Conceptual Trends in Internal Audit

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Abstract: The evolution of the economic environment amidst multidimensional changes, i.e. development, globalisation, economic crises, pandemics, stakeholder interest in credible, relevant and transparent information, has led to continuous changes in the framework for doing business. These changes have generated for entities operating in a globalised economic environment business opportunities, significant profits, financial downturns, but also exposure to diverse and complex risks and therefore proactive risk management. From this perspective, internal audit has gradually, over time, become the key actor supporting the entity in achieving its objectives, adding value as well as corporate governance. In this context, the objective of the research is to identify the internal audit trend and related conceptual connotations. The research approach includes a literature review of the Web of Science from Clarivate Analytics. The research involves a systematic analysis on internal auditing, conducted through a quantitative research methodology. The research sample includes 29 articles extracted from the Web of Science Core Collection database, covering the publication period 2005-2024. The sample was established after several stages of keyword filtering. This analysis focuses on identifying author affiliations, content of papers, research methods used, and citations and references to highlight significant trends and changes in the field of internal audit. The results demonstrate a concrete and consistent interest in the field of internal audit, highlighting the identification and analysis of significant trends and changes in internal audit practices and roles over time. In addition, it highlights a trend towards a more holistic approach to internal audit that goes beyond its traditional assurance role and extends to providing strategic advice and support to organisations. The research will thus contribute to the identification of future research directions and to a deeper understanding of the role and importance of internal audit in today's economic environment.

Keywords: Internal Audit, Internal Audit Function, Systematic Analysis, Specialized Literature

1. Introduction

In an economic context characterised by rapid dynamics and multidimensional changes, internal audit has evolved significantly, becoming an indispensable element in the process of creating added value in companies. Transformations brought about by globalisation, economic crises, pandemics, and socio-political turmoil have required business entities not only to exploit business opportunities and make profits, but also to proactively manage the complex risks associated with them. Within this framework, the role of internal audit has been redefined, moving beyond its traditional assurance function and expanding to providing strategic advice and support for corporate governance.

The premise of the research is based on the importance of internal audit in the contemporary business environment, where transparency and credibility of information are essential for investors and other stakeholders.

From this perspective, the objective of the research is to analyse trends and conceptual changes in the field of internal audit. The study aims to highlight major developments in internal audit practices, methodologies and paradigms, providing a solid basis for future research and development directions in this crucial area. In this context, drawing from the internal audit literature, this research addresses two research questions:

RQ1. How has the field of internal audit developed in recent years?
RQ2. What factors have led to changes in the field of internal audit?

To address these questions, the research uses a systematic review of literature extracted from the Web of Science Core Collection database. The applied quantitative research methodology involves the examination and coding of a sample of 29 articles, selected through a rigorous filtering process based on specific keywords and criteria.

Finally, to further develop the analysis, the following hypothesis is then stated:

H.1. Internal audit research has evolved with the need to adapt to regulatory requirements in a turbulent business environment.

2. Literature Review

Conceptual approaches to internal audit are multifaceted in the literature. Behrend and Eulerich (2019) through a bibliometric research on the evolution of internal audit argues that major historical events, such as the founding of the Institute of Internal Auditors and the issuance of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in 2002, have been linked to an increase in publications over time.

The analysis of publications revealed an academic trend towards author collaboration, identifying a small core of interlinked researchers who publish frequently on this topic, most often in accounting journals. In terms of the evolution of internal audit, a significant transformation was noted, emphasising the shift from simple assurance functions to more complex roles including strategic advice and support, while highlighting the increasing importance of internal audit quality in improving corporate governance and financial reporting processes.

