



**Audit Expectation Gap: A Comparative Literature Analysis of Private Sector  
and Public Sector**

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**Abstract**

The Audit Expectation Gap (AEG) issues are steadily expanding around the globe, irrespective of the particular sector involved. A comparative analysis will be more crucial for the AEG literature since the significance of the expectation concerns stems from the concepts of "stewardship and public accountability", which are applicable to audits in both private and public sectors. Thus, the purpose of this study is to analyze the similarities and distinctions between the AEG studies conducted pertaining to the private and public sectors. This research is directed by theoretical considerations and arrives at conclusions based on the extant literature. An exhaustive search of the published literature was conducted by applying the search terms "expectation gap" and "audit expectation gap" combined with "public sector", "government sector" and "performance audit" in the Google Scholar search engine and three databases of Scopus, Jstor, and Emerald were performed separately and independently for each sector from 1970 to 2022. Thus, only the articles published in reputable journals concerning the AEG were selected after applying some selection criteria. It was found that the research contexts, selected target populations, and the dimensions applied to assess AEG were found to be significantly different, despite the fact that the definitions and statistical techniques used were found to be comparable in both sectors. This comparison study opens up a wealth of doors for conducting further research in the future.

**Keywords:** *Audit expectation gap, Comparative literature review, Private sector, Public sector*

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## Introduction

The term "audit" originated from the Latin word "to hear". Citizens (or occasionally slaves) tasked with the collecting and dispensing of public monies were forced to give an oral explanation of their administration of those monies to a responsible authority (an auditor) in public over two thousand years ago, first in Egypt and afterwards in Greece, Rome, and anywhere else (Porter & Gowthorpe (2004). Littleton (1933) asserts that early auditing was intended to check the honesty of those assigned with fiscal rather than management. He further recognized two forms of initial audits: "public hearings" on state official outcomes and inspection of "charge-and-discharge accounts". Hence, both forms of audits were developed only to provide a check on 'accountability' (Salehi, 2011). It is obvious that an auditor's report is issued at the end of the auditing process to convey the final results to enhance its reliability and usefulness to the auditor's report users. Hence, one of the key duties of an auditor is to fulfil the needs of the proprietary interest of the users of financial statements since the auditor is expected to report the reality in financial reports (Salehi et al., 2009).

Porter (1993) claims that the users' expectation of reporting the reality of financial information through auditors might get deviated since the auditors are not providing the reality. Therefore, in most of the cases, readers of financial statements have the impression that the reports that auditors produce are not clear.

Therefore, it is evident that there is a mismatch in the attitudes and expectations of those who utilize financial statements and those who are

practising the audit profession, and this is what is extensively described as the Audit Expectation Gap (AEG) in the literature.

The AEG is a subject that continues to draw much attention: whenever there is a public discussion about auditing, the topic of expectation gaps comes up rather quickly in the conversation (ACCA, 2019). Consequently, this can lead one to believe that the expectation gap is a phenomenon that emerged quite recently. In point of fact, this phenomenon appeared during the advent of the audit profession; however, AEG investigations weren't carried out until the early 1970s in response to the deteriorating standing of the auditing profession (Liggio, 1974). Accordingly, Liggio (1974) is credited as being the one who first brought the notion of "expectation gap" to the body of auditing literature (1974), and he provided the definition as "the difference between the levels of expected performance as envisioned by the independent accountant and by the user of financial statements" (Liggio, 1974, p. 27). Subsequently, many research studies on the theme of AEG were carried out in numerous countries irrespective of the developed countries (for instance, the U.K, The U.S.A, New Zealand, and Australia) and developing countries (for instance, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Malta) all over the world (Fossung et al., 2020).

Subsequently, different authors came up with various definitions with slight differences to the original definitions and those differences were mainly due to the dimensions they used to measure the concept of AEG.

The existing body of research reveals that much attention dedicated to the

AEG has been directed toward the private sector, while the public sector has received very little, if any, of this attention. However, Batra and Kaur (1993) argue that most features of audit expectation concerns are just as relevant and vital regardless of the industry. Consequently, there is an imperative need for empirical studies to examine the existence or non-existence of AEG in the public sector as well (Chowdhury et al., 2005). They continue to believe that conducting empirical studies are essential even if there is not an AEG since the goal of auditing is the same for both private and public sectors. The existing body of literature shows credibility that, beginning with the first decade of the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, there has been a dramatic improvement in the AEG studies relating to the public sector.

It is noticed that auditing in both sectors are not entirely identical in terms of both their theoretical underpinnings and their practical implications. As an example, when referring to auditors in the private sector, the term "auditor independence" implies the auditors' capability to conduct audits without being influenced by company management. However, in the public sector, Chowdhury et al. (2005) argue that "auditor independence relates to a broader group where the comptroller and auditor General's auditors' integrity must be protected against groups not only represented by management but also civil servants and politicians" (Chowdhury et al., 2005, p.896). According to the existence of such discrepancies between the two sectors, there is a problem in investigating whether there are differences in the nature, content, and context of the AEG between

private and public sectors.

