Combined Assurance and its Role in Organisational Performance: A Case Study on Risk Professionals' Perspective in South Africa

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A research article submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration

Johannesburg, 2023

Protocol number: WBS/BA2526685/546

DECLARATION

I, Lebogang Nkhokhola Kekana, declare that this research article is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business Administration, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

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Lebogang Nkhokhola Kekana

Signed at **Centurion** On the **21st** day of **June 2023**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- To my supervisor Dr. Grant Sieff, this journey would not have been possible without your guidance and support. I am truly grateful for your grooming and availability throughout the process. You are the epitome of authentic leadership.
- Interminable acknowledgement to my husband Will, for the unwavering support and patience. I appreciate all that you have done for me throughout my studies. Thanks for your selflessness and for unconditionally supporting my dream. I love you.
- Many thanks to my fabulous family especially my mother Diccah, brother Thabang, and aunts Nkotana and Mologadi.Your words of encouragement kept me going. You have been my cheerleaders from day one. I am so blessed and proud to call you my family.
- To my Mate Nkosinathi Mbitamkhono, thanks for encouraging me to take up the MBA journey and for believing in me when I doubted myself.
- To my friends Shadi Leshika, Zezethu Siwundla, Vusi Nkutha, Patson Ndhlovu, Lesedi Mampuru and Hlayisani Mkhavele, this degree would not have been bearable without your endless support. Thanks for being there whenever I needed a punching bag.
- My study buddies, I can never thank you enough for the late nights and early mornings study sessions. They really paid off. See you on graduation day.
- To all those who participated in my survey, this research project will not have been complete without you. I am truly grateful for your assistance.
- To the Man who made it all possible, the Lord Almighty for carrying me through the frustrations and hardships, lebitšo la gago a le retwe.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
AGSA	Auditor General South Africa
CA	Combined Assurance
IIA	Institute of Internal Auditors
IoDSA	Institute of Directors South Africa
JSE	Johannesburg Security Exchange
PWC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SOX	Sarbanes Oxley
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences tool
USA	United States of America
VBS	Venda Building Society

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Nominated Journal : International Journal of Corporate Governance

Supervisor : Dr Grant Sieff

Word Count :14296

Supplementary Files: Consistency Matrix

Survey Questionnaire

Participation Motivation

Consent Form

Ethics Certificate

Topic Approval

ABSTRACT

South Africa has been in the spotlight for its poor governance practices even though various laws, regulations, and frameworks are in place to guide how business should be conducted. Oversights committees, especially the board of directors are tasked with the governance of risk and achievement of organisational goals. Combined assurance is used as one of the tools to promote efficient risk management and mitigate against poor control environment and governance processes. Regardless of legislation and governance frameworks providing direction and tasking the three lines of defense with clear assurance responsibilities, the South African public and private sectors are in shambles. This study aimed to understand combined assurance and its role on organisational performance from the second line of defense perspective.

The impact of combined assurance on organisational performance, as well as the influence of combined assurance drivers and the three lines of defence on organisational performance has been assessed in this study. The research project followed a quantitative research design. Data was collected through a structured survey questionnaire using Qualtrics. The survey questionnaire was distributed to risk professionals within South African boundaries in both the public and private sector via e-mail.44 participants (37%) of the targeted 120 risk professional have responded to the survey.

The study found that the alternative hypothesis being that effective combined assurance seems to contribute positively to organisational performance is accepted. In addition, the study found that the alternative hypothesis being that the drivers of combined assurance seem to be associated with positive organisational performance is accepted. The study further revealed that the alternative hypothesis being that effective three lines of defense contributes positively to organisational performance. The study contributed to the body of knowledge by providing the perspective of the second line of defence on combined assurance and how it impacts organisational performance.

