



AUDITORS' COMPREHENSION ON THEIR PROFESSIONAL WORK AND RELATED ISSUES: AN INDONESIAN CASE

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Abstract

This paper investigates comprehension of auditors on their professional work and related issues on auditor independence. In depth comprehension on their professional work are investigated through semi structured interviews with auditors from big-four and non big-four audit firms in Indonesia. Data analysis uses summarizing, pattern coding (miles and Hubberman, 1984) description and interpretation as suggested by Walcott (1994).

The research results indicated that all auditors comprehend well regarding the meaning of their independence, however their comprehension did not refer directly to the definition released by the Professional Body, but in similar essence. This means that the auditors have a proper comprehension, and they seem to be familiar with this issue as professional auditors. In this study, the auditors stated that being independent they must serve the public interest, not be interfered with by others, be free of any interests, be objective and follow audit rules and standards. This study also investigated major factors that could impair auditor independence as perceived by auditors. The study found that most auditors acknowledged that their independence was potentially impaired by the following major factors: first, improper relations between auditors and clients caused by long association; second, fee dependence on major clients; third, the weakness of the auditor's personal qualities.

Other findings, the auditors believed that the following were important to enhance independence: first, the auditor's personal quality (integrity, objectivity and strength of character); second, sanctions; and third, religious values.

Keywords: Auditor, threat, increase, independence, Indonesia

1. Introduction

The basic reasons why financial statements need to be audited are because the government asks for this as a statutory requirement and management needs it, because audit lends credibility to financial statements (Stamp and Moonitz, 1978, p. 27). Financial statements

will be reliable information for the users if they are audited by an auditor (Gul, Teoh and Andrew, 1991; Campbell 1985). This happens because of the following situation: conflict of interest, consequence, complexity and remoteness (Porter, Simon and Hatherly (1996, p. 8)

In doing their job, auditors are like other professionals, they have to well comprehend their work and professional ethics. Shortage of comprehension will be generating poor performance work in completing their tasks. As auditors must maintain their independence in doing their job, then they have to be familiar with the issues related to their independence. There are some audit frauds because of lack of understanding and lack of competency.

Therefore this study will investigate the comprehension of auditors on independence and related issues to their independence such as major factors that could impair and enhance independence, and motivation to be independent as perceived by auditors. Then the research question of this study is “how auditors perceive their comprehension on auditor independence and other related issues?”

2. Literature Review

The most distinctive feature of a professional body is its ability to regulate its members. The Indonesian Institute of Accountants as a professional body aims to regulate its members by setting up standards and professional ethics. The performance of its members in practising their profession therefore has to comply with what the Institute has regulated.

According to the American Accounting Association Committee's report auditing is defined as “A systematic process of objectively obtaining and evaluating evidence regarding assertions about economic actions and events to ascertain the degree of correspondence between those assertions and established criteria and communicating the results to interested users”. (Richiute, 1989, p. 4)

From the definitions, it can be seen, that auditing is a systematic process involving a logical, structured, and scientific set of steps and procedures (Gul, Teoh & Andrew, 1992 p. 4; Gill and Cosserat 1993, p. 12). In obtaining and evaluating evidence, the audit is required to be done objectively, without bias or prejudices. The assertions about economic actions and events mean that the scope of auditing covers economic matters involving the audited individual or entity.

The Indonesian Institute of Accountants has defined auditor independence as a mental attitude in which “an auditor must not easily be interfered with by other parties because the auditor must serve all parties” (IAI, 1996, p.220.1).

On the other hand, the Indonesian Institute of Accountants' Professional Code of Ethics provides guidelines on how to be independent. The following paragraphs are quoted from the Indonesian Institute of Accountants' Code of Professional Ethics (translated from the Indonesian Language) to provide an idea as to how the Institute perceives independence and its rules for its members.

The above definition and guidelines are set by the Institute for its members with the expectation that its members would be able to transfer independence to their practices. However, in reality auditors might have different perceptions of independence from that definition and code of professional ethics, as stated by Amernic and Aranya (1981) that different people will have different definitions of independence. It is important to observe how good auditors understand the idea of auditor independence compared to the ‘theory’ that must be followed by them.

