



# Company Complexity and Audit Delay: The Moderating Effect of Audit Committee Chair Accounting Expertise

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of company complexity on audit delay and the moderating effect of audit committee chair accounting expertise. The object of this study is the sector of property and real estate companies listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (BEI) for the 2018–2022 period. Based on the purposive sampling used, there were 34 companies that met the criteria. The analysis technique used is PLS-SEM using WarpPLS 8.0. This study shows that company complexity has a positive and significant effect on the audit delay. The higher the company complexity of its subsidiary, the higher the audit delay can be. Furthermore, the audit committee chair accounting expertise variable mitigates this effect. Previous research did not examine the role of audit committee chair accounting expertise in the complex situation that related to the higher audit delay. Theoretically, this research contributes to the study of agency theory. Practically, this research is useful for companies to monitor their audit process within the company through audit committee chairs who have accounting expertise that can reduce the length of the audit delay and complete their duties more effectively and in a timely manner.

## Introduction

The timeliness of audited financial reports is an important factor for interested parties in making decisions (Baatwah et al., 2019). Delays in presenting audited financial reports become a problem that must be avoided. This is commonly known as the audit delay. Audit delay is the number of days between the end of the financial year report and the audit report being signed, where the shorter number of days indicates greater timeliness (Baatwah et al., 2019). Audit delay becomes a kind of uncertainty. Furthermore, investors will assume that a delay in presenting audited financial reports is a sign that the company's health condition is not good or is experiencing losses (Nabil et al., 2023). In practice, auditors can take quite a long time to complete the audit program if there are poor internal controls, complexity of operations, or a large number of transactions that must be confirmed. The Indonesian institution, namely the Financial Services Authority (OJK), issues regulations regarding the period for publication of audited financial reports through 29/POJK.04/2016, which states that audited annual reports must be issued no later than the end of the fourth month or 120 days after the financial year ends (Pratiwi & Wiratmaja, 2018; Ginanjar et al., 2019; Manajang & Yohanes, 2022; Balqis & NR, 2023; Yastari & Nelvirita, 2023).

OJK has taken steps to tighten financial report publication regulations, such as administrative sanctions for companies that are still late in publishing their audited financial reports, but there are still many companies that are late in publishing their audited financial reports. The delay in issuing the audited

financial reports has a crucial impact on investor confidence in making decisions (Manajang & Yohanes, 2022). The phenomenon relating to audit delays is not something new. On May 9, 2022, the Indonesia Stock Exchange announced that there were 91 companies that had not submitted their financial reports and annual reports since December 31, 2021. The regulator of the Indonesia Stock Exchange provided written warnings to these 91 companies because of their delay in reporting audited financial reports (CNBC, 2022). There was also a phenomenon relating to audit delays in property and real estate subsector companies, where this subsector was recorded as the largest of the 30 companies that were late in presenting audited financial reports ending on December 31, 2019.

The topic of audit delay has become something that has attracted the attention of researchers in their studies. Based on the research that has been conducted, there are factors that have been analyzed for their influence on the audit delay. Internal factors that have been studied regarding audit delay are tax avoidance (Khamisah et al., 2023), financial distress (Khamisah et al., 2023), internal control system (Yastari & Nelvirita, 2023a), managerial ownership (R & Nelvirita, 2023), profitability (Amaliyah, 2021), solvability (Isnaeni & Nurcahya, 2021), firm size (Ginanjari et al., 2019; Amaliyah, 2021; Manajang & Yohanes, 2022; R & Nelvirita, 2023), *audit effort* (Wijayanti & Effriyanti, 2019), company complexity Pratiwi & Wiratmaja, 2018; (Ginanjari et al., 2019; Dewi & Challen, 2019; Wijayanti & Effriyanti, 2019; Isnaeni & Nurcahya, 2021; Amaliyah, 2021; Ambia et al., 2022; Manajang & Yohanes, 2022; Yastari & Nelvirita, 2023; R & Nelvirita, 2023; Balqis & NR, 2023; Nabil et al., 2023; Khamisah et al., 2023), operating profit/loss (Nabil et al., 2023; Ginanjari et al., 2019), *investment opportunities set* (Balqis & NR, 2023), earnings management (Isnaeni & Nurcahya, 2021), *audit committee chair accounting expertise* (Abernathy et al., 2014; Ghafran & Yasmin, 2018; Baatwah et al., 2019; Al-Ebel et al., 2020; IFRS implementation (Wijayanti & Effriyanti, 2019), audit committee chair's accounting and financial expertise (Abernathy et al., 2014), audit committee chair's monitoring expertise (Ghafran & Yasmin, 2018), CEO religiosity (Al-Ebel et al., 2020), CEO's and audit committee chair's accounting expertise (Al-Ebel et al., 2020).