Keywords

Risk Management, Corporate Governance, Organisational Performance, Senior Management, Combined Assurance ,Board of Directors and Three Lines of Defense.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce chapter 1 and outline the research structure. Figure 1 below outlines the research structure as follows: -

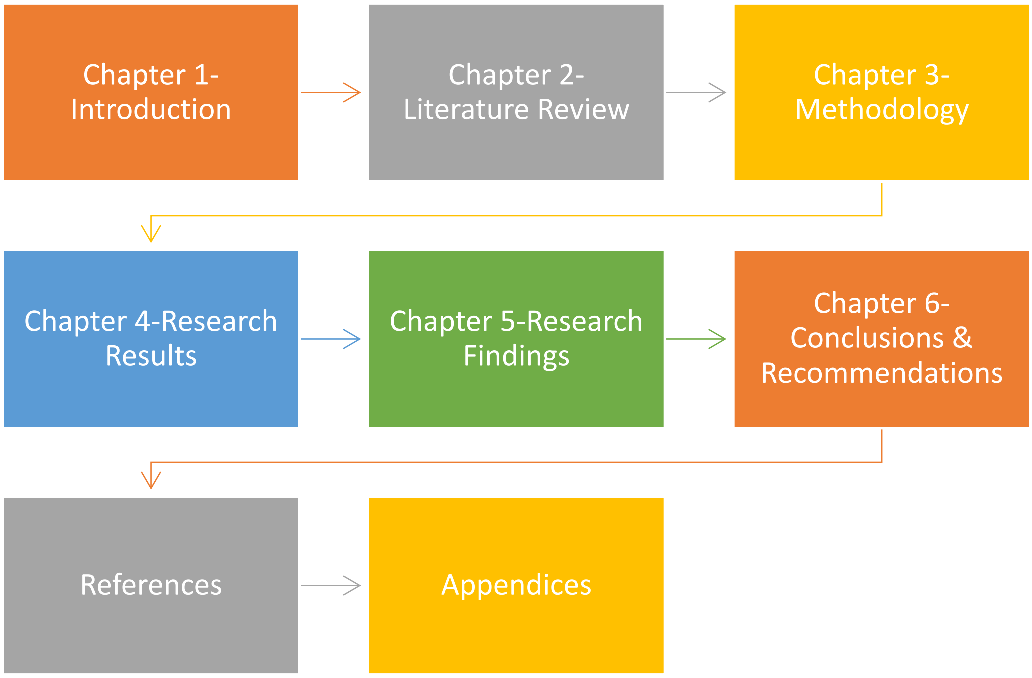


Figure 1: Structure of the Research Proposal-Source: Author

1.1 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research project was to gain an understanding on combined assurance and its role in organisational performance from a perspective of risk professionals in South Africa. The study focused on combined assurance as a tool to manage organisational risks and influence organisational performance. The following research objectives were formulated in order to fulfil the aim of the study:

- **Objective 1**: To determine how combined assurance impacts on organisational performance;
- **Objective 2**: To establish reasons behind the implementation of combined assurance by organisations; and

- **Objective 3:** To determine if the three lines of defense is effective in achieving organisational performance.

1.2 Background to the Study

For decades corporate governance has evolved in South Africa. King I report was first introduced in South Africa in 1994 as a governance framework which according to IoDSA (2009) guides organisations on how to "disclose reliable and accurate information; promote ethical culture; foster good performance; and promote effective control and legitimacy". King reports were revised in 2002,2006 and 2016 to accommodate evolving and emerging business needs. The latest version, which is King IV is adopted and applied by both private and public sectors in South Africa.

The Enrol, WorldCom and Arthur Andersons scandals, as well as the 2008 global financial crisis which emanated from the USA housing and bond markets put corporate governance in the spotlight. These scandals were as a result of ineffective risk management practices and ineffective three lines of defense. These governance failure scandals sparked conversations on the importance of risk management as part of corporate governance. Frameworks such as King IV, SOX Act and the Cadbury Report are universally used as best practice guidelines in an effort to assist senior management and the board with the management of risks.