In terms of factors influencing auditor independence, previous studies stated that some factors can impair auditor independence. According to Flint (1988, p. 63) auditor independence is affected by five conditions. These five circumstances are personal qualities, personal relationship, financial interest or dependence, investigative and reporting freedoms, and organizational status. Personal quality can be addressed with auditors' integrity, objectivity and strength of character. Those who have strong personality will act more independent than those who have weak personality.

While personal relationship according to Flint (1988) is "a person is disqualified from acting as auditor if a personal relationship exists which would be liable to influence their mental attitude". Financial interest such as borrowing by the auditor, financial remuneration and other financial issue will affect auditor independence. Auditor independent as its name implied, must act independently. Once their action are restricted to do investigation, then their independence are impaired. Auditor independent can-not be appointed by those who will be affected by the outcome of audit work. Once, auditor appointed by those kind of people then auditor will not work independently.

Many studies have been done in area of auditor independence such as theoretical studies of independence: DeAngelo's economic model (1981), Goldman and Barlev's behavioural model of independence (1974), Nichols and Price's Exchange theory model (1976), Flint's material circumstances to auditor independence (1988), and Antle's agency theory (1982). All these studies are quite popular in auditor independence topic.

3. Methodology

This study uses qualitative method and approach. The data collection based on the interviews with the auditors. Interviews used in this study is semi-structured interviews which is in between structured and unstructured interviews. It can be categorised as structured or relatively unstructured (Krathwohl, 1998, p. 288). Sarantakos (1993, p. 178) states that structured interviews are based on a rigorous procedure and heavily structured questions. On the other hand unstructured interviews have no strict procedures to follow the questions order and schedule (Sarantakos, 1993, p. 178). Therefore, because of the purpose of the study, this study uses semi-structured interviews.

In this study, the interviewees are from big-four and non big-four audit firms and they are partners and non-partners in the audit firms. The criteria for interviewees from the non big-four audit firms are partners. While from the big-four audit firms are partners, managers, assistant managers and supervisors. The reason is because of their sizes. In the qualitative research, according to Creswell (1998, p.140) there is no consensus among researchers as to the forms of analysing qualitative data.

Data analysis involves three sub-processes: data reduction; data display; and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 21). Data reduction 'refers to the process of selecting, focusing simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the 'raw' data' (p. 21). They assert that data reduction is part of analysis. Data display refers to 'an organized assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action taking' (p. 21). This involves assembling data into displays like matrices, charts, graphs, and networks. This process is considered to be analytic activities. Conclusion Drawing is 'beginning to decide what things mean, noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions' (p. 22).

The study uses the analytic procedures extended by Wolcott (1994b) and Miles and Huberman (1984) in analysing qualitative data. The reasons for using this is: 1) First, the researcher will be able to analyse what the interviewee said, and able to analyse the meaning of it as well. 2) Second, the researcher will use a comparable format in data presentation and comparison. Then the processes: (i) transcription; (ii) translation; and (iii) data reduction and pattern coding are the steps in organizing, presenting and analysing and comparing data gathered.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Auditors' Comprehension

In order to observe auditors' perceptions of independence, the twenty-nine auditors were asked the following question "Can you tell me what you understand about auditor independence?" Before asking the question, the meaning of auditor independence as stated by the Indonesian Institute of Accountants was not discussed. Rather they were asked to reply from their own comprehension, to say and determine what auditors really understand about their profession.

From the twenty-nine auditors interviewed there were fourteen views (meanings) of independence put forward, where each auditor provided one or more views. However, after having categorized those meanings they can now be classified into five main categories. First, ten auditors thought that auditors could be stated as being independent where they had a mental attitude of being neutral and serving the public interest. They argued that as auditors they had to put the public interest as the number one consideration. They did not defend their clients' interests, but the public's. This was as stated by Mr. M, a non big five audit partner when he said...

...In my opinion and comprehension, independence means that in doing audit works we should stand in the middle not to tend to defend certain parties' interests, but rather to serve public interests. The important thing in here is we should maintain our integrity as an independent auditor. (Mr. M)

Second, nine auditors believed that independent auditors must not be interfered with by other parties (clients' managements, companies' owners, bankers etc). This group of auditors believed that auditors must stand independently, based on audit rules and standards. Auditors must be resistant to any pressures. In other words, once auditors submit to or tend to submit to pressures by others they can no longer be regarded as being independent. Mr. X, a big five audit partner put forward this view of independence.