The primary purpose of this study is to compare and contrast the different facets of the AEG that are associated with the private sector and the public sector. Subsequently, the authors attempted to integrate all those components, including research methodologies and tools employed, dimensions used to assess AEG, factors affecting AEG, and mechanisms suggested to decrease the AEG while emphasizing the subjects for future research. After conducting a comprehensive review of the existing literature, the authors discovered a paucity of comparative studies relevant to AEG. As a result, this is the very first time that a comparative literature review study has been conducted on the AEG perspective, and the results of the study will serve as a point of reference for any future research conducted in the field of Audit Expectation Gap. In addition, this comparative analysis begins in 1974, when the idea of AEG was first conceived, and continues up to the latest period (2022), covering a considerable amount of time in the process. Consequently, an effort was made to accomplish the specific objectives that are outlined below:

1. To describe and contrast the definitions given to AEG in the extant literature.
2. To recognize and compare the respondent groups employed to examine the AEG.
3. To examine and contrast the different contexts in which the studies on AEG have been conducted.
4. To investigate and compare the numerous research approaches and statistical techniques applied

to test the existence of AEG.

5. To investigate and contrast the dimensions developed to quantify the AEG in both sectors.

In order to achieve these objectives, the authors employed a comprehensive examination of the literature on the audit expectations gap pertaining to both sectors. Hence, this study will provide light on the similarities and differences between literary works as well as the strengths and weaknesses of currently accepted descriptions in the related literature. The remaining parts of this study have been structured to adhere to the format that Fisch and Block (2018) have suggested should be used for such a study. In the second section, a concise explanation of the research approach that was adopted is provided, and in the third section, the findings of the literature review along with an analysis and comparison of those findings are offered. The conclusion of the study is presented in the latter part of the paper, along with a discussion of the practical implications and suggested future avenues for further research.

### **Research Process**

A literature review could be considered a valid approach. It is an essential step in structuring a field of study and establishing an integral part of any study (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). Ramdhani et al. (2014) assert review of literature as a survey of scholarly papers, books, and other materials applicable to a particular issue, field of study or a theory in which a researcher provides a summarized and critical evaluation of those documents. Thus, “it gives an overview of what has been said, who the key writers are, what are the

prevailing theories and hypotheses, what questions are being asked, and what methods and methodologies are appropriate and useful” (Ramdhani et al., 2014, p.48).

Cronin et al. (2008) claim that the primary intention of the literature review is to keep the reader up-to-date with existing knowledge and highlight the importance of new research. Consequently, a comprehensive literature review gathers information on a given topic from a variety of sources while also including a well-defined search and selection method (Carnwell & Daly, 2001). On the other hand, literature could be considered as a combination of both summary and synthesis of arguments and ideas of others since a summary represents the review of the essential information of the source, whereas synthesis consists of a re-organization of those information (Ramdhani et al., 2014). They further assert that a comprehensive and well-written literature review can be drawn from a wide range of sources including theoretical presentations, reviewing articles, and empirical research papers, among others.

Reading a substantial number of materials is essential to the process of examining published works; as a consequence, the researcher is able to acquire a big amount of information regarding the topic being considered (Wee & Banister, 2016). The analysis of past research is given a significant amount of consideration in this study, and it focuses on determining the extent to which two distinct bodies of work on AEG have parallels and contrasts. According to Cronin et al. (2008), primary materials such as “articles published in reputable journals” are more reliable and up-to-

date than books. Meanwhile, Tranfield et al. (2003) emphasize how important the archival technique is for conducting a methodical assessment of the existing body of literature. Online databases could be considered as the most common instruments for searching literature in today's modern world; nonetheless, it is vital to identify which databases include information pertinent to the topic being researched (Cronin et al., 2008). Wee and Banister (2016) convincingly suggest that, if a researcher plans to investigate almost all of the significant literature on a topic, the databases (e.g., Google Scholar, SCOPUS, Web of Science) that are available to the general public seem to be the most apparent sources to turn to as a source of information.

It is noted that an extensive search in the Google Scholar, Scopus, Jstor, and Emerald databases was performed separately and independently for each sector, as suggested by Quick (2020). On the one hand, authors searched for the related articles applying the keywords “audit expectation gap”, “audit expectations gap”, “audit expectation-performance gap” and “expectation gap” linked with “audit” or “auditor” to find articles that were relevant to the private sector perspective. In order to search for relevant articles pertinent to the public sector perspective, the authors combined the keywords “audit expectation gap”, “audit expectation-performance gap” and “audit expectation gap in central government” with “public sector”, “government sector” or “performance audit”. However, before splitting the downloaded articles into two separate sectors, each of them underwent meticulous scrutiny and was cross reviewed to ensure no mistakes were

made. In order to construct a timeline, the year 1974 was selected as the point of origin, and the year 2022 was selected as the point of destination in the voyage of searching the relevant literature.

Liggio (1974) provided the first formal interpretation on AEG. Therefore using his work as a point of reference seems suitable. Because of this, the findings of this study are seen as an advancement in the conceptualization and integration of the AEG literature. The literature was searched up to the most recent year accessible since the year 2022 has been set as the endpoint for completing the literature survey. Moreover, the references included in the bibliographies of the articles were also looked through for papers pertinent to the topic. Moreover, the papers presented at conferences and published doctorate dissertations were also taken into consideration owing to the scarcity of research conducted on the AEG through the lens of the public sector. In spite of this, over the course of the examination of the relevant literature, a comprehensive search for textbooks, book chapters, working papers, and unpublished doctorate dissertations was not undertaken as proposed by Quick (2020). Furthermore, it is highlighted that the research papers that were publicized in languages except English were not taken into consideration for inclusion in the survey because of the difficulties associated with translating them. As stated earlier, these delimitations appear to make sense when considering this study's objectives. It is noted that the facts and references in the tables relevant to the public sector have been presented in grey so that they may be identified more quickly and clearly. The list of

references employed for this study was provided at the end.