Using the analysis of the historical development of internal audit, Sridhar Romammorti (2003) pointed out that an early definition of internal audit was given by Brink Victor, director of the IIA Research Foundation, in 1958: "Internal audit is revealed as a special segment of the broad field of accounting, using basic techniques and methods of auditing. The fact that the financial accounting department and the internal auditor often use the same techniques often leads to the erroneous presumption that there are insurmountable differences between their work and objectives. The internal auditor, like any other auditor, is concerned with investigating the validity of transactions, but in his case the transactions to which he turns his attention cover a much wider perimeter and face more problems. In addition, the internal auditor is an employee of the organisation, and it goes without saying that he is very interested in helping to improve these operations and maximise their profitability."

In the view of other authors (Jones et al.,2017) as corporations and the accounting profession ushered in the new millennium with a plethora of financial scandals (accounting and corporate fraud) caused by the collapse of large companies, internal audit has seen significant growth.

Internal audit has an increasingly important role with the advent of the Sarbanes Oxley Act (2002). Although the Sarbanes Oxley Act is one of the regulations issued that impact on internal audit. Although it does not specifically address the role of internal audit in corporate governance, there are corporate governance requirements for audit committees, external auditors as well as suggestions on the importance of internal audit (Fülöp et al.,2017).

Thus, academic research has begun to explore more deeply the role of internal audit in fraud prevention and detection.Initially focused on fundamental issues such as the independence of the internal auditor and its role in evaluating internal controls, and the influence of external and internal pressures on the internal audit function (Felix et al.,2015) and (Munro, et al.,2010), subsequent research has also addressed the relationship between internal audit and fraud. Ege (2015) investigated the quality of the internal audit function and its impact on managerial behavior, demonstrating that a high quality internal audit function can deter non-compliant management behavior. Other research has examined internal auditors' moral courage in reporting fraud (Khelil et al.,2018). In addition, Zheng et al. (2019) explored internal auditors' personal values and their impact on their willingness to report irregularities, highlighting the significant influence of cultural norms and personality on internal auditors' decision-making.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated the development of virtual audit capabilities. Emerging technologies have the potential to increase audit quality and add value. Auditing is moving from a reactive, backward-looking activity to a proactive, predictive and forward-looking one that operates in real time. (Butaka, 2022)

As a result, research topics have diversified to include more complex and technical issues, such as the impact of emerging technologies on audit procedures (Elbardan et al., 2015) and the role of the internal audit function in managing cyber risks and protecting information infrastructure (Slapnicar et al., 2022). These studies reflect a continuing evolution of internal audit research, highlighting the importance of adapting the internal audit function to contemporary regulatory requirements and ethical challenges. They also highlight the crucial role of internal audit in strengthening corporate governance and preventing and detecting fraud, contributing to strengthening confidence in financial reporting and the stability of financial markets.

3. Research Methodology

This research conducts a structured literature review (SLR) in the field of internal audit using a quantitative research methodology. The SLR method establishes, in a scientific manner, the necessary prerequisites for identifying gaps in the literature, formulating research hypotheses and identifying future directions of investigation (Lungu at al.,2018). Proposed by Massaro et al. (2016), SLR is a method that facilitates the development of perspectives and critiques on the current state of a field of knowledge.

The research builds on previous research by Dumay et al. (2016), Massaro et al.(2016), Guthrie et al.(2012), Pisani et al.(2017) and Lungu et al.(2018).

Therefore, the research approach includes a literature review of Clarivate Analytics' Web of Science. Therefore, we conducted a systematic review on internal auditing based on a quantitative research methodology. The research sample includes 29 articles extracted from the Web of Science Core Collection database after going through several filtering steps, described as follows.

