of misstatements, suggesting a negative impact of extended auditor tenure on audit quality. They employ the non-voluntary auditor change after the demise of Arthur Andersen in 2002 as a natural experiment and compare the discovery time of misstatements between companies that switched auditors during that period and those that retained their auditors. Interestingly, they found that longer tenure was linked to delayed detection, possibly due to overfamiliarity and reduced skepticism. However, they also noted that the Sarbanes Oxley Act moderated this effect. Their analysis highlighted that companies that switched auditors experienced faster discovery of misstatements, suggesting that fresh auditor perspectives could improve timeliness.

Despite some conflicting evidence, there remains support for the idea that moderate audit tenure, particularly within the early years of engagement, helps auditors become more familiar with a company's processes, which may enhance audit efficiency. However, overextended tenure may compromise objectivity, suggesting that tenure effects may be nonlinear.

Audit Committee Size and Regulatory Filing Timeliness

Syofyan, Septiari, Dwita and Rashmi (2021) investigated the relationship between the audit committee (AC) and reporting quality, specifically focusing on reporting timeliness in the Indonesian context. The effectiveness of the AC is measured based on factors such as committee size, expertise or competence of its members, and meeting frequency. The researchers analyzed data from 240 observations spanning 48 manufacturing companies listed on the Indonesian Stock Exchange (IDX) from 2014 to 2019. They employ a logit regression analysis to test their hypotheses. Despite some conflicting evidence, there remains support for the idea that moderate audit tenure, particularly within the early years of engagement, helps auditors become more familiar with a company's processes, which may enhance audit efficiency. However, overextended tenure may compromise objectivity, suggesting that tenure effects may be nonlinear.

In addition, Odjaremu and Jeroh, (2019) assessed the impact of audit committee attributes on the reporting timeliness of listed firms in Nigeria. The researchers collected firm-level secondary data from the financial statements of 21 randomly selected firms over six years (2012-2017). They employed an ex-post facto research design and used descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including regression analysis, to analyze the data. The study aimed to empirically examine the relationship between audit committee attributes (such as size, independence, and diligence) and the timeliness of financial reporting in Nigerian corporate entities. Their findings revealed a significant relationship between committee characteristics such as size, independence, and diligence, and the timeliness of financial reports. They

recommended that firms strictly comply with governance thresholds and that regulatory bodies should monitor audit committee activities more closely.

Although findings vary, the literature supports the notion that a well-structured audit committee can positively affect timely disclosure, especially when it includes diverse expertise and meets frequently. Committee size may act as a proxy for diversity of oversight, but actual effectiveness depends on activity and independence.

Theoretical Framework

Timely financial disclosure is a qualitative attribute of financial reporting that supports transparency, decision-making, and capital market efficiency. Various theoretical perspectives can help explain the behavior of firms to how quickly they disclose audited financial information. This study draws on three major theories to support its investigation of audit firm size, audit tenure, and audit committee size as determinants of disclosure timeliness: the Resource-Based Theory, Disclosure Theory, and Stakeholder Theory.

The Resource-Based Theory asserts that a firm's internal resources determine its capacity to perform efficiently. Applied to audit compliance, this theory suggests that the use of larger audit firms and maintaining longer audit tenures offer firms the advantage of greater audit experience, sector knowledge, and continuity. These are intangible assets that improve internal control, reduce the risk of delay, and promote timely reporting. In this context, a company engaging a Big Four audit firm is likely to benefit from more efficient auditing procedures due to access to well-trained staff, standardized processes, and superior regulatory knowledge. Similarly, longer audit tenure allows auditors to become more familiar with the firm's systems and records, which can lead to a more streamlined audit process.

The Disclosure Theory explains that" firms have an incentive to disclose information on time to signal financial transparency, reduce information asymmetry, and attract investor trust. According to this theory, firms with better compliance structures, such as well-established audit committees or reputable audit firms, are more likely to report on time to preserve their reputation and signal credibility. For example, a firm with a larger and more effective audit committee is better positioned to detect and resolve reporting issues early. The theory assumes that the act of disclosing financial reports quickly sends a positive message to the market and supports the valuation of the firm by showing that it has nothing to hide. Thus, firms use timely disclosure as a signaling tool to differentiate themselves from less compliant or distressed entities.

Stakeholder Theory argues that the interests of all stakeholders, shareholders, regulators, lenders, employees, and the public, must be considered in corporate decision-making. From this perspective, timely financial disclosure is a responsibility that firms owe to their stakeholders. A well-functioning audit committee can play a key role in ensuring that management fulfills this responsibility by monitoring financial reporting timelines. Since delays in financial reporting can result in penalties, investor distrust, or regulatory sanctions, firms that are responsive to stakeholder needs tend to adopt governance mechanisms that reduce these risks. Therefore, audit committee size, as a measure of governance strength, can be linked to timely disclosure through the lens of stakeholder accountability.