### **Synthesis and Interpretation of Findings**

Fisch and Block (2018, p.105) suggest that “Focus on concepts, not studies: Authors need to decide how to summarize and categorize the literature identified”. They also claim that it requires a meticulous identification and examination of the "underlying concepts" that were employed in the review, which then guides the analysis that was performed. Although it is feasible to describe the literature chronologically or even in alphabetical sequence, it is generally accepted that the focus of literature reviews needs to be on the concepts being discussed (Fisch & Block, 2018).

#### ***Definitions for Audit Expectation Gap***

The first objective of this study is to describe and compare the definitions given to AEG in the extant literature. Consequently, the authors presented AEG definitions in a historical sequence since it was believed that this would make the evolution of the concepts more straightforward and effective. As seen in Table 1, the most extensively accepted definitions of AEG are provided.

Scholars, as pointed out by Fisch and Block (2018), make use of tables and figures to communicate the most crucial ideas and data effectively. As Chowdhury and Innes (1998) and Chowdhury et al. (2005) convincingly argue, while there is a plethora of studies on AEG in the private sector, the question of whether such a gap exists in the public sector has received less attention. All but two of the

definitions indicated in Table 1 express the private sector viewpoints on AEG, leading credence to the argument established by Chowdhury and Innes (1998) and Chowdhury (2005). Regarding the effectiveness of independent accountants, Liggio (1974) is credited with proposing the term “expectation gap” for the first time, and his explanation of the term is often cited as the first official definition of the term. Existing literature shows that a wide variety of academics argued and debated these two original definitions, and that new versions of AEG are continually changed and updated by assembling and disassembling fresh perspectives concerning the underlying notion. Consequently, Porter (1993) introduced the notion of the “Audit Expectation-Performance Gap” rather than the “Audit Expectation Gap” by incorporating both the performance gap and the reasonableness gap while further broadening and updating the concept of AEG.

According to Table 1, the emphasis of the majority of prior studies has been on assessing the perspectives of auditors on the one hand, whereas (i) financial statement users, (ii) accountants and investors, and (iii) the society is concurrently representing the other side when defining the AEG concept. In addition, when the various dimensions used to measure the AEG in the various studies are taken into consideration, it is possible to identify some slight discrepancies in the definitions of the AEG (Deepal & Jayamaha, 2022).

It is reasonable to draw the attention that the majority of academics, while attempting to define the idea of AEG, have focused their emphasis on Porter's (1993) basic description of the

“expectation-performance gap”, regardless of whether or not they are referring to the public or private sector. Furthermore, when comparing the definitions provided in Table 1, it is crucial to emphasize that the sector was not a significant consideration when developing the definition of AEG. It is also important to highlight that the phrases “private” and “public” do not occur in any of these AEG definitions in any capacity. Thus, it is concluded that the sector is not a crucial factor in interpreting the concept of AEG.

#### ***Types of Respondent Groups Selected in AEG Studies***

The second objective of this study is to recognize and compare the respondent groups employed to examine the AEG in both sectors. Table 2 of the Appendix displays the commonly used AEG dimensions that have been alluded to by selected scholars in existing literature chronologically, beginning in 1977 and continuing up to the present day.

As seen in Table 2 of the Appendix, researchers conducting AEG research on the private sector have employed a significant variety of samples than those conducting AEG studies on the public sector. Almost all private sector studies have utilized audit partners and audit firms, although the Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) have represented the auditor (government auditor) of related public sector studies. Furthermore, it was found that the majority of researchers (Akther & Xu, 2020; Lin, 2004; Porter, 1993), have used “audit firms” representing the external auditors without taking into consideration the audit firm’s size whereas in some studies (Baron et al., 1977; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020), only the Big 4 audit firms had been chosen.

Members of the SAIs in the public sector are referred to by a variety of titles depending on the country in which they are located. These titles include Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in Bangladesh and Malaysia, Supreme Audit Agency (SAA) in Indonesia, Auditor General (AG) in Cyprus, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka, and National Audit Office Auditors in Malta and Gambia.

Table 2 illustrates further that nearly half of the research on private sector AEG has been carried out using Investors and Shareholders (48%), whereas more than 35% of the studies on private sector AEG made use of corporate managers (represented by company directors, managers, executive officers)(48%), and Bankers (35%). However, it is found that the parliamentary evaluation committee and Public Accounting committee (60%) have become the most famous sample group pertaining to the most of the public sector AEG studies (Arung, 2017; Chowdhury & Innes, 1998; Chowdhury et al., 2005; Conteh & Hamidah, 2021; Ellul & Scicluna, 2020; Krambia-Kapardis et al., 2016; Pongsapan, 2012). In spite of this, it has been discovered that the mostly selected sample group in relation to the public sector AEG studies comprises the parliamentary Evaluation Committee and the Public Accounting Committee in parliament and local government bodies, which accounts for sixty per cent of the selected studies. In addition to that, it was found that the studies conducted on AEG in the public sector have used different types of respondent groups, such as politicians, members of parliament, government regulators, members of the public accounts committee, secretaries of the departments, and delegates

representing the international financial agencies such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Thus, it is obvious that studies of the public sector have yet to be carried out using a range of respondents, regardless of the direct beneficiaries of auditing in the public sector appear to be broader than those of auditing in the private sector.

