



From Individual Expertise to Collective Audit Quality: A Systematic Literature Review of Knowledge Sharing and Learning in Auditing Organizations

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ABSTRACT. *This study examines how individual auditor expertise is transformed into collective audit quality through knowledge sharing and organizational learning. Using a qualitative systematic literature review, the study synthesizes prior research on auditor expertise, knowledge seeking, knowledge sharing, organizational learning, and audit quality across individual, interpersonal, team, office, and firm levels. The findings indicate that individual expertise represents a distributed organizational knowledge resource whose value depends on its accessibility, transferability, and integration into collective audit processes. Knowledge sharing serves as a critical mechanism linking individual expertise to organizational learning and collective audit capability, while psychological safety, social cohesion, organizational structure, knowledge characteristics, and absorptive capacity condition this process. The review further indicates that knowledge sharing is positively associated with audit quality when relevant knowledge is effectively communicated, absorbed, and applied. The study develops an integrated framework explaining how audit organizations transform distributed expertise into collective capability and sustained audit quality.*

Keywords Auditor Expertise; Knowledge Sharing; Organizational Learning; Collective Audit Capability; Audit Quality

INTRODUCTION

Audit quality fundamentally depends on auditors' knowledge, expertise, professional judgment, and collaborative capabilities. As a knowledge-intensive activity, auditing requires the integration of accounting and auditing standards, industry-specific knowledge, client information, and experience to identify risks and evaluate complex financial reporting issues (Alvesson, 2004; Causholli et al., 2021). Because audits are conducted by teams rather than isolated individuals, audit quality depends not only on individual knowledge but also on how effectively expertise is accessed, transferred, shared, and collectively applied within the organization.

Prior research establishes the importance of auditor expertise for audit quality. Industry specialization is associated with improved earnings quality and audit outcomes (Balsam et al., 2003; Low, 2004; Reichelt & Wang, 2010), while auditor experience and partner-specific expertise influence audit quality and its perceptions (Chi et al., 2017). Research also demonstrates substantial heterogeneity in expertise across audit partners (Aobdia et al., 2021), indicating that valuable knowledge is unevenly distributed within audit firms. Thus, the critical organizational issue is how individual expertise becomes accessible to others and is transformed into collective knowledge. Audit partner rotation

and the use of non-audit services can either worsen or improve audit quality depending on the context of the company and the financial statements being audited (Rizal, M., et al, 2024).

Knowledge sharing provides a key mechanism for mobilizing individual expertise through formal reviews, consultations, teamwork, brainstorming, training, mentoring, and interpersonal networks (Vera-Muñoz et al., 2006; Duh et al., 2020). Social cohesion and network structures further facilitate knowledge transfer across individuals and organizational boundaries (Reagans & McEvily, 2003). Empirical evidence supports this perspective: Duh et al. (2020) find that knowledge sharing is associated with higher audit quality and efficiency, while Causholli et al. (2021) show that the effects of knowledge seeking depend on knowledge type, network characteristics, and the status of knowledge providers and seekers. The use of AI and big data allows auditors to handle large volumes of data more quickly, while blockchain offers solutions to improve the security and integrity of audit evidence (Ruslaini, et al, 2024).

The importance of organizational knowledge transfer is further demonstrated by He et al. (2022), who find that industry-specific knowledge transfer following audit-firm mergers is associated with improved audit quality, particularly when communication between auditors is stronger. More recently, Michas et al. (2025) report that greater opportunities for partners to share industry knowledge within audit offices are associated with lower restatement likelihood and smaller abnormal accruals. These findings suggest that audit quality emerges not simply from possessing expertise but from organizational processes that distribute and integrate expertise. Sharia audits, both internal and external, play a crucial role in maintaining adherence to sharia principles and improving transparency and accountability in Islamic financial institutions (Amelia, Y., et al, 2024).

Knowledge sharing, however, is not automatic. Psychological safety, social cohesion, proximity, absorptive capacity, and organizational incentives can influence whether auditors share and utilize knowledge. Gissel and Johnstone (2017) show that psychological safety affects auditors' willingness to share fraud-relevant information, particularly among less knowledgeable auditors, while Michas et al. (2025) identify absorptive capacity, associative learning, social cohesion, physical proximity, and mutual monitoring as important conditions for knowledge sharing.