The theories adopted in this study provide a comprehensive view of why certain audit-related characteristics may influence financial reporting timeliness. The Resource-Based Theory links audit firm size and tenure to internal capacity and efficiency. Disclosure Theory explains how timely filing enhances market credibility. Stakeholder Theory underlines the importance of accountability and the role of oversight bodies in protecting stakeholder interests.

To achieve the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses are tested.

H₁: Audit firm size does not significantly influence regulatory filing timeliness

H₂: Audit tenure does not significantly influence regulatory filing timeliness

H₃: Audit committee size does not significantly influence regulatory filing timeliness

3.0 Methodology

Research design is a crucial aspect of a study, serving as a master plan that outlines the collection and analysis of data. In this study, a descriptive and correlational research design was adopted to examine the relationship between Audit Compliance Parameters and Regulatory Filing Timeliness. The panel data analysis approach was employed, utilizing annual reports and accounts as the main data source. The choice of this design was justified by the study's objective and the availability of secondary data. Following a deductive approach within the positivist paradigm, a quantitative method was used to test the relationship between the variables. The study focuses on some selected companies listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange (now Nigerian Exchange Group as of 2022) as of December 31, 2022. Out of the 160 Companies in the population, 42 were used to represent the adjusted population from 2012 to 2021, considering certain criteria such as the availability of audited financial reports, complete information for the study period, and non-delisting from the Nigerian Exchange Group. A mix of stratified sampling techniques and convenience sampling was deployed to select the companies for the study. The panel multiple regression was employed to test the research hypotheses, given the panel nature of the data and consistency with previous empirical studies.

The study focuses on listed companies in Nigeria as of December 31, 2022. From a population of 160 firms, 42 companies were selected based on the availability of complete financial data between 2012 and 2021 and continuous listing status. A stratified sampling technique was first applied by categorizing companies across ten sectors: agriculture, conglomerates, construction and real estate, consumer goods, healthcare, information and communication technology, industrial goods, oil and gas, services, and natural resources. Within each sector, convenience sampling was then used to select firms with complete annual reports for the period under review. This dual sampling approach ensured sectoral representation and accessibility of relevant secondary data.

The dependent variable, Regulatory Filing Timeliness (RFT), is defined as the number of days between the end of a firm's financial year (31st December) and the date the auditor signs the financial statement, as used by McGee (2008). The audit compliance parameters used in this study are operationalized as follows:

Table 1

Variable Measurement

Parameter	Measurement	Source
Audit Firm Size (AFS)	Binary variable: 1 = Big Four, 0 = non-Big Four	Modugu, Eragbhe, and Ikhatua (2012)
Audit Tenure (AT)	Binary variable: 1 = ≥ 3 year, 0 = < 3 years	Odjaremu and Jeroh (2019)
Audit Committee Size (ACS)	Number of audit committee members on the board	Study Definition

Source: Authors' compilation, 2024.

Model Specification

To estimate the relationship between audit compliance parameters and timely financial disclosure, the following panel regression model was specified and tested using Feasible Generalized Least Squares (FGLS):

$$RFT_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AFS_{it} + \beta_2 AT_{it} + \beta_3 ACS_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

Where:

RFT_{it} = Regulatory Filing Timeliness

AFS_{it} = Audit Firm Size

AT_{it} = Audit Tenure

ACS_{it} = Audit Committee Size

β₀ = Intercept

β₁, β₂, β₃ = Coefficients of the variables

ε_{it} = Error term

All variables were measured consistently with existing literature. The model was tested for multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, autocorrelation, and model appropriateness using standard diagnostic tools, and results guided the choice of FGLS estimation.

4.0 Data Analysis and Discussion

The descriptive statistics of the explained and the explanatory variables are presented in Table 2 where the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of the data for the variables in the study are described.

Table 2.

Summary of descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	skewness	kurtosis
RFT	125.709	96.676	147	234	4.041	25.056
AFS	.416	.493	0	1	.341	1.116
AT	.812	.391	0	1	-1.597	3.549
ACS	4.774	.993	2	6	.015	2.056

Source: Stata Output (2024).

From Table1, the mean value of regulatory filingtimeliness (RFT) is 125.71 days, and the standard deviation is 96.68 days. The minimum regulatory filingtimeliness is 126 days, while the maximum is 234 days. The mean of regulatoryfilingtimeliness of 125.71 days signifies that, on average, the external auditors of the listed sampled firms in Nigeria took approximately 126

days before their annual reports were audited and signed. The standard deviation of approximately 97 days indicates a high variability of the data from the mean. That is, there is high variability in the number of days taken by the external auditors of sampled listed firms in Nigeria to sign their audited annual reports.