External factors that have been studied regarding audit delay are *audit fee* (Khamisah et al., 2023), audit opinion (Ermian Challen & Puspa Dewi, 2019; Isnaeni & Nurcahya, 2021; Ambia et al., 2022; Nabil et al., 2023), size of public accounting firm (Amaliyah, 2021; Manajang & Yohanes, 2022; Ambia et al., 2022), audit tenure (Pratiwi & Wiratmaja, 2018; Ambia et al., 2022; Yastari & Nelvirita, 2023), auditor reputation (Balqis & NR, 2023), and COVID-19 pandemic (Manajang & Yohanes, 2022).

Previous research regarding the influence of company complexity on audit delay shows various results. Company complexity refers to the condition where a company has many branches or operating units, so that auditors need sufficient time to complete their audit work in the process of examining the transactions (Amaliyah, 2021). The more complex a company is, the longer the time required for the auditor to carry out the audit work, considering that the auditor will first complete the audit of the subsidiary's financial statements before finally auditing the parent company (Manajang & Yohanes, 2022). Studies by Pratiwi & Wiratmaja (2018), Isnaeni & Nurcahya (2021), Amaliyah (2021), Hilal Al Ambia et al. (2022), and Khamisah et al. (2023) show that company complexity has a positive effect on audit delay. These results are different from those conducted by Ermian Challen & Puspa Dewi (2019), Wijayanti & Effriyanti (2019), Ginanjari et al. (2019), Manajang & Yohanes (2022), Yastari & Nelvirita (2023b), R & Nelvirita (2023), Balqis & NR (2023), and Nabil et al. (2023), which show that company complexity has no effect on audit delay.

Baron & Kenny (1986) state that if there are inconsistencies in the results of the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable, then there are factors that might moderate (strengthen or weaken) this relationship. Therefore, it is interesting to examine the influence of company complexity on audit delay and add the audit committee chair's accounting expertise as a moderating variable. Audit Committee Chair Accounting Expertise is the accounting expertise possessed by the audit committee in the company (Baatwah et al., 2019). A study by Bala et al. (2022) provides evidence that audit committee accounting expertise is a moderating factor in operational aspects and accounting methods in the company. Baatwah et al. (2019) stated that audit committee chair accounting expertise has a negative effect on audit delay, which means that audit committee chair accounting expertise helps

increase the timeliness of audit reports and increases their role in monitoring related to the process of completing the audit process. Companies that have many subsidiaries will become increasingly complex and complicated. To carry this out, the audit committee chairman must have the ability and expertise in the field of accounting so that there are no irregularities in the accounting records of the subsidiaries. The process of publishing and presenting financial reports will be completed on time. When the complexity of the company's operations is high but the audit committee has accounting expertise, it will accelerate the completion of the auditor's report. Based on the arguments that have been described, the questions in this research are: How does company complexity affect audit delay? And how does audit committee chair accounting expertise moderate the relationship between company complexity and audit delay?