Despite growing evidence, the literature remains fragmented across different levels of analysis, including auditor expertise, knowledge seeking, knowledge transfer, social networks, teamwork, and audit quality. The mechanisms through which individual expertise becomes collective audit capability therefore remain insufficiently synthesized. Accordingly, this study conducts a qualitative systematic literature review to examine how individual expertise is transformed into collective knowledge through knowledge sharing and organizational learning in auditing organizations. By integrating these research streams, the study develops a comprehensive understanding of how audit organizations connect, transfer, integrate, and learn from distributed expertise to support collective audit capability and sustained audit quality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Auditing is fundamentally a knowledge-intensive activity because auditors must integrate professional standards, accounting knowledge, industry expertise, client-specific information, experience, and professional judgment when evaluating risks and audit evidence (Alvesson, 2004; Low, 2004). However, expertise is unevenly distributed within audit organizations, making knowledge accessibility and utilization critical to audit quality (Vera-Muñoz et al., 2006). Research shows that industry specialization and auditor experience influence audit judgments and outcomes (Balsam et al., 2003; Low, 2004; Reichelt & Wang, 2010; Chi et al., 2017). Importantly, client-specific knowledge is difficult to replace because it accumulates through repeated engagement, meaning that auditor turnover may result in the loss of valuable organizational knowledge (Chi et al., 2017).

Individual expertise therefore creates organizational value only when it can be transferred and integrated. Knowledge sharing occurs through workpaper review, consultation, mentoring, training, brainstorming, teamwork, and interpersonal interaction (Vera-Muñoz et al., 2006; Duh et al., 2020). Duh et al. (2020) find that knowledge sharing is positively associated with audit quality and efficiency, although the relationship may be mutually reinforcing. This suggests a shift from viewing expertise as an individual attribute toward understanding it as an organizational resource dependent on knowledge flows.

Knowledge sharing is also embedded in social networks. Social cohesion and network range facilitate knowledge transfer (Reagans & McEvily, 2003), while Causholli et al. (2021) show that knowledge-seeking relationships do not always improve auditor performance. Their findings indicate that the effects depend on the type of knowledge, hierarchy, and participants involved. Thus, the quantity of knowledge exchange alone does not determine its value. Seavey et al. (2018) further conceptualize audit firms as networks of offices in which partner knowledge sharing and oversight connect local units to the broader organization.

Psychological and interpersonal conditions also influence whether expertise becomes collective knowledge. Gissel and Johnstone (2017) demonstrate that psychological safety increases less-knowledgeable auditors' willingness to share privately known fraud information. Consequently, leadership, hierarchy, status, and organizational climate can determine whether critical knowledge becomes available for collective audit assessment.

Knowledge can also be transferred across organizational boundaries. He et al. (2022) find that industry-specific knowledge transfer following audit-firm mergers improves audit quality among clients of less-specialized firms. Beardsley et al. (2022), meanwhile, report a negative association between audit-office industry diversity and audit quality, suggesting that concentrated industry knowledge may support the development and application of specialized expertise, although the integration mechanisms remain important.

Michas et al. (2025) provide direct evidence linking opportunities for partner industry knowledge sharing within audit offices to audit quality. Greater sharing opportunities are associated with fewer financial-statement restatements and lower absolute abnormal accruals. Their analysis highlights absorptive capacity, associative learning, social cohesion, physical proximity, and mutual monitoring as potential mechanisms. Importantly, they distinguish knowledge-sharing opportunities from conventional measures of industry specialization and show that office size, growth, inter-office support, partner industry leadership, client distance, regulation, and accounting complexity moderate these relationships. Thus, expertise alone does not guarantee effective knowledge distribution.