According to the data from the Table, the average audit firm size was found to be 0.416 This average value indicates that 41.6% of the sampled of some listed companies in Nigeria during the study period were audited by the four largest audit firms, known as the "big 4" (KPMG, PWC, Ernst and Young, Akintola Williams Deloitte). Conversely, the mean value of 41.6% suggests that 58.9% of the sampled selected listed firms are audited by non-big 4 audit firms in Nigeria during the investigation period. These findings indicate that the audit firms are not predominantly controlled by the Big 4 audit firms in Nigeria, with only a large number of non-Big 4 firms conducting audits for the selected listed firms in the country. The minimum and maximum values of audit firm size observed during the study period were 0 and 1, respectively. These values suggest that auditor size is measured using a binary variable. A value of 1 indicates that the company was audited by a Big 4 audit firm, while a value of 0 indicates otherwise.

During the study period, the mean value of auditor tenure was 0.812, indicating that approximately 81.2% of the selected firms retained their auditors for three years or more. This suggests that more than half of the audit firms in the selected sector enjoy long-lasting relationships with their clients, allowing them to gain in-depth knowledge of the client's specific practices and financial reporting, leading to more effective audits. Additionally, the mean implies that only around 81.2% of the sampled companies may have had auditors for less than three years during the study period. It should be noted that auditor tenure was measured using a binary variable, taking a value of one for companies that retained auditors for three years or longer and zero otherwise. Therefore, the minimum and maximum values of auditor tenure were zero and one, respectively. The average audit committee size, as shown in Table 1, is 4.77. The standard deviation is 0.993, suggesting that the member of the audit committee is not widely dispersed among the selected listed firms in Nigeria. The minimum and maximum are 2 and 6 members, respectively.

Normality Distribution of the Data

The normality distribution of the data is another paramount assumption of regression, considered a condition for parametric test analysis. This is because one of the parametric test conditions is that the data must be normally distributed across the variables for the test to stand for generalization. However, it was argued that normality should be assessed on the residuals of the model, rather than the data, where the dependent variable determines the type of parametric analysis to be conducted. Thus, this study conducted a normality test on the residuals of the model using the Shapiro-Wilk test.

Table 3.
Shapiro-Wilk W Test for Normal Data

Variable	Obs	W	V	Z	Prob>z
Resid	420	0.999	0.400	-2.195	0.986

Source: Stata Output (2024).

The value of the p-value for the model is 0.986, as obtained in Table 3 for the Shapiro-Wilk. Since the value is greater than a 5% (0.05) level of significance, the null hypothesis that the data is normally distributed across the models cannot be rejected. For this reason, this study concludes that the residual of the model is normally distributed.

Test for Multicollinearity

The non-existence of multicollinearity is a key assumption of linear regression analysis. Multicollinearity occurs when the independent variables are not independent of each other. Multicollinearity is examined using tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values. The result of the multicollinearity test is shown in Table 4.

Table 4:
Collinearity Test

	VIF	1/VIF
AFS	1.11	.901
AC	1.107	.903
AT	1.007	.993
Mean VIF	1.075	.

Source: Stata Output (2023)

Based on the evidence presented in Table 4, it can be concluded that there is no multicollinearity problem. This is because the VIF values for all the variables are less than 10, and the tolerance values for all the variables are greater than 0.10 (rule of thumb).

Heteroscedasticity Test and Autocorrelation Test

Heteroskedasticity arises when the error terms along the regression are not equal. The presence of heteroscedasticity violates the homoscedasticity assumption and may lead to a wrong inference. In this study, heteroskedasticity was tested using Breusch Pagan’s test.

Table 5:
Heteroskedasticity Test

	Hetest
Chi2	8.309
P-value	0.0298

Source: Stata Output (2024).

The study adopted GroupWise to test for the existence of heteroskedasticity. The study revealed a Chi-Square of 8.309 with a p-value of 0.0298. This implies the presence of heteroskedasticity for the model; it also means that the constant residual (homoscedastic) and the null hypothesis are rejected.

Autocorrelation Test

Table 5.

Chi2	2.979
P-value	0.1100

Source: Stata Output (2024)

The presence of auto/serial correlation violates the assumption of longitudinal data, which is one key attribute of panel data. The Wooldridge test for autocorrelation was adopted to test for the presence/absence of auto/serial correlation. The criteria were to accept H_0 = No Autocorrelation if P-value is greater than 5% and accept H_1 = Presence of Autocorrelation if P-value is less than 5%. The result obtained from the table above shows that there absence of Auto/serial correlation in the Model, as the P-values (0.1100) is greater than 5%.

Hausman Specification Test

In order to decide the more effective between the fixed effect and the Random effect, researchers often rely on the Hausman (1978) specification test. The Hausman test is designed to detect violations of the random selection modeling assumption that the error is constant across the residuals are constantly distributed. The result of the Hausman test is shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6.
Hausman Test

	Hausman
Chi2	1003.99
P-value	0.000

Source: Stata Output (2024).