First, we performed a computerized search on 30.03.2024 of the Web of Science Core Collection database using search terms such as "internal audit" and "internal auditor", which resulted in 1913 indexed articles. At the same time, the search results for the articles were refined. As part of the article selection and filtering process, we first applied a quick filter to include only open access articles. This criterion initially reduced the sample to 404 indexed articles. This was followed by filtering by document type, limiting us to Review Articles and Article, resulting in 366 relevant articles. Continuing the selection, we restricted the search to articles written in English, reducing the number to 352 articles. In order to focus the search, we focused on the specific field of Business Economics, resulting in 271 articles. We then considered the Web of Science category, to limit the selection to research topics relevant to internal audit only. As this study focuses on the internal audit literature, the categories selected were: Business Finance, Management, Business and Economics. Applying this filtering did not influence the total number of articles relevant to the study, which remained constant at 271. Finally, among the six main indexes in which the Web of Science Core Collection is organized, the Social Science Citation Index and the SCI - Expanded index were selected. Taking into account the described criteria, an initial sample of 111 articles published between 1993-2024 was established. Following this step, the articles were selected, saved and organized by category.

Second, the sample of 111 articles was manually processed to eliminate articles that did not fall within the scope of internal audit research. This analysis involved examining the keyword section, i.e. abstract to eliminate articles that did not contain the phrase "internal audit". In some cases, the full text of the articles was analysed because the abstract or keywords did not provide relevant information to determine whether or not the article fell within the scope of internal audit research. After processing, articles dealing with topics such as accounting, external audit and internal quality audit were excluded, which resulted in narrowing the sample search to 29 articles published between 2005 and 2024.

4. Results and Discussion

Analyzing the distribution of the 29 articles according to indexing category, we have identified the predominant trends and priorities in academic research. Thus, 68.97% of the articles are published in journals indexed in the category "Business, Finance", followed by the categories "Economics" and "Management" (6.90%), respectively "Business" (3.45%). At the same time, the analysis identified cases where articles are included in more than one category, such as "Business, Finance; Management" (6.90%), followed by "Business; Business, Finance; Management" (3.45%) and "Business; Management" (3.45%), indicating a multidimensional approach.

On the other hand, in terms of the distribution of articles by publication, 20 journals were identified that addressed internal audit research. The International Journal of Auditing (27.59%) being the most active publication in promoting and developing knowledge related to internal auditing in the academic sphere. Looking at the other journals and their contribution to research, we note that although the number of articles published in each journal is smaller, they still make significant contributions and reflect the diversity of research interests and approaches, such as "Contemporary Accounting Research" and "Managerial Auditing Journal" (6.90%).

Table 1: Distribution of articles

Categories	Number of Articles Published	%
Business,Finance	**20**	**68.97%**
ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE	1	3.45%
ACCOUNTING AUDITING & ACCOUNTABILITY JOURNAL	1	3.45%
ACCOUNTING FORUM	1	3.45%
ACCOUNTING ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIETY	1	3.45%
ACCOUNTING REVIEW	1	3.45%
AUDITING-A JOURNAL OF PRACTICE & THEORY	1	3.45%
AUSTRALIAN ACCOUNTING REVIEW	1	3.45%
CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTING RESEARCH	2	6.90%
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ACCOUNTING	1	3.45%
EUROPEAN ACCOUNTING REVIEW	1	3.45%
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF AUDITING	8	27.59%
REVISTA DE CONTABILIDAD-SPANISH ACCOUNTING REVIEW	1	3.45%
Economics	**2**	**6.90%**
ECONOMIC RESEARCH-EKONOMSKA ISTRAZIVANJA	1	3.45%
ECONOMIC COMPUTATION AND ECONOMIC CYBERNETICS STUDIES AND RESEARCH	1	3.45%
Management	**2**	**6.90%**
ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT LEARNING & EDUCATION	1	3.45%
JOURNAL OF ENTERPRISE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	1	3.45%
Business	**1**	**3.45%**
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS	1	3.45%
Business,Finance;Management	**2**	**6.90%**
MANAGERIAL AUDITING JOURNAL	2	6.90%
Business; Business, Finance;Management	**1**	**3.45%**
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACCOUNTING INFORMATION SYSTEMS	1	3.45%
Business;Management	**1**	**3.45%**
RBGN-REVISTA BRASILEIRA DE GESTAO DE NEGOCIOS	1	3.45%
NumărArticole	**29**	**100%**