Taken together, the literature suggests a multistage process: auditors develop individual expertise through training, specialization, and experience; knowledge becomes organizationally valuable through seeking, sharing, and transfer; organizational learning integrates distributed knowledge into shared understanding; and effective integration contributes to audit quality (Low, 2004; Chi et al., 2017; Vera-Muñoz et al., 2006; Duh et al., 2020; Gissel & Johnstone, 2017; He et al., 2022; Michas et al., 2025). Collective audit quality therefore cannot be understood simply as the aggregate of individual competencies, but as the result of coordination, social relationships, leadership, organizational structures, and incentives that transform distributed expertise into collective judgment (Reagans & McEvily, 2003; Gissel & Johnstone, 2017; Michas et al., 2025).

The literature can consequently be organized into four interconnected domains: individual expertise, knowledge sharing, organizational learning, and collective audit quality. Nevertheless, existing studies remain fragmented across levels of analysis, with limited synthesis explaining how individual expertise is progressively transformed into collective audit capability. Moreover, knowledge sharing is not universally beneficial; its effects depend on knowledge characteristics, participants, organizational context, and the extent to which knowledge is absorbed and integrated (Causholli et al., 2021; Gissel & Johnstone, 2017; Michas et al., 2025). This gap supports a shift from a “heroic individual expert” perspective toward a collective knowledge perspective in which audit quality depends on an organization’s ability to connect experts, facilitate knowledge exchange, create psychologically safe environments, retain critical knowledge, and integrate distributed expertise into collective audit judgments.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative systematic literature review (SLR) to identify, evaluate, interpret, and synthesize research on how individual expertise is transformed into collective audit quality through knowledge sharing and organizational learning. A qualitative SLR is appropriate for examining patterns, mechanisms, relationships, and contextual conditions across heterogeneous studies rather than estimating pooled effect sizes (Snyder, 2019; Page et al., 2021). The review follows the PRISMA 2020 framework for transparent study identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, complemented

by PRISMA-S for reproducible reporting of search strategies and information sources (Page et al., 2021; Rethlefsen et al., 2021).

The review is guided by the overarching question: How does individual auditor expertise become collective audit quality through knowledge sharing and organizational learning in auditing organizations? Four subsidiary questions examine the forms of expertise, mechanisms facilitating or constraining knowledge sharing and seeking, the transformation of distributed expertise into collective capability, and the organizational, interpersonal, and contextual conditions affecting audit quality. These questions support higher-order interpretation rather than simple counting of findings (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

The search strategy covers four domains: individual expertise; knowledge sharing and seeking; organizational learning and knowledge transfer; and audit quality. Keywords include “auditor expertise,” “industry specialization,” “knowledge sharing,” “knowledge transfer,” “knowledge seeking,” “knowledge integration,” “organizational learning,” and “audit quality.” Searches are conducted across relevant accounting, auditing, management, and organizational databases, with Google Scholar used as a supplementary source. Search dates, databases, complete search strings, restrictions, and retrieved records are documented to ensure reproducibility (Rethlefsen et al., 2021).

Studies are included when they address auditing or directly relevant organizational contexts and examine expertise, experience, knowledge sharing, knowledge seeking, knowledge transfer, organizational learning, knowledge integration, or audit quality. Eligible studies provide empirical, theoretical, or substantive conceptual contributions and are available in English through peer-reviewed or academically credible sources. Studies unrelated to the review constructs, duplicates, non-scholarly materials, insufficient conference abstracts, and papers superseded by equivalent peer-reviewed articles are excluded. Study selection follows PRISMA stages of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion (Page et al., 2021).

Methodological quality is assessed according to each study’s design, focusing on research questions, theoretical foundations, research design, data quality, measurement, analysis, and consistency between evidence and conclusions. Particular attention is given to the conceptualization and measurement of audit quality because commonly used proxies do not always correspond with practitioner assessments (Aobdia, 2019). A

standardized extraction framework records study characteristics, theoretical perspective, research design, unit of analysis, expertise and knowledge-sharing mechanisms, organizational learning, audit-quality outcomes, contextual conditions, findings, and limitations.