In South Africa, King IV places the responsibility of risk management on the board. King IV further states that the board should "treat risk as integral to the way it makes decisions and execute its duties" (IoDSA,2009). If risks are managed effectively, organisations can achieve their strategic objectives. Even with King IV and other applicable legislations in place, the South African public and private sector collapsed due to ineffective corporate governance processes and practices. Organisations such as Steinhoff, VBS Bank, Eskom, South African Airways, Eskom and SABC inter alia are classic cases of corporate governance gone wrong.

King IV on corporate governance requires that assurance be provided on risk management and internal controls effectiveness to the board of directors. It is however impractical for the board to fulfil its risk responsibility without delegating some of its functions to assurance providers such as management, risk managers, internal & external auditors, legal and compliance inter alia. To manage the reliability and accuracy of information submitted to the board, all assurance providers should coordinate their effort through combined assurance processes.

Combined assurance is a mechanism which allows the three lines of defence (management, risk management and compliance, internal auditors and external auditors) to contribute towards risk management without duplicating efforts; and allows the board to effectively play its risk oversight role.

1.3 Problem Statement

At the heart of good corporate governance is risk management which ensures that set organisational objectives will be achieved. The board, as the custodian of good governance, must annually provide feedback on the effectiveness of risk management and internal control mechanisms (IoDSA,2009). This is made possible by implementing combined assurance. Decaux and Sarens (2015) supports that a holistic assurance approach is required so that the board may remark on how well risk management processes and internal controls are working.

Regardless of legislation and governance frameworks providing direction and tasking the three lines of defense with clear assurance responsibilities, the South African public and private sectors are in shambles. The former Public Protector, Adv. Thuli Madonsela issued a state capture report on 14 October 2016 alleging that there was improper and unethical conduct by the former President Jacob Zuma and the Gupta family (Madonsela, 2016). Private sector organisations such as Bosasa,VNA Consulting and PWC were at the centre of unethical conduct scandals during the state capture commission of enquiry (Businessinsider,2022). Auditor-General of South Africa issued the 2020/2021 audit report on national departments which indicates that although there is a slight improvement in audit outcomes, the state of South African public sector governance is not at the desired level. The collapse of state-owned entities and departments gave rise to the notorious question being ***where were assurance providers and what role did they play in the collapse of these entities?***

The breakdown in public and private sector governance practices have led to instances of fraud and corruption, which impacts negatively on strategy implementation and achievement of goals. This means that there is little to no service delivery to South African citizens, whilst taxpayers' monies are being abused and misused by those in power. This also impacts on the

GDP of the country and defeats the government plan to eradicate wicked problems such as unemployment, poverty and crime.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated in order to fulfil the aim of the study:

- **Question 1:** How does combined assurance impact on organisational performance?
- **Question 2:** What are the drivers of combined assurance and their impact on organisational performance?
- **Question 3:** Does the three lines of defense have an impact on organisational performance?

1.5 Research Delimitations

The study did not consider all theories of corporate governance. The focus was on the agency theory which places emphasis on the board's delegation of responsibilities to management. This theory supports the notion of combined assurance and delegation of responsibilities to the three lines of defense. The study also focused on the second line of defense.

1.6 Research Assumptions

The researcher assumed that the calibre of identified participants was that of individuals who in their various roles are expected to provide accurate information and understand the implications of providing misleading information.. It is on this basis that the researcher assumed that participants answered the survey questionnaire with honesty, and to the best of their ability and knowledge.

1.7 Definitions of terms

Keywords

Combined Assurance, Three Lines of Defense, Risk Management, Corporate Governance, Organisational Performance, Senior Management, Board of Directors.

1.8 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the structure of the research and introduced the purpose of the study. Corporate governance breakdown in South Africa fuelled the need to explore how combined assurance impacts on the achievement of organisational goals. The research problem, together with research objections and research questions were identified to fulfil the aim of the study. Research delimitations and assumptions were discussed to outline the scope of the research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to focus on available literature regarding combined assurance and organisational performance. The theoretical framework as well as definition of topics will also be discussed in this chapter.