### ***Contexts of the Studies Conducted on AEG***

Table 3 summarizes the author/s (with the year of publication), the countries where the AEG studies have been performed, the research approach (quantitative or qualitative), the statistical instruments that have been used to analyze the AEG, and the dimensions employed to assess AEG in the same table.

The third objective of this study is to assess and contrast the different contexts of the studies on AEG have been conducted. Table 3 demonstrates very clearly that numerous empirical research on the AEG have been carried out relating the private sector settings in a variety of developed as well as developing countries around the globe. However, most of the private sector research have been clustered in some developed countries such as the United States (Baron et al., 1977; Porter & Gowthorpe, 2004), in Australia (Low et al., 1988), in New Zealand (Porter, 1993; Porter & Gowthorpe, 2004), and in the UK (Humphrey et al., 1993). Power (2000) argued that “these hypothesized causes require further empirical support and that more research is needed, particularly to demonstrate that the audit explosion is not simply a UK phenomenon” (Power, 2000, p. 111). Furthermore, Oluyombo and Okunola (2018)

emphasize the importance of studying the expectation gap in developing countries since it is much more relevant today than ever. However, Choudhury and Innes in 1998 revealed that “almost all the research into the audit expectations gap has been conducted in developed countries” (Chowdhury & Innes, 1998, p. 247). Table 3 shows that, with the exception of Budding and Wassenaar (2021) in the Netherlands, the vast majority of public sector AEG studies (more than 90% of selected studies) have been conducted in developing countries, as opposed to the vast majority of private sector AEG studies in developed countries. It is also worth noting that some public sector research projects were undertaken in emerging countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, South Africa, and Romania. In contrast, a substantial amount of research has been performed in Nigeria, as shown in Table 3. Furthermore, Deepal and Jayamaha (2021) revealed that the empirical studies on AEG relating to the public sector are minimal, whereas there is a dearth of such studies in Sri Lanka.

### ***Research Approaches and Statistical Techniques Applied in AEG Studies***

To achieve the fourth objective, the authors contrasted the research approaches and the statistical techniques applied to test the existence of AEG. As can be shown in Table 3, the quantitative research approach has been employed in the majority of studies about the AEG regardless of the sector being investigated. In addition, the existing body of research provides evidence for many studies in which qualitative and mixed methods have been employed. This is true regardless of whether the AEG studies were conducted in the public or



private sector. It is argued that “qualitative data can put flesh on the bones of quantitative results, bringing the results to life through in-depth case elaboration” (Patton, 1990, p. 132). In terms of the many kinds of tests, non-parametric tests have been applied in most of the studies conducted in both private and public sectors. Table 2 illustrates quite clearly that the majority of the studies on AEG used more than two separate respondent groups for their research, and those respondent groups are fundamentally distinct from one another in terms of their nature and context. Consequently, the assumption of “Normality” cannot be made from such diverse populations, which appears to be the primary motivation behind the use of non-parametric tests in research connected to AEG. Porter (1990) highly accepted this reason stating as, “While recognizing that parametric tests are generally more powerful than their non-parametric counterparts, no justifiable assumptions could be made about the distribution of the populations represented by the survey results” (Porter, 1990, p. 165). Meanwhile, The Mann-Whitney U test was discovered to be an extensively used technique in many studies, accounting for 60% of private sector studies and 47% of public sector studies, respectively. When it comes to the parametric tests, Table 3 clearly shows that public sector studies have mainly employed independent sample t-test while the private sector has applied a broader range of statistical tools such as independent Sample t-test (Hassink et al., 2009; Lin & Chen, 2004; Sidani, 2007), Multiple linear regression and Correlation analysis (Aminu et al., 2022; Kamau, 2013; Okafor & Otalor, 2013) and Partial Least-Squares

Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) (García-Hernández et al., 2021; Xu & Akther, 2019) in addition to the independent sample t-test.

### *Dimensions Developed to Quantify the AEG*

As a means of progressing toward the fifth objective of this investigation, an effort was made to evaluate the AEG dimensions compared to each other. The last column of Table 3 illustrates the “dimensions”, which indicate the aspects of AEG that scholars have extensively investigated since 1977. Quick (2020) highlights that the concept of AEG is a very complicated phenomenon, and existing research reveals that many academics have utilized different aspects to explain and characterize AEG. As a foundational research study on AEG, Porter (1993) describes the “audit expectation performance gap within the framework of the “auditor’s duties” dimension. Afterwards, she separated AEG into its two main components as, “reasonableness gap” and “performance gap”, which were then broken down into “deficient standard gap” and “deficient performance gap”. Extant literature suggests a variety of dimensions to measure the AEG related to the private sector. However, Deepal and Jayamaha (2022) reveal the most prominently employed dimensions in assessing AEG as duties and responsibilities of the auditor, the auditor’s independence, factors connected to the audit profession, the audit report’s format and substance, as well as the message it conveys.