Source*: Authors' own research*

In order to answer research question RQ1. "How has the field of internal auditing developed in recent years? ", we conducted a detailed analysis of the development of internal audit research between 2005-2024. This analysis was summarized in Figure 2, which highlights the distribution of articles published in audit, accounting and other journals. From the analysis, we could observe a positive development of internal audit research in recent years, with an increase in the number of published articles and a diversification of interest from different academic journals. The data analysis suggested that auditing and accounting journals have played a key role in promoting and developing knowledge in the field of internal auditing, with a significant and steady contribution over the period analyzed.

At the same time, it has been possible to observe an increase in the interest of other journals in internal audit in recent years, indicating an extension of internal audit into the academic sphere. At the level of audit journals we observed that 12 articles (41%) were published, suggesting a significant involvement in the promotion and development of knowledge. On the other hand, accounting journals published 11 articles (38%). A significant increase in the publication of articles by these journals has also been observed in recent years, indicating a continued interest and a substantial contribution to the advancement of knowledge. Other economic journals reflect about 21% of the sample analysed.

Table 2: Evolution of internal audit research

Year Publication	Total Articles	%	Audit Journals		Accounting Journals	
			No.	%	No.	%
2005	1	3.45%	0	0.00%	1	3.45%
2010	1	3.45%	0	0.00%	1	3.45%
2011	1	3.45%	0	0.00%	1	3.45%
2015	2	6.90%	0	0.00%	1	3.45%
2016	1	3.45%	0	0.00%	1	3.45%
2017	4	13.79%	1	3.45%	2	6.90%
2018	1	3.45%	1	3.45%	0	0.00%
2019	5	17.24%	2	6.90%	1	3.45%
2020	2	6.90%	2	6.90%	0	0.00%
2021	2	6.90%	1	3.45%	0	0.00%
2022	2	6.90%	1	3.45%	1	3.45%
2023	5	17.24%	2	6.90%	2	6.90%
2024	2	6.90%	2	6.90%	0	0.00%
Total Articles	**29%**	**100%**	**12**	**41%**	**11**	**38%**

Source: Authors' own research

One of the essential components of the evaluation of academic literature in a particular field of study is citation analysis. In this context, using the information published in the Web of Science Citation Report provided by Clarivate Analytics, we analysed the impact and relevance of articles in the academic literature based on the total number of citations. This method is applied in research conducted by Dumay et al. (2016), Lungu et al. (2018), and is also recommended by Massaro et al. (2016).

Table 3: Top ten articles by total number of citations

Title Article	Author YearPublication	Citations
Does Internal Audit Function Quality Deter Management Misconduct?	Ege,M.S.(2015)	99
Ethical Awareness, Ethical Judgment and Whistleblowing: A Moderated Mediation Analysis	Latan,H.et al.(2019)	42
The influence of nonaudit service revenues and client pressure on external auditors' decisions to rely on internal audit	Felix,W.L.et al.(2005)	40
External auditors' reliance on internal audit: the impact of sourcing arrangements and consulting activities	Munro,L.and Stewart,J.(2010)	26
Practice Variation in Public Sector Internal Auditing: An Institutional Analysis	Arena,M.and Jeppesen,K.K.(2016)	21
Watchdogs, helpers or protectors? - Internal auditing in Malaysian Local Government	Ferry,L.et al.(2017)	20
The Role of Auditing in Corporate Governance in Australia and New Zealand: A Research Synthesis	Hay,D.et al.(2017)	17
Breaking the silence: An empirical analysis of the drivers of internal auditors' moral courage	Khelil,I.et al.(2018)	16
The effects of disclosure type and audit committee expertise on Chief Audit Executives' tolerance for financial misstatements	Norman,C.S.et al.(2011)	15
The influence of construal of self on internal auditors' judgments on whistle-blowing: Evidence from China	Zheng,B.Z.et al.(2019)	12

Source: Web of Science-Citation Report, accessed at 11.05.2024

The ranking of the top 10 most cited articles provides insight into the diversity of topics covered in the literature, including topics such as the performance of the internal audit function, ethical issues in organizations, the impact of non-audit revenues and the influence of client pressure on external auditors' decisions. By analyzing in terms of total number of citations, it was observed that articles published in the last five years failed to rank in the top 10, indicating a change in the approach to internal audit research.