### **Hypothesis Development**

#### **The Effect of Company Complexity on Audit Delay**

Company complexity refers to the condition where a company has many branches or operating units, so that auditors need sufficient time to complete their audit work in the process of examining the transactions (Amaliyah, 2021). The more complex a company is, the longer the time required for the auditor to carry out the audit work, considering that the auditor will first complete the audit of the subsidiary's financial statements before finally auditing the parent company (Manajang & Yohanes, 2022). The longer the time that auditors take to complete their audit program, the greater the risk of delays for the company to publish its audited financial reports (audit delay). Based on the agency theory perspective, the number of subsidiaries indicates that the company has complex operating activities. Agency theory relates to the timeliness of the presentation of financial reports, which explains that the more complex a company is, the more likely it is that managerial problems will arise. Furthermore, complex relationship patterns will occur, and information asymmetry will arise between the agent and the principal (Ulum, 2011). This will cause delays in the presentation and publication of the company's financial reports (audit delay).

Delays in presenting audited financial reports will have an impact on uncertainty, where an investor will assess the company based on the timeliness of presenting its financial reports. The longer the presentation process takes, the more it indicates that the company is in bad condition. Previous research conducted by Khamisah et al. (2023), Isnaeni & Nurcahya (2021), Amaliyah (2021), dan Hilal Al Ambia et al. (2022), show that company complexity has a positive influence on audit delay. This means that if a company has increasingly complex operational activities, it will cause audit delays due to the increased time needed for auditors to complete their audit program. Based on the arguments that have been described, the first hypothesis of this research is formulated as follows:

**H<sub>1</sub>: Company complexity has a positive effect on audit delay.**

#### **The Moderating Effect of Audit Committee Chair Accounting Expertise in the Influence of Company Complexity on Audit Delay**

The audit committee chair's accounting expertise is the accounting expertise possessed by the audit committee chair and can be referred to as an accounting expert if the audit committee chair's has qualifications and experience in accounting or auditing, such as experience as a public accountant, CFO, controller, or treasurer (Baatwah et al., 2019). An audit committee chairman who has accounting expertise will improve the quality of financial reporting. Therefore, delays in presenting financial reports and annual reports can be avoided. Agency theory relates to the timeliness of the presentation of financial reports, which explains that the more complex a company is, the more likely it is that managerial problems will arise. Furthermore, complex relationship patterns will occur, and information asymmetry will arise between the agent and the principal (Ulum, 2011).

Companies that have many subsidiaries will become increasingly complex and complicated. To overcome this condition, the audit committee chairman must have the ability to have accounting expertise so that there are no irregularities in the accounting records of the subsidiaries. The process of publishing and presenting financial reports will be completed on time. When the complexity of the company's operations is high but the audit committee has accounting expertise, it will accelerate the

completion of the auditor's report. A study by Baatwah et al. (2019) shows that audit committee chair accounting expertise can reduce the length of audit delay. Based on the arguments that have been described, the second hypothesis of this research is formulated as follows:

**H<sub>2</sub>: Audit committee chair accounting expertise can mitigate the positive influence of company complexity on audit delay.**

## Method

### Sampling and Data Collection

This research is a causality study that aims to determine the influence of company complexity on audit delay and the role of audit committee chair accounting expertise as a moderating variable. The objects of this research are property and real estate companies listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (BEI) for the 2018–2022 period. Property and real estate companies are companies that operate in the service sector by providing facilities for regional development and industrial businesses. The stages of data sample collection are described as follows:

**Table 1. Purposive Sampling**

Criteria of the sample	Amount
Property and real estate companies listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (BEI) for the 2018–2022 period	85
Companies that do not publish audited financial reports during the 2018–2022 observation period	(41)
Companies that do not provide complete information relating to research variables	(10)
The number of samples that meet the criteria	34
Years of observations	5
Total observations processed	170

### Variable Measurement and Technical Analysis

The variables in this study were measured as follows:

**Table 2. Variable Operational Definition**

Variable	Measurement
<b>Dependent</b>	
Audit Delay (Baatwah et al., 2019)	The number of days between the end of the financial year and the date of signing the audit report
<b>Independent</b>	
Company Complexity (Yastari & Nelvirita, 2023b).	The number of subsidiaries owned by the company
<b>Moderating</b>	
Audit Committee Chair Accounting Expertise (Baatwah et al., 2019)	Coded 1 if the audit committee chair in the company has qualifications and experience in accounting or auditing, such as experience as a public accountant, CFO, controller, or treasurer; 0 otherwise.
<b>Controls</b>	
Leverage (Isnaeni & Nurcahya, 2021)	$DAR = \frac{\text{Total Liabilities}}{\text{Total Assets}}$
Profitability (Amaliyah, 2021)	$ROA = \frac{\text{Net Profit}}{\text{Total Assets}}$

This study uses the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique with WarpPLS 8.0 software as the technical analysis. In this study, the equation model is described in Equation 1.

$$DELAY = \rho_1 COMPLEX + \rho_2 EXPERT * COMPLEX + \rho_3 LEV + \rho_4 PROFIT$$

DELAY: Audit Delay

$\rho$ : Regression coefficient

COMPLEX: Company Complexity

EXPERT\*COMPLEX: Interaction of Audit Committee Chair Accounting Expertise and Company Complexity

LEV: Leverage

PROFIT: Profitability

## Results and Discussion

### Descriptive Statistics

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Maximum	Minimum	Average	Standard Deviation
DELAY	234	43	99.911	28.120
COMPLEX	68	0	13.523	14.075
EXPERT	1	0	-	-
LEV	1.113	0.0003	0.364	0.208
PROFIT	0.428	-0.375	0.015	0.074

Based on Table 3, the descriptions of the data from each variable in this study are relatively varied. The data distribution of audit delay (DELAY) shows that audit delay in the study has a maximum value of 234, a minimum value of 43, an average value of 99.911, and a standard deviation of 28.120. The value of the standard deviation of 28.120 shows that the audit delay data in this study is less varied because this standard deviation value is smaller than the average of 99.911. The data distribution of company complexity (COMPLEX) shows that company complexity in this study has a maximum of 68, a minimum value of 0, an average value of 13.523, and a standard deviation value of 14.075. The value of the standard deviation of 14.075 shows that the company complexity data in this study is highly varied because this standard deviation value is higher than the average of 13.523. The data distribution of audit committee chair accounting expertise (EXPERT) shows that the audit committee chair accounting expertise data in the study has a maximum value of 1 and a minimum value of 0. Audit committee chair accounting expertise variable proxied with dummy, where code 1 is given if the audit committee chair in the company has qualifications and experience in accounting or auditing, such as experience as a public accountant, CFO, controller, or treasurer; 0 otherwise. There were 91 observations that were coded 1, and 79 observations were coded 0. The distribution of dummy data in the audit committee chair accounting expertise variable cannot be interpreted in terms of average value and standard deviation because of this dummy measurement. There were also control variables in this study, namely leverage and profitability. The data distribution of leverage (LEV) shows that leverage in this study has a maximum value of 1.113, a minimum value of 0.0003, an average value of 0.364, and a standard deviation value of 0.208. The value of the standard deviation of 0.208 shows that the leverage data in this study is less varied because this standard deviation value is smaller than the average value of 0.364. Another control variable is profitability. The data distribution of profitability (PROFIT) shows that profitability in this study has a maximum value of 0.428, a minimum value of -0.375, an average value of 0.015, and a standard deviation value of 0.074. The value of the standard deviation of 0.074 shows that the profitability data in this study is highly varied because the standard deviation value is higher than the value of 0.015.