2.2 Definition of Keywords

Key definitions such as the three lines of defense, senior management and the board of directors are pertinent to the implementation and success and/or failure of combined assurance. **Combined Assurance** “is a process of integrating and aligning assurance processes in a company to maximise risk and governance oversight and control efficiencies, and optimise overall assurance to the Audit and Risk committee, considering the company’s risk appetite” (IoDSA, 2009). **The three lines of defense** is a process meant to make governance and risk management more efficient and effective. (Huibers, 2015). **Corporate Governance** “is a system by which companies are directed and controlled” (Rossouw, van der Watt & Malan 2002). **Organisational Performance** analyses a company's performance in relation to its aims and goals. **Senior Managemen**t “is the top-level management structure in an organisation responsible for implementing a risk management framework, systems of internal control, and governance-related processes” (IIA, 2020). **Board of Directors** “is a panel of people elected to represent shareholders” (IIA, 2021).

2.3 Theoretical Framework (Agency Theory)

For decades, the agency theory has been applied and widely researched in different disciplines such as economics, law, finances and political science (Zogning ,2017). This theory clarifies the relationship between the principal and agent in as far as conflict management is concerned (Eisenhardt, 1989). According to Afza and Nazir (2014) the agency theory is problematic in instances where agents are self-serving and neglects their responsibilities toward their principals. Some of the reasons which gives rise to the agency problems are conflict of interests by agents and differing risk-taking attitudes between the principals and agents (Eisenhardt, 1989 as cited in Afza et al,2014).

Mudambi & Pedersen (2007) explained the agency theory in a multinational organisation context wherein the head office delegates some decision making powers to the subsidiary. Mudambi et al, (2007) asserts that the challenge with agency problems arise when the subsidiary puts its needs above the needs of the head office. The agency theory is relevant to this research project as it supports the notion of combined assurance, clarifies roles in organisations, and promotes the protection of shareholders' interests.

2.4 Research Question 1: How Does Combined Assurance Impact on Organisational Performance?

2.4.1 Combined Assurance and Organisational Performance

To some extent, part of the African continent appears to be aware of what combined assurance is compared to other continents. "In the CBOK 2015 Global Internal Audit Practitioner Survey" (Huibers ,2015), the Sub-Saharan Africa results revealed that 39% of respondents confirmed that their organisations implement combined assurance, 80% is aware of combined assurance, and 53% use the three lines of defense model (Huibers ,2015).

South Africa, as the custodian of King IV seems to be making good strides with combined assurance. Dzomira (2016) in his study on the South African public sector's use of combined assurance concluded that most South African organisations have the three lines of defense and provide assurance on the management of risks. Another case study research by Decaux and Sarens (2015) on the implementation of combined assurance concluded that the two sampled South African organisations are implementing combined assurance. Donkor, Djajadikerta, and Mat Roni (2021) revealed that JSE listed companies apply combined assurance as an effective tool which impacts positively on integrated reporting and ESG Qualities.

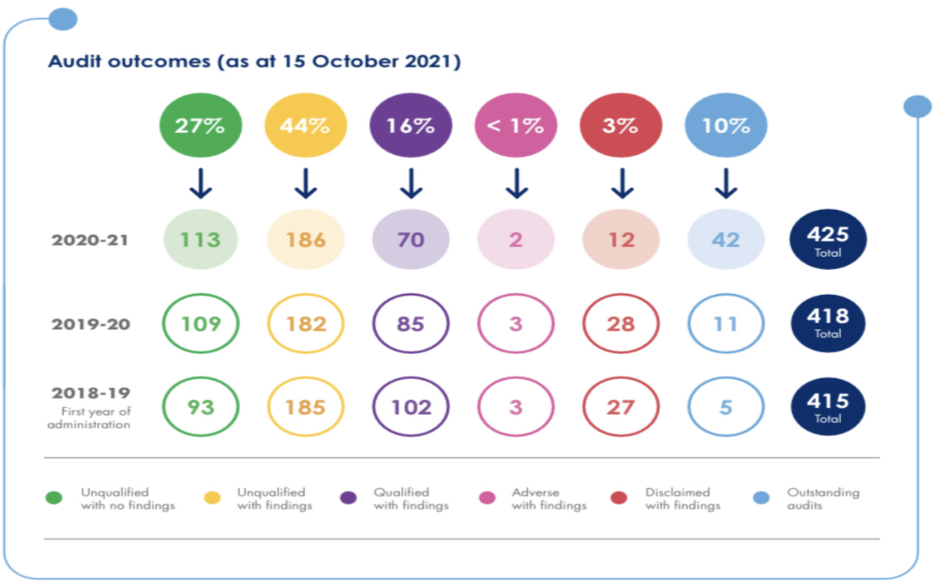
There is however mounting evidence that the implementation of combined assurance does not warrant positive organisational performance. South African private and public sectors have instances of poor corporate governance despite the three levels of defense being in place. (Masegare,2016 as cited in Masegare, 2018) shows that organisations still fail to achieve a clean audit even with combined assurance in place. This indicates that combined assurance may be in place but be ineffective.