However, by analyzing the average number of citations per year, it was shown that these articles are likely to be in the process of being recognized and will be cited more in the future as their influence on the field is consolidated. Analyzing the average number of citations of articles published between 2022 and 2023, we identified 2 articles cited out of the sample of 29 articles, these articles had an average citation between 2.5%

and 3.67%. This reveals that although the total number of citations is not significant, the research has the potential to have a significant long-term impact in the literature. This observation is evidenced by the citations published in 2019, which were found both in the top 10 articles ranked by total citations and in the top 10 articles ranked by average citations per year. It was also noted that eight out of the top ten articles published between 2005 and 2019 ranked in both rankings, illustrating a lasting and significant impact on the academic debate in the field of internal auditing.

Next, to answer the RQ2 query. "*What were the drivers of change in the field of internal audit?"*, we defined the analytical framework of this research by considering six criteria used in previous research by Lungu et al.(2018), Dumay et al.(2016), Guthrie et al.(2012), Dumay and Garanina(2013), and Broadbent and Guthrie(2008). By applying this set of criteria, we coded articles downloaded from Clarivate Analytics by classifying them into the following categories:

- Jurisdiction (A) allows differentiation between research with an international and a national approach, including subcategories that highlight the focus on a general setting, a specific industry or an organisational setting. Thus, articles that are not based on empirical data, such as literature reviews or normative research, are coded as 'general'. Conversely, those that focus on internal audit in a specific industry or on a specific organisational setting are classified according to their international or national focus. Case studies that focus on a single organisation are also categorised separately.
- Organizational orientation (B): classifies articles according to the type of organizations investigated in the study. The attributes of this criterion define different categories of organisations, such as listed companies, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), private enterprises (other than SMEs), public sector, non-profit organisations and other types of organisations (general/other category).
- Research location (C): classifies studies by region or country of origin, allowing assessment of the geographical diversity of research practices and contexts. This criterion divides locations into six distinct categories, reflecting the different regions or countries involved in internal audit studies, such as the United States and Canada, Australia, the European Union (excluding the United Kingdom), South Africa, and Asia-Pacific. Articles that are not associated with a specific research location are classified under "Other".
- Data Source (D): classification according to the sources used to collect the data, such as: corporate sources (Compustat, Thompson Reuters or other corporate databases), authors' primary data (collected through interviews, questionnaires or surveys), data from databases of professional or regulatory organisations, internal company data, stock market data. Subcategories have also been included: multiple sources in cases where more than one distinct data source is used, and other sources in cases where the data does not fit into any of the other specific subcategories mentioned above.
- Research Methodology (E) aims to provide a detailed understanding of the methodological approaches used in research, with two main subcategories: E.1.Theoretical and E.2.Empirical, each of which is subdivided into subcategories relevant to the different research methods. The Theoretical attribute includes conceptual articles or literature reviews, which are based on the development of theoretical concepts related to internal audit. On the other hand, the Empirical attribute is subcategorised into three subgroups: qualitative (case studies, interviews or content analysis), quantitative (statistics, surveys) and multiple. (includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches).
- Frameworks, Models, Tools (F) includes subcategories: none proposed (indicates where no specific internal audit frameworks, models or tools are proposed or discussed), apply or consider previous models, propose new (indicates where new internal audit frameworks, models or tools are proposed or developed).

Given the criteria established for the analysis of the articles, the coding results for each category are presented in the figure below.