Data are coded deductively and inductively and synthesized through thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008). The analytical framework follows five interconnected stages: Individual expertise → Knowledge seeking and sharing → Knowledge integration and organizational learning → Collective audit capability → Audit quality. Individual expertise includes industry knowledge, client-specific experience, professional judgment, and specialized expertise (Low, 2004; Chi et al., 2017; Aobdia et al., 2021). Knowledge seeking and sharing make these resources accessible to others (Vera-Muñoz et al., 2006; Duh et al., 2020; Causholli et al., 2021), while organizational learning integrates dispersed knowledge into collective practices (He et al., 2022).

Cross-study comparison examines differences in knowledge type, direction of knowledge flow, hierarchy, social cohesion, psychological safety, proximity, office and client characteristics, and absorptive capacity. This approach reconciles apparently heterogeneous findings, including the positive association between knowledge sharing and audit quality reported by Duh et al. (2020), the contingent effects of knowledge-seeking networks identified by Causholli et al. (2021), knowledge transfer across audit firms documented by He et al. (2022), and the association between partner knowledge-sharing opportunities and audit quality found by Michas et al. (2025).

Overall, the methodological synthesis conceptualizes collective audit quality as an emergent organizational outcome rather than merely the aggregation of individual competence. Individual expertise becomes organizationally valuable when mechanisms for knowledge seeking, sharing, consultation, and transfer are supported by psychological safety, social cohesion, hierarchy, incentives, absorptive capacity, proximity, and organizational structure. Accordingly, knowledge sharing and organizational learning constitute the central bridge between individual expertise and collective audit quality (Duh et al., 2020; Causholli et al., 2021; He et al., 2022; Michas et al., 2025).

RESULTS

The systematic synthesis indicates that audit quality depends not only on individual auditor expertise but also on how expertise is accessed, shared, transferred, and integrated across individuals and organizational units. Individual expertise provides the initial knowledge resource, while knowledge seeking and sharing enable dispersed expertise to contribute to collective audit capability and, ultimately, audit quality (Chi et al., 2017; Duh et al., 2020; He et al., 2022; Michas et al., 2025). The relationship is not uniformly linear because its effectiveness depends on knowledge characteristics, participants, hierarchy, social relationships, psychological conditions, organizational proximity, and absorptive capacity.

Five interconnected themes emerge: (1) individual expertise as distributed organizational knowledge, (2) knowledge seeking and sharing as mechanisms of expertise mobilization, (3) social and psychological conditions affecting knowledge exchange, (4) organizational learning and knowledge integration, and (5) collective knowledge capability as a pathway to audit quality.

First, expertise is distributed across auditors through industry specialization, client-specific experience, technical knowledge, and professional experience (Aobdia et al., 2021; Chi et al., 2017). Chi et al. (2017) show that pre-client experience is particularly useful during early engagement stages, whereas client-specific experience becomes increasingly important over time and cannot be fully replaced after auditor turnover. Thus, expertise should be viewed as a distributed organizational resource whose value depends on its accessibility and utilization. Industry specialization is generally associated with stronger audit outcomes (Balsam et al., 2003; Low, 2004), while office-level industry diversity may also influence the development and concentration of specialized knowledge (Beardsley et al., 2022). This highlights an important distinction between expertise possession and expertise accessibility.

Second, knowledge sharing transforms distributed expertise into an organizational resource. Duh et al. (2020) find that knowledge sharing within audit firms is positively associated with audit quality and efficiency, including lower absolute discretionary accruals and shorter reporting delays. Michas et al. (2025) similarly find that greater opportunities for partners to share industry-specific knowledge within audit offices are associated with fewer restatements and lower absolute abnormal accruals. However, their measures capture opportunities for knowledge sharing rather than actual observed

exchanges. The synthesis therefore distinguishes three stages: expertise availability → knowledge-sharing opportunity → actual knowledge utilization.

Knowledge seeking is also not universally beneficial. Causholli et al. (2021) find that larger knowledge-seeking networks may be negatively associated with individual auditor performance, particularly for explicit knowledge, while some tacit knowledge-seeking relationships with managers may be beneficial. Consequently, the value of knowledge exchange depends on who seeks knowledge, from whom, what type of knowledge is exchanged, and how it is applied.