2.4.2 Combined Assurance Gone Wrong

The 2021 South African governance perception index is at a score of 40.4 and a ranking of 156 out of 180 countries (World Bank n.d.). This is a reflection that corporate governance is not improving even with the three lines of defense in place. Organisations such as African Bank and Steinhoff are examples of some of the biggest corporate failures in South Africa. African Bank was placed under curatorship by the South African Reserve Bank in 2017 due to failures in corporate governance pertaining from reckless lending practices and poor financial management (Kodongo, van den Berg & Beswick 2015). Steinhoff collapsed for the same corporate governance failures reason with accounting irregulars and conflict of interests as the main contributing factors for its failure (Rossouw & Styan 2019). In addition, the state capture revealed irregularities experienced by the South African public and private sector. Entities such as Eskom, Transnet and SABC are amongst those linked to the Gupta family in fraud and corruption scandals in so far as supply chain management process are concerned**.** What is common in these scandals is that the agency problem arose when either one or more assurance levels were ineffective.

The Auditor-General of South Africa issued the 2020/2021 audit report on national departments which indicates that although there is a slight improvement in audit outcomes, the state of governance in the South African public sector is not at the desired level.

Figure 2: Auditor-General 2020/2021 PFMA Audit Outcomes refers: -



Source: AGSA- The Citizen's Report: PFMA 2020-21

2.4.3 Combined Assurance Success Stories

Conflicting findings have come from attempts to analyze the connection between corporate governance and the performance of the organization (Gill, Vijay & Jha, 2009; Smits,2014 as cited in Madondo,2021). Even with these conflicting views the literature reviewed revealed that most researchers agree that there is a positive correlation between organisational performance and good governance. A research hypothesis by Aregbeshola and Radebe (2012) suggests that there is “a positive relationship between corporate financial performance and the CSR performance”. One of the lessons learned from a study by Peinado-Vara (2006) is that organisations achieved objectives and profitability when they observed good social action.

A study by Prinsloo (2015) found that SMMEs realised value in the implementation of either combined assurance (36.67% respondents), or the use of other assurance providers (50% respondents). “In core, value is predominantly added through means of the enhancement of the effectiveness of internal controls (81.4% of the time), achieving of business objectives (80.9% of the time) and aiding in up-skilling of employees to attain better customer satisfaction (80% of the time)” (Prinsloo, 2015).

Waweru (2014) found that there is “a significant positive relationship between firm performance and the quality of corporate governance”. According to Ethical Boardroom (n.d.) African organisation which were announced as the 2022 African winners for good governance included Sappi Ltd, Zenith Bank Plc, Old Mutual Ltd, Safaricom Plc and LaFarge Africa Plc inter alia.

Hypothesis 1 (H1)

Null Hypothesis-Combined assurance does not have an impact on organisational performance.
Alternative Hypothesis-Effective combined assurance seems to contribute positively to organisational performance.