In my opinion independence is a situation that we as auditors can freely express our findings and opinion, and independence also can be stated when there is no intervention from other parties to auditors. (Mr. X)

Third, eight auditors stated that auditors can be regarded as independent when they are free from any interests. Auditors must not have a vested interest or financial interests, as stated by Mr. D, a non big-five audit partner.

In my opinion independence is similar to pillars which protect auditors from wrong doings. Auditors must be free in stating their opinion, and the auditor must be free from any interests. (Mr. D)

Fourth, seven auditors viewed independence as an objective action. This means that auditors have to see clients' financial statements as they are. If the auditors find something that needs to be corrected or adjusted in the financial statements then the auditors have to inform the clients, otherwise the auditors will report on the financial statements as they are. This view was put forward by Mr. L and Mrs. U, a big-five audit partner and manager respectively.

Well, as an auditor our duty is to do the attest function. It means that we have to see everything as it is... (Mr. L)

In my opinion independence means that an auditor presents audited financial statements as they are, without taking any advantages. Independence means also that auditors can be fair to all parties. (Mrs. U)

The last view, stated by seven auditors, indicates that auditors can be regarded as independent if the auditors follow audit rules and standards in performing the audit tasks, as Mr. H, a big five audit manager, said...

In my opinion an auditor can be said to be independent if he does audit works and meet audit rules and standards. (Mr. H)

In short, from all auditors' responses, their answers can be condensed into five meanings. These five views on the meanings of independence are that auditors must serve the public interest, must not be interfered with by others, must be free of any interest, must be objective and must follow audit rules and standards.

Twenty-nine auditors were asked the same question concerning the meaning of independence. All responses had various meanings, there were no answers that were exactly the same. Interestingly, no one auditor referred to the Institute's definition and guidelines of professional ethics in a direct way. Even though, the essence of their answers is similar to what the Institute defines and rules.

The auditors' responses were merely based on their comprehension, and their answers are practical, therefore their answers better represent what and how they practice independence rather than what the Institute 'says'.

The differences among the auditors' answers reflects that they have a range of understandings of independence. Based on the investigation of the auditors' comprehension of independence, it seems that auditors have a proper comprehension of the role of their profession. All these views are similar in spirit to the independence guidelines of the Indonesian Institute of Accountants.

4.1. Revealed Major Factors Impairing Auditor Independence

Besides investigating the factors affecting auditor independence, this study also aimed to investigate the major factors that could impair auditor independence. To investigate these major factors, the twenty-nine auditors were interviewed about this. The auditors were asked the following question "Can you tell me what major factors could impair auditor independence?"

Before being asked this question, they were told that all of the questions they had previously been asked related to factors that could impair auditor independence and they were asked to pick one or two major factors.

Twenty-seven auditors replied with one or two major factors, and two auditors said that there was no major factor impairing auditor independence. Twenty-seven auditors generated thirteen distinctive answers. However, from these answers only three major factors could be discovered that could impair auditor independence because the remaining answers were mentioned by only one or two auditors. These three major factors were, first, a close (improper) relationship with clients, second, major clients, and the third was the weakness of the auditor's integrity.

It was mentioned by eight auditors, that a close (improper) relationship with clients was perceived as the most dangerous factor that could threaten auditor independence. Of these eight auditors six of them were non big-five audit partners and only two were members of the big five. From this it follows, in my opinion, that auditors from small audit firms face stronger pressure from clients than auditors from big firms. The following statement by Mr. B, a non big-five audit partner, indicates that they face a difficult situation when they have a close relationship with their clients.

I think the major factors that can impair auditor independence are first, a close relationship with clients or management. With old clients normally we have good relations and it makes it hard to be independent... (Mr. B)

Major clients were perceived to be the second major factor that could impair auditor independence as stated by six auditors. Of these six auditors, three of them were members of the big five, and another three were members of non big-five audit firms. They said that auditors will tend to retain their major clients because these clients generate a significant amount of fees, consequently the auditors would be reluctant to have a different opinion from or an argument with the clients because of the fear of losing these clients. The following statement by a big-five audit manager asserts that auditors will tend to retain their large clients.

I think major clients who generate significant fees could affect auditor independence, because auditors will try to retain such clients to run their business (Mr. G).