When the dimensions used to assess the AEG in both sectors are contrasted, Table 03 shows that the dimensions utilized in private sector research have covered a more

extensive scope than those employed in public sector studies. Extant studies reveal that the public sector has not touched the attributes such as going concern reporting, Key Audit Matters (KAMs), providing non-audit services and third-party obligations of auditors, technical knowledge on audit and assurance, and credibility and the significance of audited financial reports in decision making. It was further found that studies had yet to be conducted to investigate the AEG based on the roles and duties stated by Porter (1993), at least not by making adjustments to that of public sector auditors. However, the private sector still needs to address issues such as governance, risks and compliances, performance audits, and other special audit engagements that are inherent in the public sector viewpoint.

### **Conclusion, Implications and Future Research**

The AEG has a history that stretches back for a long time and has become a big concern in the private sector. Nevertheless, compared to the studies that have been carried out on the AEG in the private sector, the public sector has only conducted a few investigations so far. The general public is becoming increasingly aware of the relevance of auditing, and at the same time, their expectations and interest in auditing are also developing at a higher pace, which ultimately contributes to widening the gap between the two groups.

The present study commenced with the purpose of analyzing and comparing the various definitions of AEG that can be found in the previous research. Researchers observed that their definitions of the AEG varied slightly depending on the dimensions

they used to assess it. However, it is essential to emphasize that the bulk of interpretations of AEG have frequently been drawn from Porter's (1993) definition. It is emphasized that the existing body of research needs to redefine the AEG through the lens of the public sector. The two definitions of AEG proposed by researchers in the public sector displayed in Table 3 have not considered the sector. Hence it is concluded that the sector is not a significant consideration in defining the AEG. Finally, after reviewing the existing literature, the authors developed a fresh and straightforward definition for the AEG in the public sector as “the difference of perceptions between what society as a whole expects auditors to perform and what public sector auditors are perceived to accomplish by complying with the related legislations and auditing promulgations when performing an audit in practice”.

In achieving the second objective, it was sought to compare the various range of respondent groups employed to examine the AEG. Comptroller Auditor Generals attached to the Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) have usually held a dominant position on the “auditor” side in public sector studies. However, auditors, audit firms and professional accountants have been considered the “auditors” in the private sector. Further, it was concluded that the target respondent groups used to represent the “society” side in earlier research examining the AEG were extremely varied in both sectors. Under the third objective, we examined the contextual differences of conducting AEG studies and concluded that the public sector studies had been concentrated in developing and emerging countries as opposed to the vast majority of private

sector AEG studies dominated in developed countries. As far as the methodological differences are concerned, it is concluded that a substantial difference cannot be seen in the studies between both sectors. Further, the quantitative method under the positivistic approach has become the most famous approach in both sectors. Furthermore, the non-parametric tests have been dominantly employed to test the existence of AEG irrespective of the sector, specially due to the fundamental differences of the groups of respondents in terms of nature and context. Finally, the dimensions developed to measure the AEG construct was examined and it is concluded that the AEG is a multi-dimensional concept.

Finally, it is concluded that private and public sector AEG studies have certain commonalities and variations in the dimensions utilized to measure the AEG. We also draw the conclusion that the dimensions used in private sector research have spanned a significantly broader range of scope than those used in public sector studies.

It is essential to emphasize that this comparative review of the literature study has a few limitations. The most significant limitation of this study was the availability of just a small number of empirical studies on AEG-related concerns that were carried out addressing the public sector. As another limitation, the authors did not search for unpublished doctoral dissertations, working papers, or textbooks in this comparative study. However, we only looked at studies in which the titles or abstracts contained terms relevant to AEG; articles written in languages other than English were disregarded due to linguistic barriers.

According to the current body of literature, there are potential implications for further studies. Strandberg and Simpson (2020) suggest that a literature review is one of the most important methods available for acquiring access to information that might enhance social work practice. Authors attempted to summarize and contrast the definitions and interpretations provided for AEG, the different contexts in which the AEG studies were conducted, the dimensions used to measure the concept, various target groups of respondents used in AEG studies as well as the methodologies used to measure the AEG from both private and public sector perspectives. In light of this, we have a strong belief that the findings of this study might potentially help the development of a more comprehensive theoretical framework for AEG-related research in the years to come. As a result, this comparative literature review may be viewed as a vital method for acquiring a body of information that can be employed in a variety of ways by diverse stakeholders in society. Finally, this synthesis could be used to assist in the discovery of misunderstandings regarding AEG and how they vary between the views of the private sector and the public sector.

This comparison study opens up a wealth of doors for further research in the future. The amount of AEG research conducted by the public sector is noticeably less than that conducted by the private sector. Therefore, there should be a general rise in the number of studies conducted in the private sector, particularly in developed countries. Furthermore, it is evident that auditing in the public sector encompasses more

than just financial auditing. Accordingly, the AEG that is pertinent to “performance audit”, “Value-for-Money (VfM) audit”, and “compliance audit” have received insufficient attention up to this point, and they constitute a potential path for future studies. As a consequence of this comparative research, it was concluded that studies employing a mixed technique need to be more represented in both the public and private sectors. In light of this, prospective researchers should conduct more studies using a mixed-methods technique.

Some countries are incorporating, from time to time, the international auditing standards, guidelines, directives, and promulgations published by the International Organization for Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) in conducting public sector auditing in practice. Since there is a dearth of studies addressing the impact of those criteria and regulations for diminishing the

severity of AEG, future research might concentrate on such pathways. Furthermore, Computer-assisted auditing techniques, often known as CAATs, are one of the most widely used digital approaches. Information technology is essential to the current accounting and auditing professions. AEG on these digital developments in each of these sectors is relatively uncommon. Thus, prospective researchers should focus on the association of AEG with these perspectives.