Table 4: Analytical Framework

Jurisdiction (A)	Organisational focus (B)
A.1. International A.1.1. International – General (4 articles) A.1.2. International – Industry (1 article) A.1.3. International – Organisational A.2.Național A.2.1. National – General (2 articles) A.2.2. National – Industry (1 article) A.2.3. National – Organisational (17 articles) A.3. One Organisation (4 articles)	B.1. Listed on the stock market (7 articles) B.2. Private - SMEs (2 articles) B.3. Private – Other (1 article) B.4. Public sector (5 articles) B.5. Non-profit (1 article) B.6. General/Other (13 articles)
Location of research (C)	**Data sources (D)**
C.1. USA/ Canada (3 articles) C.2. Australia (3 articles) C.3. European Union (UK excluded) (8 articles) C.5. South Africa (1 article) C.6. Asia-Pacific (4 articles) C. 7. Other/Mixed (10 articles)	D.1. Corporate information database D.2. Authors' primary data (18 articles) D.3. Intergovernmental organization (1 article) D.4. Corporate website or internal data (1 article) D.5. Stock index (0) D.6. Mixed data sources (8 articles) D.7. Other (1 article)
Research methodology & Research methods (E)	**Frameworks, models, instruments (F)**
E.1. Theoretical (1 article) E.2. Empirical E.2.1. Qualitative (7 articles) E.2.2. Quantitative (19 articles) E.2.3. Multiple (2 articles)	F.1. None proposed (1 article) F.2. Applies or considers previous (20 articles) F.3. Proposes a new (8 articles)

Source: Developed from Lungu et al.(2018), Dumay et al.(2016), Guthrie et al.(2012), Dumay și Garanina(2013), Broadbent și Guthrie(2008) și Pisani et al.(2017)

Initially focused on particular case studies and specific organisations, the research has progressively diversified and adapted to global changes and business dynamics, motivated by the need to address internal audit in a globalised context.

Analysis of research articles on internal audit reveals a varied distribution of studies by jurisdiction. Of the total 29 analysed, 5 are classified as international in nature, of these, 4 articles address general topics of international interest, and one article focuses on a specific industry at the international level, with no articles identified in the international-organisational category.

On the other hand, at national level, 24 articles (83%) were identified, of which 7% address general topics at national level and 3% focus on a specific industry at national level. A significant majority, 59% fall into the national-organisational category. This shows a strong preference for national-organisational research, highlighting the importance of the local context in internal audit studies.

The shift from quantitative to qualitative and combined methodologies reflects the need to address the complexity of internal audit in depth, and the diversification of data sources and expansion of research areas illustrates the adaptation of the discipline to a dynamic business environment.

Analysis of the research articles according to organisational orientation revealed various directions of focus. Out of the total of 29 articles analysed: 45% fall into the general/other category, indicating a broader or diversified approach to internal audit research without focusing on a specific type of organisation, while 24% focus on listed companies, showing a significant interest in internal audit in the context of financial markets and strict corporate governance imposed by stock exchange regulations. Other research addresses the following areas: 7% small and medium-sized enterprises in the private sector, 17% the public sector, 3% non-profit and other types of private organisations. The results suggest a distributed focus across different types of organisations, with a notable preference for general studies and on listed companies.

A specific contribution to internal audit research in the context of globalisation is evidenced by the analysis of research articles by geographical location. The analysis revealed a varied distribution of internal audit research, with particular interest in the European Union (28%) and Asia-Pacific (14%) regions.

On the other hand, the analysis of articles in terms of sources of data use reveals a clear distribution of preferences for different types of sources. The majority of studies, 62%, rely on primary data collected directly by the authors, highlighting the importance of original data and direct empirical research in the field of internal audit, while 28% use multiple sources, reflecting an integrated and diversified approach to data collection.