Weak integrity is the third major factor in impairing auditor independence, as mentioned by five auditors. This is because auditors who have weak integrity will be easily interfered with or affected by other parties' interests. The following statement by Mr. H, a big-five audit manager makes it clear that auditor integrity is vital.

The major threat in impairing auditor independence comes from auditors' integrity and personality. Those who have a weak personality and integrity will be easily affected by any other force and temptation. Their attitude can change because they have weak integrity (Mr. H).

The following factors were only mentioned by one or two auditors. Factors such as lack of knowledge, fee dependence, superiority of partner, conflict of interest, audit firm size, lack of confidence, non audit-services, competition, intervention from clients' bankers, and early stages of audit firm establishment.

The last two factors are interesting. Intervention by the clients' bankers with the auditor is a common practice (according to Mr. M) in small audit firms. They (auditors, clients and bankers) are like a triangle, they need one another. The auditor needs clients, clients need a 'good' audited financial statement to obtain credit from the banks, and bankers ask auditors to 'approve' clients' financial statements as 'good' audited financial statements. Even though this was only mentioned by one auditor, in my opinion auditors (especially small audit firms) need to be aware of this threat.

The early stages of an audit firm's existence, according to two auditors, is the hardest phase in running an audit firm. Because, at the beginning of the audit firm's business, they have few clients and they have to look for clients. If they conduct an audit task very 'severely', they will hardly attract clients. This stage, according to two auditors, is the hardest stage in maintaining auditor independence. It is important to note that those who would establish an audit firm, must be aware of this situation.

4.2. Revealed Major Factors Enhancing Auditor Independence

This study also aimed to investigate the major factors that could enhance auditor independence. The interviewees were asked the following question, "Can you tell me what the major factors are that could enhance auditor independence?" Before asking this question, the auditors were asked to pick from a list of factors.

In responding to the question, each auditor provided one or two answers as major factors that could enhance auditor independence. From the interviews, the auditors provided seven different answers. However, there were four major answers that were mentioned by at least three auditors. First, thirteen auditors stated that auditor integrity, or professionalism as an auditor, can be the most important factor in maintaining and enhancing auditor independence. To those auditors, auditor integrity is everything, wherever they work, whoever their clients are, whatever the characteristics of their relationship and if auditors have strong integrity then auditor independence will not be impaired. The following statement by Mr. R, makes it more obvious how important auditor integrity is in maintaining auditor independence.

To me building character to be independent is very important. It must be started from the early stages from the university for example students have to try to be independent. Therefore, if this attitude is possessed by auditors, they will be always independent no matter where they work, in big five audit firms or in small audit firms. No matter whether they audit big clients or small clients, once again independence is an individual matter that has to be owned by auditors. (Mr. R)

Second, for at least ten auditors, sanctions can become a major factor in maintaining and enhancing auditor independence. This is understandable because auditors must face sanctions imposed by the professional body when they violate audit rules and standards. This is viewed by those auditors as quite an effective way to maintain and improve auditor independence, because they are afraid of the consequences, especially in relation to their future business. This was explained by Mr. N a supervisor with a big-five firm:

In my experience, sanctions and punishments can make me more independent. Because, once we violate the rules and standards, we will be punished and we'll finish (Mr. N).

Third, religious values were surprisingly mentioned by five auditors as a major factor in maintaining and improving auditor independence. Four of them were Moslems and one was a Christian. In my opinion, those five auditors have a religious spirit in the performance of their daily tasks, including audit tasks. Therefore, their religious spirit could affect their work attitude particularly their independence.

Fourth, the level of auditors' education, was mentioned by three auditors as a major factor that could maintain and enhance auditor independence. According to these three auditors, the higher the level of education of auditors (including knowledge, training and skills) the more independent they are.

The following factors were only mentioned by one to two auditors; audit firm internal policy, building independence from an early stage, and mission and vision of auditors. From those major factors mentioned that could enhance auditor independence, it seems that the auditors themselves are a key point in maintaining and enhancing auditor independence, except for external factors such as audit firm policy and sanctions.

4.3. Auditors: Total or Partial Independence?

Although the factors that could affect auditor independence have been discussed, this study aims to investigate whether auditors can be totally independent or not and to know how badly these factors affect auditor independence. The twenty-nine auditors were asked the following question, "In performing audit tasks can you become totally independent?" Before being asked this question, they were told that some factors could affect auditor independence, and they were asked whether they could be resistant to or affected by those threats. .