### **Author Contributions**

The first author designed the study, collected and analyzed data, interpreted the results, drew the conclusions. Further, all versions of drafts of the manuscript were written by the first Author.

The second author commented and refined the research article. Further he provided insights and constructive suggestions to improve the overall manuscript.

## Tables and Figures

**Table 1**

*Definitions for Audit Expectation Gap*

Year	Author	Definition for Audit Expectation Gap
1974	Liggio	“The difference between the levels of expected performance as envisioned by the independent accountant and by the user of financial statements” (p. 27).
1988	Guy and Sullivan	“The difference between what the public and financial statement users believe accountants, auditors are responsible for, and what the accountants and auditors themselves believe they are responsible” (p.36).
1993	Jennings et al.	“The differences between what the public expects from the auditing profession and what the auditing profession can actually provide”
1993	Porter	“The gap between society’s expectations of auditors and auditors’ performance, as perceived by society” (p.50).
1993	Monroe and Woodliff	“It exists when there are differences between in beliefs between auditors and the public about the duties and responsibilities assumed by auditors and the messages conveyed by audit reports” (p.62).
2009	Salehi et al.	“A shortfall in audit effectiveness. Expectation gap occurs when there are differences between what the public expects from the auditor and what the auditor actually provides” (p.167).
2011	Ebimobowei and keruotu	“Audit expectation gap is the difference between the levels of expected performance as envisioned by the users of financial statements and by the independent accountant” (p.445).
2013	Kamau	“The difference between what the public as well as financial statement users believe auditors are responsible for and what auditors actually believe their responsibilities are” (p.489).
2014	Ruhnke and Schmidt	“A divergence between the public’s expectations of auditors’ statutory role and responsibilities under the current regime and auditors’ performance as perceived by the public” (p.595).
2016	Salehi	“It is commonly used to describe the situation whereby a difference in expectation exists between a group with a certain expertise and a group, which relies upon that expertise. The public perception of an auditor’s responsibility differs from that of the profession and this difference is referred to as the expectation gap” (p.26).
2017	AICPA	“Difference between what stakeholders and users of financial statements consider to be the responsibilities of auditors and what auditors actually do”.
2018	Azagaku and Aku	“The deference between what the public expects from an audit function and what the audit profession accepts the objective of auditing to be” (p.1).
2018	Oluyombo and Okunola	“The combination of skill gap, knowledge gap, reasonable expectation gap, regulation gap, and the actual performance gap” (p.208).
2020	Nguyen and Nguyen	“The difference between auditors and users of audit report about the auditor’s performance” (p.52).
2020	Coram and Wang	“The difference between what users expect from the auditor and the financial statement audit and the statutory requirement for an audit” (p.2).
2020	Fossung et al.	“ It is the difference between what the profession thinks an audit is and does and what stakeholders think” (ahead-of-print)
2021	ACCA	“The difference between what the general public thinks auditors do and what the general public would like auditors to do”
2021	Conteh and Hamidah	“The ‘audit expectation gap’ is a mismatch/difference in perceptions between what auditors do and what third parties believe auditors should do or should not do in performing audit practice” (p.138).

2022 Deepal and Jayamaha “The difference between what the society as a whole expects auditors to do and what auditors actually do when performing an audit in practice” (p.314)

(Source: Constructed by authors based on literature)

**Table 2**  
*Types of Respondents in the samples of selected studies*

Auth or/s*	Types of respondents in the sample**																		
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
01		x							x			x		x					
02		x	x	x			x		x	x	x	x		x			x		x
03	x				x	x													
04		x		x						x		x							
05		x							x	x	x								
06		x					x						x	x	x				
07	x				x	x													
08		x		x					x	x		x							
09	x					x	x					x							x
10		x									x	x		x	x	x			
11		x												x			x	x	x
12		x							x					x					
13		x										x							
14		x					x	x						x				x	
15								x											
16			x																
17	x					x							x						
18		x							x	x	x								
19		x																	
20							x	x											
21		x					x		x		x	x		x					
22		x							x		x			x			x	x	x
23	x		x			x							x				x		
24													x						
25	x					x	x						x			x	x		x
26		x									x								
27	x					x							x						
28		x									x			x				x	
29				x							x			x				x	
30		x						x									x		
31		x															x		
32	x													x					
33		x									x			x					
34		x									x	x				x			
35																		x	
36	x					x								x		x			
37		x		x				x											
38		x							x	x	x	x							
39		x																x	
40																		x	
41								x										x	
42						x													
43		x		x					x	x	x	x							
44			x						x										
45		x																	x
46												x			x				x
Pvt									1		1								
Total	0	27	2	6	0	0	5	5	1	7	6	9	1	12	3	2	7	5	5
%	0	84	6	19	0	0	6	16	4	22	0	28	3	38	9	6	2	6	16

Pub																			
Total	10	0	2	0	2	9	2	1	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	2	4	0	2
%	67	0	13	0	3	0	3	7	0	0	0	7	4	0	0	3	7	0	13