### Model Fit

**Table 4. Model Fit**

Criteria	Value	Sign.	Rule of Thumb	Notes
Average Path Coefficient	0.165	P= 0.002	P < 0.05	Satisfy
Average R-Square	0.144	P= 0.006	P < 0.05	Satisfy
Average Adjusted R-Squared	0.123	P= 0.012	P < 0.05	Satisfy

Average Variance Inflation Factor	4.583	$\leq 5$	Satisfy
Average Full Collinearity VIF	1.238	$\leq 5$	Satisfy
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.379	Small $\geq 0,1$ ; Medium $\geq 0,25$ ; Large $\geq 0,36$	Large

The first step in this analysis is to evaluate the indicator of model fit. Based on the model fit indicator output presented in Table 4, the six indicators used in this research model meet the criteria. The APC, ARS, and AARS indicators have a P value  $< 0.05$ . The AVIF and AFVIF indicators have values  $< 3.3$ . The GoF indicator has a value of 0.379, meaning it is in the large model category because it is higher than 0.36.

#### Explanatory Power

**Table 5. R-squared, Q-squared, and Effect Size**

R-Squared = 0.144			
Q-Squared = 0.177			
Effect size			
Variable	Path Coefficients	Information	Rule of Thumb
COMPLEX	0.074	Weak	$> 0.02$ weak
EXPERT*COMPLEX	0.043	Weak	$> 0.15$ moderate
LEV	0.015	Very weak	$> 0.35$ large
PROFIT	0.042	Weak	

Based on Table 5, the explanatory model indicator in this study shows that the R-squared value of 0.144 shows that 14.4% variation in endogenous variables or dependent audit delay can be explained by the variable exogenous or independent complexity of company operations (COMPLEX); the interaction variable of audit committee chair accounting expertise and company complexity (EXPERT\*COMPLEX); and also the variable control, namely leverage (LEV) and profitability (PROFIT). The remaining 85.6% is explained by other variables outside of this research model. The Q-squared value of 0.177 means this research model has predictive relevance because this value is higher than 0. The next explanation is the effect size indicator.

The results show that the effect size of variable company complexity (COMPLEX) of 0.074, or 7.4%, means that the individual contribution of individual variable company complexity on the R-squared value is categorized as weak from a practical view. The value of effect size EXPERT\*COMPLEX of 0.043, or 4.3%, means that individual contribution interaction variable audit committee chair accounting expertise with the company complexity on R-squared value is categorized as weak from a practical view. For the control variables in this study, the effect size value of leverage (LEV) of 0.015, or 1.5%, means that individual contribution variable leverage on the R-square value is categorized as very weak from a practical perspective. The effect size value of profitability (PROFIT) of 0.042, or 4.2%, means that individual contribution variable profitability on the R-squared value is categorized as weak from a practical view.

#### Path Coefficients and P-values

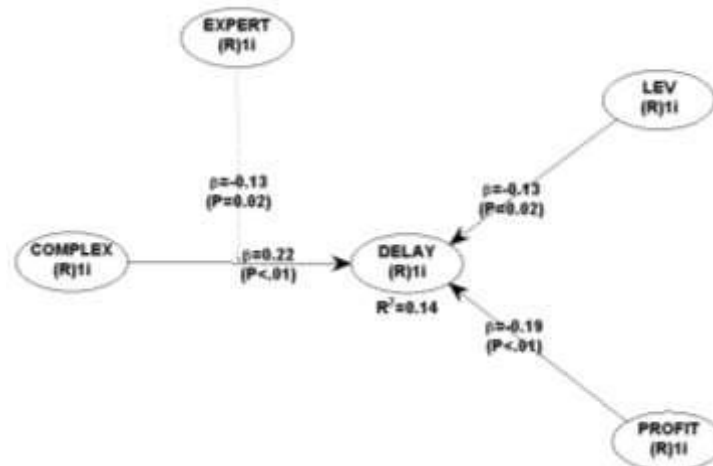
**Table 6. Path Coefficients and P-values**