Analysis of the articles according to research methodology reveals a predominant use of empirical methodologies, reflecting a tendency to base conclusions on concrete data and analysis in the field of internal audit. Out of 29 articles: 3% are based on a theoretical approach, 97% use empirical methodologies (24% qualitative methodology, 66% quantitative methodologies) and 7% use a multiple approach (qualitative and quantitative methods).

In analysing the articles according to the frameworks, models and tools used, the data suggests that while researchers predominantly build on previous analyses (69%), there is a significant segment that makes new and original contributions (28%) to the conceptual development of internal audit.

Looking for an answer to RQ2. "*What were the factors that led to changes in the internal audit field?"*, there is a change in perspective. The research results highlighted the trend in academic research towards a holistic approach, whereby internal audit goes beyond its traditional assurance role and extends to providing strategic advice and support to organisations. Research initially focused on fundamental issues such as the independence of the internal auditor and its role in assessing internal controls, and the influence of external and internal pressures on the internal audit function (Felix et al.,2015) and (Munro,2010). Over time, as a result of the financial crises, research topics have diversified to include more complex and technical issues, such as the impact of emerging technologies on audit procedures (Elbardan et al.,2015), and the role of the internal audit function in managing cyber risks and protecting information infrastructure (Slapnicar et al.,2022).

Therefore, given the answers to the two research questions regarding the development of research focused on internal auditing, as well as the factors that have generated changes in the trend of academic research, the research hypothesis: H1: "*Internal audit research has evolved with the need to adapt to regulatory requirements in a turbulent business environment*", is confirmed. Financial crises and rapid changes in the business environment have had a significant impact on the level of regulations applied in the business environment, which has contributed to the diversification of research topics, thus supporting a constant adaptation of internal auditing.

5. Conclusions

The research findings highlight the continuing evolution of internal audit approaches as a result of the need to adapt to regulatory requirements in a turbulent business environment. Research in the literature highlights that internal auditing has moved beyond its traditional assurance role to providing strategic advice and support to organizations.

By analyzing a sample of articles published between 2005 and 2024, starting with the research question (RQ1) "*How has the field of internal auditing developed in recent years*?", a steady increase in the number of articles published in both auditing and accounting journals was found. Auditing and accounting journals have played a central role in promoting research in internal auditing, accounting for 79% of the published articles, while other business journals contributed 21%. These articles are predominantly included in the "Business Finance" research area, which emphasizes the importance of internal audit in the corporate finance context.

Regarding the answer related to the second research question (RQ2) "*What were the drivers of change in the field of internal auditing*?" , it shows a paradigm shift in internal audit research, generated by the broadening of research areas from the assessment of internal controls and auditor independence to more complex topics such as the impact of emerging technologies, cyber risk management. Another important aspect of the evolution of internal audit is its contribution to strengthening corporate governance. Through continuous assessment of internal controls and regulatory compliance, internal audit ensures transparency and accountability within organizations, which is the foundation for maintaining the trust of investors and other stakeholders, as well as ensuring ethical and responsible leadership.

In this context, the research hypothesis H1: "*Internal audit research has evolved with the need to adapt to regulatory requirements in a turbulent business environment*", was validated. This evolution is supported by the diversification of research topics and the continuous adaptation of internal audit to new challenges, demonstrating that the audit function remains central to maintaining transparency and effective corporate governance.Therefore, the diversification of research topics and the adaptation of internal audit practices reflect a continuous commitment to improving efficiency, transparency and corporate governance.

5.1 Limitations and Avenues for Further Research

Regarding the limitations of the research, these are that the present research focused exclusively on articles from the Web of Science database. This approach may exclude relevant contributions published in other databases or academic journals that are not indexed in Web of Science. However, the research will help to identify evolving research directions on the role and importance of internal audit in the business environment. Future research directions include both an expansion of the databases that publish research on internal audit, as well as an expansion of the literature review on internal audit in the context of corporate governance, applying the same systematic review methodology used in this research. This could include a detailed assessment of how internal audit contributes to transparency, accountability and efficiency in corporate governance.

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