2.5 Research Question 2: What Are the Drivers of Combined Assurance and Their Impact on Organisational Performance?

The rise in corporate failures has put pressure on organisations to observe laws, regulations, governance frameworks, and professional guidelines applicable to their respective industries. These requirements are implemented with the purpose of achieving set organisational goals by identifying adequate and effective mitigating controls on risks identified by senior management and the board. As there are laws and regulations that control how the tiers or lines of defense are established and function, combined assurance suitability is demonstrated by its ability to facilitate organizational compliance with those laws and regulations (Madondo,2021). Combined assurance was frequently turned into a check-the-box exercise when it was motivated by the need to adhere to governance standards or listing requirements (Mutevhe, 2019). As a result, combined assurance was ineffective when its motive was "compliance". Madondo (2021) found contradicting views that compliance obsession was not advantageous to organizations in terms of minimizing the agency problems however, some participants were of the view that focusing on compliance was crucial when dealing with the agency problem Some of the driving motivation behind combined assurance includes the following: -

2.5.1 King IV

King IV is a South African corporate governance framework which contains principles and guidelines which assists organisations in achieving good governance practices. The framework is applicable to JSE listed companies, public entities, and municipalities amongst others. The introduction of combined assurance by the Institute of Directors was first seen in 2006 when King III was published (PWC, 2010).

Principle 3.5 of King III was issued as a recommended governance practice which required assurance providers to improve assurance coverage and quality by coordination (PWC,2010). The revision of King III led to the issuance of King IV which was effective on 1 April 2007. King IV further required that a combined assurance model be implemented by organisations as "these enable an effective control environment, support the integrity of information used for decision-making by management, the governing body and its committees; and support the integrity of the organisation external reports" (PWC,2010). King IV further tasked the board and the audit committee with combined assurance responsibilities. IoDSA (2009) guides organisations on how to "disclose reliable and accurate information; promote ethical culture; foster good performance; and promote effective control and legitimacy

2.5.2 The Institute of Internal Auditors

Internal auditors by virtue of being internal assurance providers (third line of defense) are expected to play a value adding role in corporate governance. Internal audit "helps an organization accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes" (IIA,2021). To guide the role and responsibilities of internal auditors in combined assurance, the IIA revised the Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing which came into effect on 01 January 2017. The standards outline the following guidelines in table 1.

Table 1: IIA Standards on Combined Assurance

Standard 1000 Purpose, Authority, and Responsibility	In accordance with the Definition of Internal Auditing, the Code of Ethics, and the Standards, the purpose, authority, and responsibility of the internal audit activity must be officially stated in an internal audit charter.
Standard 2050 Coordination	The chief audit executive should coordinate actions, communicate information., and consider relying upon the work of other internal and external assurance and consulting service providers to ensure proper coverage and minimize duplication of efforts.
Standard 2060 Reporting to Senior Management and the Board	The chief audit executive must report periodically to senior management and the board on the internal audit activity's purpose, authority, responsibility, and performance relative to its plan and on its conformance with the Code of Ethics and the Standards. Significant risk and control issues, such as fraud risks, governance issues, and other matters needing the attention of senior management or the board, must also be included in the reporting.
Standard 2100 Nature of Work	Using a methodical, disciplined, and risk-based approach, the internal audit activity must assess and contribute to the enhancement of the organization's governance, risk management, and control systems.

Source: (The Institute of Internal Auditors, 2016).

2.5.3 Public Finance Management Act (PFMA)

Combined assurance is also visible, though not explicit in the PFMA. South African public sector is mandated by PFMA to have effective and efficient risk management systems. Section 38 (1) (a) (i) of the PFMA requires that "the accounting officer maintains effective, efficient, and transparent systems of financial and risk management and internal control." PFMA also requires that organisations establish an audit committee to review internal controls, risk management and governance processes. It also requires the use of Auditor-General on an annual basis to review financial statement and ensure that they fairly and accurately represent the financial position of organisation. Various roles identified in the PFMA are aligned to the three lines of defense thus making it possible to implement combined assurance.

Hypothesis 2 (H2)

Null Hypothesis-Drivers of combined assurance make no difference in promoting organisational performance.