In order to choose the best model between the fixed effect and random effect estimates, the Hausman specification test was carried out. However, the null hypothesis is that the random effect estimate is appropriate, while the alternative hypothesis is that the fixed effect estimate is appropriate. The result of the Hausman test shows that the probability value of 0.000 with a chi-square value of 1003.99 is less than a 5% significance level. This implies that the study cannot reject the null hypothesis, which states that a fixed effect estimate is appropriate. Due to the presence of heteroscedasticity, panel corrected standard error (PCSE) was found suitable for the analysis.

Regression Result

Cross-sectional time-series FGLS regression

Variables	Coef.	St.Err.	t-val	p-val	Sig
AFS	.068	.015	4.25	.000	***
AT	1.496	.107	13.94	.000	***
ACS	.041	.020	2.00	.045	
Constant	1.426	.304	4.69	.000	***

Mean dependent var	5.531	SD dependent var	0.840
Number of obs	452.000	Chi-square	2052.966
Prob > chi2	0.000	Rsquared	81.96

Source: Stata Output (2024).

Results and Discussion

The panel regression model was estimated using the Feasible Generalized Least Squares (FGLS) method. This choice was based on diagnostic test outcomes that revealed the presence of heteroscedasticity and model-specific violations, which made FGLS more efficient than Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) or fixed/random effects estimators. The Hausman test results supported the use of fixed effects, but heteroscedasticity detection led to FGLS being more appropriate for robust estimation of standard errors.

Audit Firm Size

The regression coefficient for audit firm size was positive and statistically significant. This indicates that companies audited by Big Four audit firms tend to experience improved timeliness in financial reporting, as measured by shorter regulatory filing delays. The expertise and institutional reputation of Big Four firms likely contribute to more efficient audit processes, thereby reducing the number of days between the fiscal year-end and the signing of audited financial statements. This supports prior findings by Modugu, Eragbhe, and Ikhatua (2012) and aligns with the Resource-Based Theory, which views reputable audit firms as valuable organizational resources.

Audit Tenure

Audit tenure also showed a positive and significant effect on regulatory filing timeliness. Firms that retained their auditors for three or more years recorded shorter audit delays compared to those with shorter tenure. This suggests that familiarity between the auditor and client facilitates more efficient audits, confirming the view that longer tenure improves audit quality and reporting efficiency. These findings align with Odjaremu and Jeroh (2019) and reinforce the theory that accumulated auditor knowledge over time enhances the quality and speed of the audit process.

Audit Committee Size

Audit committee size was positively and significantly related to regulatory filing timeliness. Firms with larger audit committees tended to submit their financial statements earlier. This may be due to the broader expertise and oversight capacity that comes with larger committees. These results suggest that audit committees contribute to stronger internal control and monitoring, thereby supporting timely disclosures. The findings are consistent with those of Syofyan et al. (2021) and Odjaremu and Jeroh (2019), and are theoretically explained through Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes the role of oversight in meeting stakeholder expectations.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that all three audit compliance parameters, firm size, tenure, and committee size, are significant predictors of financial reporting timeliness. The positive direction of the coefficients implies reduced audit delays, thus improving the

timeliness of disclosure. These results validate the study's theoretical propositions and support the rejection of all three null hypotheses.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the effect of audit compliance parameters on regulatory filing timeliness among selected listed companies in Nigeria. Using panel data from forty-two firms across ten sectors and employing the FGLS regression method, the study found that audit firm size, audit tenure, and audit committee size each had a significant positive effect on the timeliness of audited financial disclosures.

The findings indicate that companies audited by larger, more established audit firms are more likely to submit their reports within the regulatory deadline. This is attributed to the broader expertise and resources of the Big Four audit firms, which enhance audit efficiency. Similarly, audit tenure was found to improve timeliness, as longer auditor-client relationships foster familiarity and procedural understanding, leading to faster audit completion. Lastly, firms with larger audit committees tend to disclose their reports earlier, likely due to improved oversight and decision-making capacity.

Based on these findings, several practical and policy-oriented recommendations are presented:

- i.** Companies should prioritize the selection of well-established audit firms with proven experience in handling complex reporting environments. Regulatory bodies such as the SEC and the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria may also consider setting minimum quality standards or establishing public audit firm ratings to promote informed selection by firms.
- ii.** While maintaining auditor independence, listed companies should consider sustaining moderately long audit relationships. This promotes familiarity without compromising objectivity. Regulatory bodies could guide optimal tenure thresholds that balance continuity and independence.
- iii.** Companies should aim to constitute audit committees that reflect a balance of professional diversity and size. Rather than meeting minimum compliance numbers, boards should include members with relevant financial expertise. Regulatory authorities may consider issuing sector-specific guidelines that define best practice benchmarks for audit committee composition.

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