Source: Adopted from the literature

**\*Author/s in chronological Order:** 01. Baron et al. (1977); 02. Porter (1993); 03. Chowdhury and Innes (1998); 04. Best et al. (2001); 05. Fadzly et al. (2004); 06. Lin and Chen (2004); 07. Chowdhury et al. (2005); 08. Dixon and Woodhead (2006); 09. Daud (2007); 10. Haniffa and Hudaib (2007); 11. Sidani (2007); 12. Hassink (2009); 13. Salehi et al. (2009); 14. Bui and Porter (2010); 15. Dana (2011); 16. Ebimobwei and keroetu (2011); 17. Pongsapan (2012); 18. Pourheydari and Abousaiedi (2011); 19. Kamau (2013); 21. Okafor and Otor (2013); 22. Ruhnke and schmidt (2014); 23. Coetzee (2016); 24. Emmanuel (2016); 25. Krambia-Kapardis (2016); 26. Salehi (2016); 27. Arung (2017); 28. Behzadian and Nia (2017); 29. Azagaku and Aku (2018); 30. Fulop et al. (2019); 31. Kunz and De Jager (2019); 32. Okoro et al. (2019); 33. Xu and Akther (2019); 34. Akther and Xu (2020); 35. Dauda (2020); 36. Ellul and Scicluna (2020); 37. Nguyen and Nguyen (2020); 38. Olojede (2020); 39. Astolfi (2021); 40. Budding and Wassenaar (2021); 41. Coram and Wang (2021); 42. Conteh and Hamidah (2021); 43. Dang and Nguyen (2021); 44. Dewi et al. (2021); 45. García-Hernández et al. (2021); 46. Aminu et al. (2022).

**\*\* Types of respondents in the sample:** A. Government Auditors, B. Private Sector Auditors (Audit Firms), C. Internal Auditors, D. General Public, E. International Funding Agencies, F. University Academics, G. Graduates and Undergraduates, H. Bankers, I. Stockbrokers, J. Investors, K. Shareholders, L. Investment/ Financial Analysts, M. Government Officials, N. Corporate Management, O. Creditors, P. Government regulating Bodies, Q. Accountants, R. Employees, S. Others

**Table 3**  
*Summary of Survey Research on the AEG*

Author (year) <i>Country</i>	<i>Approach</i> Instruments used	Dimensions used to measure AEG
Baron et al. (1977) <i>USA</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test & Sign test	Auditor's responsibilities for detecting and disclosing corporate irregularities and illegal acts
Porter (1993) New Zealand	<i>Quantitative</i> Wilcoxon signed-ranks & Mann-Whitney U test	Existing duties, Non-existing duties, Duties reasonably expected of auditors
Monroe & Woodliff (1993) <i>Australia</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Kruskal-Wallis Test & One way ANOVA, Mann-Whitney U test	Auditors' responsibilities and duties
Chowdhury & Innes (1998) <i>Bangladesh</i>	<i>Qualitative</i> Analysis (Content analysis)	Auditor accountability, Auditor independence, Auditor competence, Performance audit, Truth and fairness of the reported information
Best et al. (2001) <i>Singapore</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Mann Whitney-U test	Responsibilities of auditors, Reliability of audit and Audited Financial Statements (A.F.S), Usefulness of A.F.S.
Fadzly et al. (2004) <i>Malaysia</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Mann-Whitney U-test, Factor Analysis (1996)	Responsibilities of auditors, Reliability of F.S, Usefulness of A.F.S.
Lin & Chen (2004) <i>China</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Independent Sample <i>t</i> -test	Objectives of audit, Auditor's responsibility to discover and disclose frauds, Auditor's independence, Auditor's third-party obligations and influence of government funding on audit services' credibility.
Chowdhury et al. (2005) <i>Bangladesh</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Mann-Whitney U-test	Auditor General's reporting, Accountability, Auditor independence, Competency of auditor, Audit materiality, Audit evidence, True and fair view, Performance auditing