From the interviews, their answers can be categorized into two. First, the answers of fifteen auditors can be classified as 'try to be independent as much as they can'. Second, fourteen auditors answered directly that they could be totally independent. For those who answered that they tried to be independent, some of them felt that it was hard to answer this question. The following answers of this group of auditors are cited as follows:

As a human being, it's hard to answer that question. What I do is try to be independent as much as I can, by following the rules and standards (Mr. D).

I am a human being, it is hard to say that I can be totally independent, because to be honest some times there is a feeling to 'help' clients as long as it is within the rules and standards (Mr. Y).

It seems that auditors, however, try to be independent as much as they can, because they are aware of their profession. However, in my opinion, this group of auditors, faced some threats (as stated in the previous questions in the interviews) caused by possibly weak integrity, conflicts of interest, or other related things.

On the other hand, fourteen auditors directly answered that they could become totally independent. Their reason was that because their profession requires them to be independent there is no reason not to be independent. What they do is perform audit tasks as set by the audit rules and standards, as stated by the following auditors.

I can be totally independent because my profession is as an independent auditor, I have enough salary, I work independently, there are no reasons not to be independent (Mr. G).

As an auditor I have to be independent as set by the audit standards and the code of ethics. I never compromise my independence with clients, what I do is I do my best try to audit and stick as much as possible to the rules. I never violate the rules and standards (Mr. Q).

Interestingly most of this group of auditors (eleven of fourteen) were members of the big five audit firms. On the other hand, another three auditors from this group were all female auditors of non-big five audit firms. This is because big five auditors may have strong integrity and are supported by the confidence of their firms. While for three female non big five auditors, it seems that they may have strong integrity and are supported by their conditions of work such as establishing audit firms not merely for seeking money, but also to accommodate theory into practice. Consequently, they have less conflict of interests during the performance of audit tasks. While the first group of auditors who stated that they tried to be independent, ten of the fifteen are members of non-big five audit firms. This phenomenon is interesting, because there is a tendency that non-big five auditors tend to answer, “try to be independent”, and conversely big five auditors tend to answer, “can be totally independent”.

This is because of the two reasons relating to auditor integrity and their individual condition. Both big five and non-big five auditors may have the same strong integrity, but their integrity is influenced by their individual condition (individual firms, or auditors). For non-big five auditors, unfortunately the threats they face in maintaining independence are ‘stronger’ than the big five auditors’. Therefore they tend to answer, “try to be independent” as much as they can. But, there is an exception with the three female non-big five auditors, because they experience ‘different conditions’.

4.4. Maintaining Independence: Some Practical Efforts by Auditors

This study aimed to investigate the key success factors practiced by auditors in maintaining auditor independence. It is important that this be researched because auditors could have a different experience from each other. To investigate the auditors’ key success factors in maintaining auditor independence, the twenty-nine auditors were interviewed by asking them the question, “Can you tell me your key factors in maintaining auditor independence from any impairment?”

From the interviews each auditor provided one to two keys factors in responding to the question. Following the audit rules and standards, as stated by thirteen auditors has become the most frequent answer in maintaining auditor independence. According to this group of auditors, in performing audit tasks auditors will only be independent if they follow the audit rules and standards. This was stated by the following auditor.

To maintain my independence, I always try to be a good independent auditor. Good auditor means that the auditor must follow the audit rules and standards. He must have a strong personality and integrity when facing any situation and conditions, so the rules and standards can be done properly (Mr. H).

Then, the second most popular formula to maintain auditor independence is by strengthening auditor integrity. This was indicated by ten auditors. By doing this, according to this group of auditors, auditors will be always independent in all situations and conditions, as asserted by the following auditor.

In my experience, I think the integrity of the auditor has a very important role in maintaining and enhancing auditor independence (Mr. B).

Surprisingly, six auditors believed that religious values not only had a positive impact in performing audit tasks, but religious values played a significant role in maintaining auditor independence. The following statement of an auditor makes it more obvious that the religious approach for some auditors has a place in maintaining auditor independence.

In maintaining my independence, I do use a religious approach. I maintain and improve my faith not to fall down because it will affect our mental attitude and professional skills. In my opinion, it is very important because without faith, auditors will be easily affected by bad impacts (Mr. P).