Third, knowledge is heterogeneous. Explicit knowledge can be communicated through documents, systems, and formal consultation, whereas tacit, experiential, industry-specific, and client-specific knowledge often requires richer interpersonal interaction. Causholli et al. (2021) demonstrate that the effects of knowledge seeking differ according to knowledge type and hierarchical position. He et al. (2022) further show that transferring industry-specific knowledge from more-specialized to less-specialized auditors can improve audit quality, particularly where communication is stronger. Thus, knowledge transfer generates value when the recipient can recognize, absorb, integrate, and apply the knowledge to the audit task.

Fourth, knowledge sharing is fundamentally social. Gissel and Johnstone (2017) show that psychological safety increases less-knowledgeable auditors' willingness to disclose privately known fraud-relevant information. Michas et al. (2025) likewise identify absorptive capacity, social cohesion, physical proximity, and mutual monitoring as relevant conditions for knowledge sharing. These findings indicate that formal communication channels are insufficient when hierarchy, status concerns, or interpersonal risks discourage auditors from speaking up. Structural connectivity must therefore be complemented by behavioral connectivity, meaning active knowledge seeking, consultation, sharing, and learning.

Fifth, organizational structure affects knowledge diffusion. Audit firms operate through multiple teams, offices, hierarchical levels, and geographic locations, creating potential knowledge silos. Seavey et al. (2018) conceptualize audit firms as networks of offices in which partner knowledge sharing and oversight connect local units to the broader organization. Michas et al. (2025) further show that office size, growth, inter-office support, partner industry leadership, client distance, regulation, and accounting

complexity affect opportunities for knowledge exchange. The challenge is therefore not specialization itself, but whether specialized expertise can be effectively connected and diffused across organizational boundaries.

Knowledge sharing becomes organizational learning when transferred knowledge is interpreted, integrated, and embedded in collective routines and practices. This occurs through consultation, teamwork, brainstorming, mentoring, training, and repeated interaction (Michas et al., 2025). The synthesis identifies three learning processes: knowledge acquisition, knowledge integration, and knowledge institutionalization. Accordingly, knowledge sharing is an input to organizational learning rather than its final outcome.

A central finding is the role of collective audit capability as the intermediate mechanism linking individual expertise to audit quality. When industry knowledge, client experience, technical expertise, and professional judgment are connected through knowledge seeking, sharing, consultation, and learning, audit organizations can develop capabilities that exceed the knowledge of individual auditors. These capabilities include identifying unusual transactions, recognizing industry risks, challenging management assumptions, addressing complex accounting issues, and coordinating specialized knowledge (Duh et al., 2020; He et al., 2022; Michas et al., 2025). The evidence therefore supports the process model: Individual Expertise → Knowledge Accessibility → Knowledge Seeking and Sharing → Knowledge Integration and Organizational Learning → Collective Audit Capability → Audit Quality.

The relationship should be understood as a conditional positive relationship rather than the simple proposition that “knowledge sharing improves audit quality.” Important boundary conditions include knowledge type, source and recipient characteristics, psychological safety, social cohesion, hierarchy, organizational structure, physical or virtual proximity, absorptive capacity, client complexity, and industry regulation (Causholli et al., 2021; Gissel & Johnstone, 2017; Michas et al., 2025).

Overall, the synthesis indicates that collective audit quality emerges from an organization’s ability to mobilize, connect, integrate, and institutionalize distributed expertise, rather than merely accumulate highly skilled auditors. Thus, audit quality can be conceptualized partly as a collective knowledge capability, in which individual

expertise becomes organizationally valuable when transformed into shared knowledge, organizational learning, and coordinated professional judgment.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic literature review indicate that audit quality is not solely an outcome of individual auditor expertise but also reflects an organizational process through which dispersed expertise is accessed, exchanged, integrated, and transformed into collective audit capability (Chi et al., 2017; Duh et al., 2020; He et al., 2022; Michas et al., 2025). By connecting research on auditor experience, knowledge sharing, social interaction, organizational learning, and audit quality, this SLR shows that expert auditors do not automatically create organizational expertise; the value of individual knowledge depends on whether it can be accessed and utilized by others (Aobdia et al., 2021; Vera-Muñoz et al., 2006; Seavey et al., 2018).