Alternative Hypothesis -Drivers of combined assurance seem to be associated with positive organisational performance.

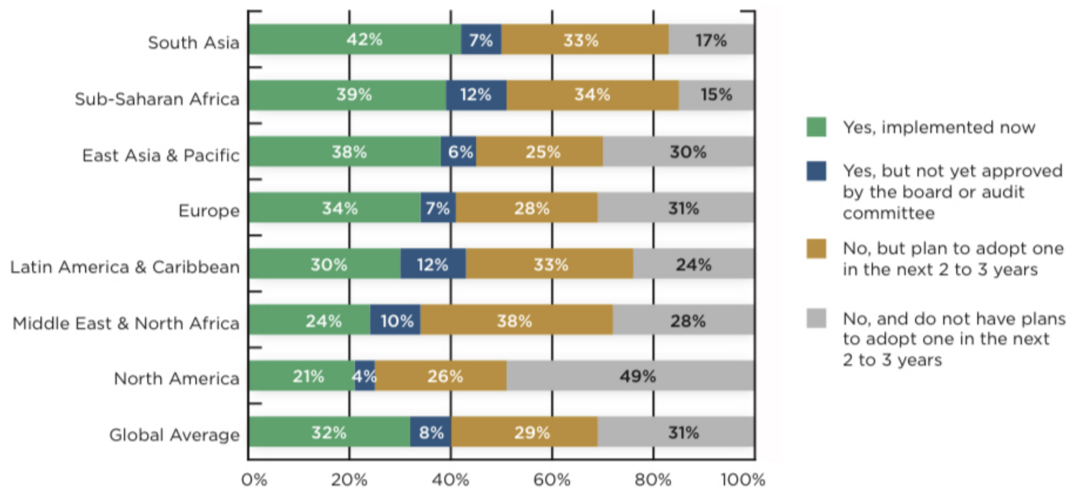
2.6 Research Question 3: Does the three lines of defense have an impact on organisational performance?

2.6.1 Combined Assurance Implementation

Based on the literature reviewed, combined assurance is still a new topic which needs to be widely researched. A study by (Sarens, Decaux & Lens,2012; Decaux & Sarens, 2015) asserts that the limitation in combined assurance research is due to it being a new concept. Combined assurance was first introduced in South Africa in 2009 when IoDSA issued King III (Rossouw & Marais, 2019). There were however no clear guidelines on how organisations should implement combined assurance (Huibers,2015). The research on how combined assurance affects internal auditing by (Rossouw et al., 2019) concluded that "research is yet to prove the feasibility of full implementation and effectiveness of CA". Professional bodies have embarked on researches which proves that the implementation of combined assurance is rare (Madondo,2021). The CBOK 2015 Global Internal Audit Practitioner Survey shows that understanding and application of the combined assurance approach are still developing (Huibers, 2015).

Below is figure 3 which illustrates the global average of 32% on the implementation of combined assurance: -

Exhibit 5 Implementation of Combined Assurance



Note: Q61: Has your organization implemented a formal combined assurance model? Those who selected "I don't know. I am not familiar with the combined assurance model" were excluded from these calculations. Due to rounding, some region totals may not equal 100%. *n* = 6,185.

Source: Combined assurance: One language, one voice, one view. *IIA CBOK Raporu*.