The next key success factors for maintaining auditor independence, as mentioned by two auditors, are the selection of clients. According to these auditors, it would be better to refuse (potential) clients who have bad intentions, such as violating rules and standards. Accepting such clients would put auditors at risk and consequently it would be hard to be independent. Two auditors proposed another formula for independence. They believed that by managing a proper relationship with their clients they would be able to be independent. The next three key success factors to maintain auditor independence were mentioned by one auditor each. These were the auditors' ability including skill and knowledge, job satisfaction as auditors including salary and their vision and mission to be auditors.

The key success factors practised by auditors to maintain auditor independence that were raised from the interviews therefore were; first, following audit rules and standards; second, strengthening auditor integrity; third, applying religious values; fourth, selecting clients; fifth, maintaining a proper relationship with clients; sixth, improving auditor ability; seventh, auditor job satisfaction; and last the vision and mission of auditors. From these key success factors, it seems that the most important thing in maintaining auditor independence are the auditors themselves, and not external factors such as the audit firm size. Another thing that needs to be noted is the role of the religious values of auditors in maintaining independence. Previous studies did not take religious values into account as a determinant of auditor independence. This study, therefore could argue that the religious values possessed by auditors could be one source that helps maintain auditor independence, because six auditors acknowledged this.

5. Conclusion

The study has investigated and discussed the findings concerning the meanings and comprehension of independence as perceived by the auditors. The paper also discussed the findings about the major factors that could impair and enhance auditor independence. The paper also discussed the auditors' perception as to whether they can be totally or partially independent, and the auditors' efforts in maintaining their independence.

The study found that the auditors have a similar comprehension and perception of independence as written in the Institute's definition of independence. This means that the auditors have a proper comprehension, and they seem to be familiar with this issue as professional auditors. In this study, the auditors stated that being independent they must serve the public interest, not be interfered with by others, be free of any interests, be objective and follow audit rules and standards.

This study also investigated major factors that could impair auditor independence as perceived by auditors. The study found that most auditors (twenty-seven of twenty-nine) acknowledged that their independence was potentially impaired by the following major factors: first, improper relations between auditors and clients caused by long association; second, fee dependence on major clients; third, the weakness of the auditor's personal qualities. On the other hand, two auditors argued that there was no major factor in impairing auditor independence.

A long association between auditors and clients was acknowledged to be a major factor that potentially could impair auditor independence. To reduce this threat therefore, a limitation of audit engagement should be considered by the professional body (or government agent) through rotation of audit firms. Not only for the banking industry, but also for all clients, particularly listed clients. Dependence on certain clients should be avoided through distributing potential income by seeking other potential clients. The weakness of an auditor's personality could be overcome through continuous educational/training and forced through law enforcement by the professional body.

On the issue of major factors that could enhance auditor independence, the auditors believed that the following were important: first, the auditor's personal quality (integrity, objectivity and strength of character); second, sanctions; and third, religious values. It is obvious that the major factors are heavily dependant on the internal factors of auditors (auditor quality and religious values) and the law enforcement conducted by the professional body.

On the issue of whether auditors are able to be totally or partially independent, the study found that fifteen auditors believed that being totally independent is impossible, however they preferred to say that they should "try to be as independent as much as they could". This answer is based on the reality that auditors are professional persons but they are also human beings who can be affected by internal and external factors. However, they try to be independent as much as they can.

On the contrary, fourteen auditors directly stated that they could be totally independent. They argued that being totally independent was a must for auditors; they just follow the audit rules and standards in doing audit work. It is obvious that there was no agreement on this issue as to whether they could be totally or partially independent. One lesson that can be taken from the auditors' statements is that being independent is possible but they must be careful and resistant to potential factors that could impair their independence and that their independence is a continuum and not dichotomous. This range extends from less independent to more independent, as it depends on how well the auditors can resist negative external factors.

This study also investigated auditors' experiences in maintaining auditor independence. The study identified the following processes conducted by the auditors. Following audit rules and standards was the most common answer for auditors, followed by strengthening auditor' quality and significantly applying religious values to the audit work was the third ranked answer, and the last formula was to be selective in seeking and accepting clients. From this study, it can be seen that auditors' religious values have an important place in maintaining auditor independence.

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