First, the findings extend Chi et al. (2017), who demonstrate that both pre-client and client-specific partner experience are associated with improved audit quality, although the importance of pre-client experience declines as client-specific experience accumulates. The present synthesis adds that the organizational value of such expertise increases when it moves beyond individual auditors through consultation, knowledge seeking, and knowledge sharing (Duh et al., 2020; He et al., 2022). Expertise is therefore both individually accumulated and organizationally transferable.

Second, the findings are consistent with Duh et al. (2020), who report positive associations between knowledge sharing, audit quality, and audit efficiency. The present SLR extends this evidence by conceptualizing knowledge sharing not simply as a direct determinant of audit quality but as an intermediate mechanism through which organizational learning transforms distributed expertise into collective capability (Duh et al., 2020; Seavey et al., 2018).

Third, the synthesis qualifies the findings of Causholli et al. (2021), who show that knowledge-seeking networks do not necessarily improve individual auditor performance. Their results indicate that outcomes depend on knowledge type and the characteristics of knowledge seekers and providers. Thus, more knowledge exchange is not necessarily better knowledge exchange; effective sharing requires knowledge relevance, appropriate matching, absorptive capacity, and task fit (Causholli et al., 2021; Michas et al., 2025).

Fourth, He et al. (2022) provide strong support for the transition from individual expertise to collective capability. Their evidence shows that industry-specific knowledge transferred from more-specialized to less-specialized auditors can improve audit quality, particularly when communication is stronger. This demonstrates that specialized knowledge can generate broader organizational value when effectively transferred and integrated (He et al., 2022).

Fifth, the role of social conditions is supported by Gissel and Johnstone (2017), who find that psychological safety increases less-knowledgeable auditors' willingness to share privately known fraud-relevant information. This demonstrates that knowledge may remain inaccessible to the team when hierarchy or interpersonal concerns discourage speaking up. Psychological safety therefore functions as an important behavioral mechanism connecting individual knowledge possession with collective knowledge utilization (Gissel & Johnstone, 2017).

Sixth, the findings complement Seavey et al. (2018), who conceptualize audit firms as networks of offices connected through partner knowledge sharing and oversight. The present SLR extends this network perspective by emphasizing that structural connectivity must ultimately produce knowledge integration. Formal networks may otherwise coexist with knowledge silos when relevant knowledge is not actively exchanged (Seavey et al., 2018; Causholli et al., 2021; Michas et al., 2025).

Seventh, Beardsley et al. (2022) find a negative association between audit-office industry diversity and audit quality, suggesting that concentrated industry knowledge may facilitate deeper specialization. The present synthesis adds that specialization should not be viewed merely as knowledge concentration; its organizational value depends on whether specialized knowledge can be sufficiently diffused through sharing and learning mechanisms (Beardsley et al., 2022; Michas et al., 2025).

Finally, Michas et al. (2025) provide the most direct contemporary evidence that greater opportunities for partner industry knowledge sharing within audit offices are associated with lower restatements and lower absolute abnormal accruals. Importantly, these measures capture opportunities rather than observed knowledge-sharing behavior, reinforcing the distinction between knowledge accessibility and actual utilization. Their findings also show that the relationship varies with office size, growth, cross-office

support, partner industry leadership, client distance, regulation, and accounting complexity, confirming the contingent nature of knowledge sharing (Michas et al., 2025).

Overall, the eight studies converge on the importance of expertise, knowledge exchange, organizational structure, and social interaction but examine these mechanisms at different levels of analysis (Chi et al., 2017; Gissel & Johnstone, 2017; Seavey et al., 2018; Duh et al., 2020; Causholli et al., 2021; He et al., 2022; Beardsley et al., 2022; Michas et al., 2025). The principal contribution of this SLR is to integrate these fragmented findings into a multilevel pathway: individual expertise → knowledge accessibility → knowledge seeking and sharing → organizational learning and knowledge integration → collective audit capability → audit quality. This framework shifts the theoretical emphasis from whether auditors possess expertise toward how audit organizations transform distributed expertise into collective professional judgment and sustained audit quality (Aobdia et al., 2021; Michas et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review shows that audit quality is not determined solely by individual auditor expertise but also by how audit organizations access, share, integrate, and apply dispersed knowledge across individuals, teams, offices, and organizational boundaries (Duh et al., 2020; He et al., 2022; Michas et al., 2025). Individual expertise provides the foundation of audit capability, while knowledge sharing and organizational learning transform individual knowledge into a collective organizational resource (Chi et al., 2017; Aobdia et al., 2021).