Dixon & Woodhead (2006) <i>Egypt</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Mann Whitney-U test	Responsibilities of Auditor, Reliability of A.F.S, Decision usefulness of A.F.S
Daud (2007) <i>Malaysia</i>	<b>Qualitative</b> Grounded Theory (constant comparative method	Responsibilities of Auditor, Scope of Audit, Independency of auditor, Audit Reporting, Ethics of Auditor, Audit Standards
Haniffa & Hudaib (2007) <i>Saudi Arabia</i>	<b>Quantitative + Qualitative</b> Mann–Whitney U-test + Content Analysis	Performance of audit responsibilities, Responsibilities of auditor in detection and disclosure of frauds, Possibility of providing ancillary services
Sidani (2007) <i>Lebanon</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Independent Sample t-test	Auditor's role in fraud detection, Perspectives of the auditing profession for F.S responsibility and sampling
Hassink (2009) <i>Netherlands</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Independent Sample t-tests	Auditor's responsibilities in corporate fraud
Salehi et al. (2009) <i>Iran</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Mann-Whitney U test	Level of auditor independence
Bui Porter (2010) <i>New Zealand</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Structural data displays	Competencies of graduates, Role of education(Accounting), Staudents's expectation on Accounting
Dana (2011) <i>Romania</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Descriptive Statistics	Responsibilities of Auditors, Usefulness of Audited Report, Independency of Auditor
Ebimobowei keroetu (2011) <i>Nigeria</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Descriptive statistics, Spearman rank order correlation coefficient, Mann-Whitney U test.	Responsibilities of Internal auditors in public sector in Nigeria
Pourheydari Abousaiedi (2011) <i>Iran</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Mann-Whitney U-tests	Auditor's responsibilities in detecting frauds, Effectiveness of internal controls, Preparing F.S.
Pongsapan (2012) <i>Indonesia</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Chi Square, Mann-Whitney U test and Independent Sample T-Test	Functions of auditors, auditors' performance (with or without accounting education)
Kamau (2013) <i>Kenya</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Multiple linear regression and Correlation analysis	Auditor efforts, Auditor's skills, Audit methodologies, Auditor Independence, Society's Knowledge about the role of auditor, Narrower Audit Scope
Okafor & Otolor (2013) <i>Nigeria</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Analysis of Variance, Multiple Regression Analysis	Role of the auditing profession
Ruhnke schmidt (2014b) <i>Germany</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Wilcoxon signed-rank test	Independent financial audits, Responsibilities of auditor, Performance of auditors.
Füredi-Fülöp (2015) <i>Hungary</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Z-test	Duties and responsibilities of auditor
Coetzee (2016) <i>South Africa</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Kruskal-Wallis tests	Risk management structures, coordination level with internal auditing, Internal audit functions
Emmanuel (2016) <i>Nigeria</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Chi-Square test	Fraud detection
Krambia-Kapardis (2016) <i>Cyprus</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Paired sample t-test, Quadrant analysis – government	Types of information included in the report, Quality of the information included in the report
Salehi (2016) <i>Iran</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Mann-U Whitney test	Responsibilities of Auditors, Financial control, Detecting misstatements, Auditors' professional discipline.
Arung (2017) <i>Indonesia</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Independent Samples T Test	Accountability, Materiality, Audit opinion, Integrity, Objectivity, Audit evidence



Behzadian and Nia (2017) <i>Iran</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Student t test	Audit services quality
Azagaku and Aku (2018) <i>Nigeria</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Descriptive and Kolmogorov – Smirnov test	Duties and responsibilities of auditors , Quality and usefulness of the auditors' report
Fulop et al. (2019) Hungary	<i>Quantitative</i> Analysis of Variance	Audit education on auditors' responsibilities, Degree of assurance provided by the auditor, Board's responsibilities
Kunz and De Jager (2019) S. Africa	<i>Quantitative</i> One sample t-test	Technical knowledge on audit and assurance
Okoro et al. (2019) Bangladesh	<i>Quantitative</i> Log-Linear Regression Model	Disposition of auditors, Skills and the performance of auditors
Xu and Akther (2019) Bangladesh	<i>Quantitative</i> Partial Least-Squares Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM).	Independence of auditor, Level of communication, Responsibility for fraud detection, Meaning and usefulness of audit report, Going concern reporting assessment
Akther and Xu (2020) <i>Bangladesh</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Mann–Whitney U-test and structural equation model (SEM) in Smart-PLS	Auditor's responsibility for detecting frauds, Audit report's meaning & effectiveness, Provision of non- audit services, Responsibility of auditor, Unfulfilled expectations for additional assurance services.
Dauda (2020) <i>Nigeria</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Simple descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient	Forensic accounting, investigation services and auditors' duty to produce reliable accounting data
Ellul and Scicluna (2020) <i>Malta</i>	<i>Quantitative + Qualitative</i> Chi-square test, Mann-Whitney U test, independent t-test	Responsibilities of Auditor, Audit reports, Detection of frauds, Materiality, Audit standards, Audit independence, Audit judgement.
Nguyen and Nguyen (2020) <i>Vietnam</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Mann-Whitney U test and Wilcoxon signed-ranks test	Auditors responsibilities in (i) Detection of Frauds and errors, Asset protection and financial scandals and, (ii) Role of auditing and auditors in determining investment choices and investor confidence
Olojede (2020) <i>Nigeria</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Mann–Whitney U test and Kolmogorov–Smirnov Z test	Reliability and Usefulness of Financial statements
Astolfi (2021) <i>France and Luxembourg</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Chi-Square test	International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)
Budding & Wassenaar (2021) <i>Netherlands</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Mann-Whitney U test	Performance management, Strategic management, Finance operations and reporting, Governance risk and compliance
Coram and Wang (2021) <i>U.S.A.</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Multivariate analysis of variance	Disclosure of Key Audit Matters and Accounting Standard Precision
Conteh and Hamidah (2021) <i>Gambia</i>	<i>Qualitative</i> Thematic Analysis	Audit scope, Auditor independence, Fraud Detection and reporting exercise, Auditor ethics, Audit reporting and audit report format under public sector performance audit
Dang and Nguyen (2021) <i>Vietnam</i>	<i>Quantitative</i> Chi-Square test	Responsibilities of auditors
Dewi et al. (2021) <i>Indonesia</i>	<i>Qualitative</i> Symbolic interaction	Detection of frauds in banks

García-Hernández et al. (2021) <i>Spain</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Structural equation modelling methodology (PLS-SEM),	Auditor Independence, Auditor prohibitions, Auditor safeguarding
Aminu et al. (2022) <i>Nigeria</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> descriptive statistics and multiple-regression analysis	audit opinion, Independency, Economic dependency, Mkt competition, non-audit services, Regulatory Framework, CG System, Audit committees, Professional Ethics, receiving gifts by Mgt, Prospects of reappointment

Source: Adopted from the Literature

Note: Public sector Studies have been coloured in grey

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