Variable	Path Coefficients	P- value
COMPLEX	0.216	$< 0.001$
EXPERT*COMPLEX	-0.125	0.023
LEV	-0.126	0.022
PROFIT	-0, 194	0.001

The next stage is to evaluate the path coefficients and P-value values from the output summarized in Table 6. The path coefficient of the company complexity (COMPLEX) is 0.216 and significant with  $P <$

0.001; the path coefficient of the moderating variable, which is the interaction of audit committee chair accounting expertise and company complexity (EXPERTCOMPLEX), is -0.125 and significant with  $P = 0.023$ . This model also includes control variables, namely leverage (LEV) and profitability (PROFIT).

## Discussion



**Image 1. Path Diagram**

Based on Image 1, it shows that company complexity has a positive and significant effect on audit delay. This can be seen from the company's operational complexity path coefficient of 0.216 with  $P < 0.001$ , meaning that hypothesis 1 (H1) is accepted. These results are in line with research conducted by Pratiwi & Wiratmaja (2018), Isnaeni & Nurcahya (2021), Amaliyah (2021), Hilal Al Ambia et al. (2022), and Khamisah et al. (2023), which shows that the complexity of company operations has a positive effect on audit delay. If the company has increasingly complex operational activities, it will cause audit delays due to the increase in the time it takes for auditors to complete their audit work. Based on the agency theory perspective, the number of subsidiaries indicates that the company has complex operating activities. This will cause delays in the publication of the company's audited financial reports, resulting in a higher audit delay.

The next explanation, based on Image 1, shows that audit committee chair accounting expertise mitigates the influence of company complexity on audit delay. This can be seen from the path coefficient of the moderating variable, namely audit committee chair accounting expertise and the company complexity on audit delay, which is -0.125 and is significant with  $P = 0.023$ , meaning hypothesis 2 (H2) is accepted. Companies that have many subsidiaries will become increasingly complex and complicated. To carry this out, the audit committee chairman must have expertise in accounting so that there are no irregularities in the accounting records of the subsidiaries. The process of publishing and presenting financial reports will be completed on time. When the complexity of the company's operations is high but the audit committee has expertise in accounting, it will accelerate the completion of the auditor's report.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The complexity of company operations has a positive and significant effect on the audit delay. Hypothesis 1 (H1) is accepted. Companies have increasingly complex operational activities, which will cause audit delays due to the increased time it takes for auditors to complete their audit work. Delays in presenting financial reports will have an impact on uncertainty. An investor will assess the company based on the timeliness of presenting its financial reports; the longer the presentation process takes, it indicates that the company is in bad condition. Audit committee chair accounting expertise weakens the influence of the relationship between company operational complexity and audit delay. Hypothesis 2



(H2) is accepted. When the complexity of the company's operations is high but the audit committee has expertise in accounting, it will accelerate the completion of the auditor's report.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the study of agency theory. The occurrence of a conflict of interest between the agent and the principal is an assumption that is always related to and inherent in agency theory. The agent has more information than the principal; conflicts can occur due to deviant behavior from the agent. This deviation can be traced from the manipulation of accounting records to the reporting of financial statements. Practically, this research is useful for companies as input for management (agents) to improve performance within the company. Audit committee chairs who have accounting expertise will increase their monitoring role and be able to complete various tasks more effectively, for example, monitoring internal and external auditors, monitoring the quality of financial reports, and managing audit issues between the CFO and audit partners. The chair of the audit committee with expertise in accounting is really needed in the complex situation of the company. If the company's activities are complex, the chair of the audit committee can complete his duties more effectively and in a timely manner.

The limitation of this research is that there is only one independent variable, namely the complexity of company operations. The company complexity aspect of this study is also limited to the number of subsidiaries. Another limitation is that the research year is only five years, and the research object is only property and real estate companies. Future research can improve this research by adding other independent variables, especially those related to corporate governance, lengthening the years of observations so that the results are more relevant, and also investigating another sector, such as the financial sector.

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