The literature demonstrates that auditor expertise is heterogeneous, including industry specialization, client-specific experience, technical knowledge, and professional experience (Chi et al., 2017; Aobdia et al., 2021). However, expertise does not automatically generate collective performance unless it is accessible through consultation, knowledge seeking, teamwork, mentoring, and other knowledge-sharing mechanisms (Duh et al., 2020; He et al., 2022). Duh et al. (2020) find that knowledge sharing is associated with higher audit quality and efficiency, while He et al. (2022) show that industry-specific knowledge transfer from more-specialized to less-specialized auditors can improve audit quality. Michas et al. (2025) further find that greater opportunities for intra-office partner knowledge sharing are associated with lower

restatements and lower absolute abnormal accruals, while emphasizing the distinction between opportunities to share and actual sharing behavior.

Nevertheless, knowledge sharing is positive but conditional rather than automatic. Causholli et al. (2021) show that the effects of knowledge-seeking networks depend on knowledge type and the characteristics of knowledge seekers and providers. Gissel and Johnstone (2017) demonstrate that psychological safety affects less-knowledgeable auditors' willingness to communicate privately held fraud-relevant information. Thus, knowledge relevance, interpersonal relationships, hierarchy, psychological safety, communication, absorptive capacity, and organizational conditions influence whether knowledge exchange produces beneficial outcomes.

The central theoretical model emerging from the synthesis is: Individual Expertise → Knowledge Accessibility → Knowledge Seeking and Sharing → Knowledge Integration and Organizational Learning → Collective Audit Capability → Audit Quality. This framework shifts the focus from "who possesses expertise?" to "how does an audit organization transform distributed expertise into collective professional capability?" It extends research on auditor specialization and individual characteristics by emphasizing the organizational mechanisms through which expertise becomes collectively useful (Chi et al., 2017; Seavey et al., 2018; Duh et al., 2020; He et al., 2022; Michas et al., 2025).

From a practical perspective, audit firms should complement specialist development with mechanisms that facilitate consultation, mentoring, cross-engagement learning, psychological safety, social cohesion, and knowledge diffusion. Overall, sustained audit quality requires not merely highly knowledgeable auditors but an organizational capacity to connect expertise, facilitate meaningful knowledge exchange, convert shared knowledge into organizational learning, and embed that learning into collective audit practices (Michas et al., 2025).

LIMITATION

This systematic literature review has several limitations. First, its qualitative design synthesizes theoretical mechanisms and recurring patterns but does not estimate pooled effect sizes or causal effects. Second, methodological heterogeneity across studies including differences in research designs, samples, units of analysis, and audit-quality

proxies such as abnormal accruals, restatements, audit opinions, reporting delays, and inspection outcomes limits direct comparability (Aobdia, 2019; DeFond & Zhang, 2014).

Third, knowledge-related constructs are measured differently, including knowledge sharing (Duh et al., 2020), knowledge-seeking networks (Causholli et al., 2021), industry-specific knowledge transfer (He et al., 2022), and opportunities for partner knowledge sharing (Michas et al., 2025). These differences highlight the need to distinguish knowledge availability, sharing opportunities, actual sharing, absorption, and utilization. Fourth, evidence is concentrated in specific contexts, such as Chinese audit-firm mergers (He et al., 2022) and large U.S. audit firms (Michas et al., 2025), limiting generalizability to smaller firms and other institutional settings.

Finally, the literature provides stronger evidence on knowledge sharing than on the complete pathway from knowledge integration and organizational learning to collective audit capability. Moreover, remote auditing, virtual teams, and AI may reshape knowledge-sharing processes (Michas et al., 2025). Future longitudinal, network-based, experimental, and cross-country research should therefore examine when and how individual expertise is transformed into collective audit quality.

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