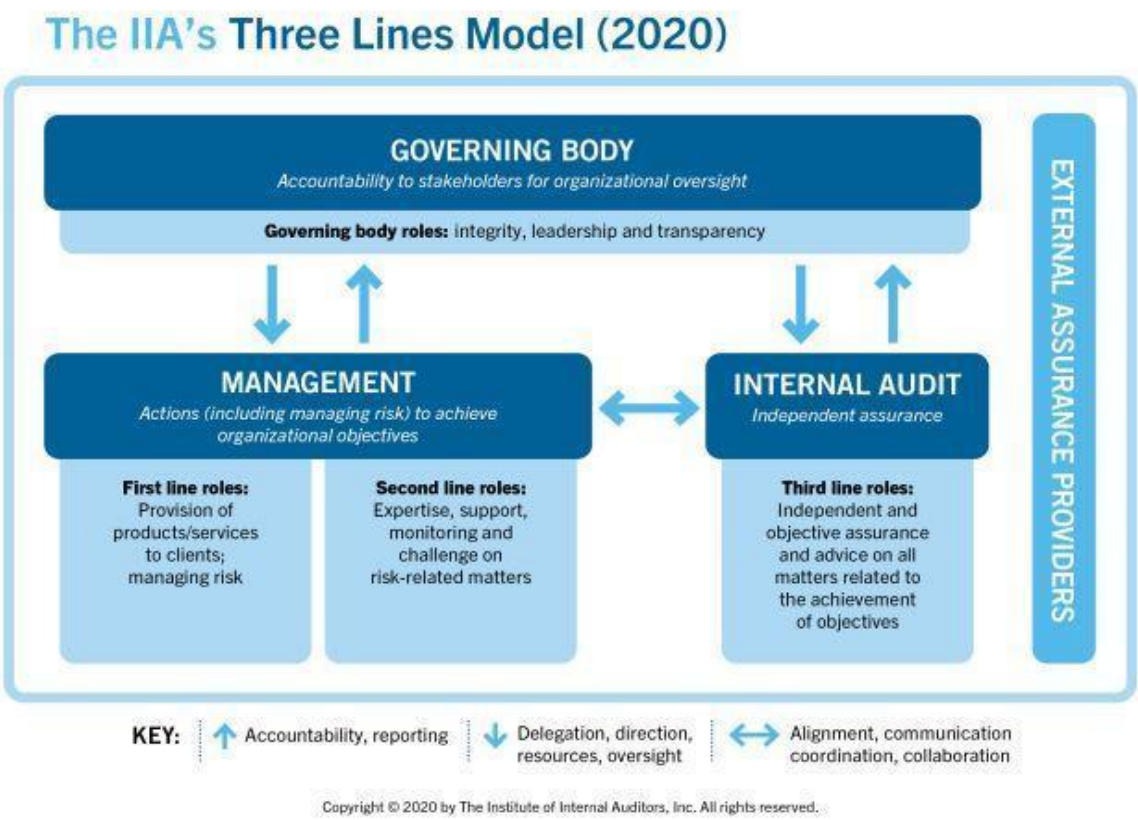
Sub-Saharan Africa is rated number two in the world with a 39% implementation of combined assurance. Though it is worrisome that 15% has no intentions of adopting combined assurance in the next two to three years, it is commendable that 34% is awaiting approval by the board and the audit committee. This is an indication that the broader majority wants to address the agency problem.

2.6.2 The Three Lines of Defense

Risk assessment is a core process in relation to strategy planning. Senior management and the board have to identify risks which might impact the achievement of strategic goals either positively or negatively. Anderson and Eubanks (2015) posits that management must identify risks and implement internal controls which will give a fair level of certainty that the objectives will be met. This requires all assurance providers to coordinate their efforts and work towards the achievement of organisational goals.

For one to identify combined assurance in an organization, there should be assurance providers who are involved in the process. These assurance providers are identified using the three lines of defense model. Huibers (2015) defines the three lines of defense model as a process designed to facilitate efficient and effective governance and risk oversight. The implementation, custodianship, and functionality of integrated assurance are not addressed in the King framework (IoDSA,2009; Decaux & Sarens 2014). IoDSA (2009) make mention of internal audit as a component of combined assurance and places the combined assurance accountability on the audit committee. Decaux and Sarens (2014) suggests that combined assurance should be driven by the internal audit function. Schreurs and Marais (2015) also positions internal audit as the driver for the implementation of combined assurance. (IIA, 2013) position paper provides an analysis on the three lines of defense model with emphasis on guidelines for internal audit. The position paper does not provide guidelines on how other assurance providers must fulfil their combined assurance responsibilities.

The IIA three-line model is shown below as figure 4

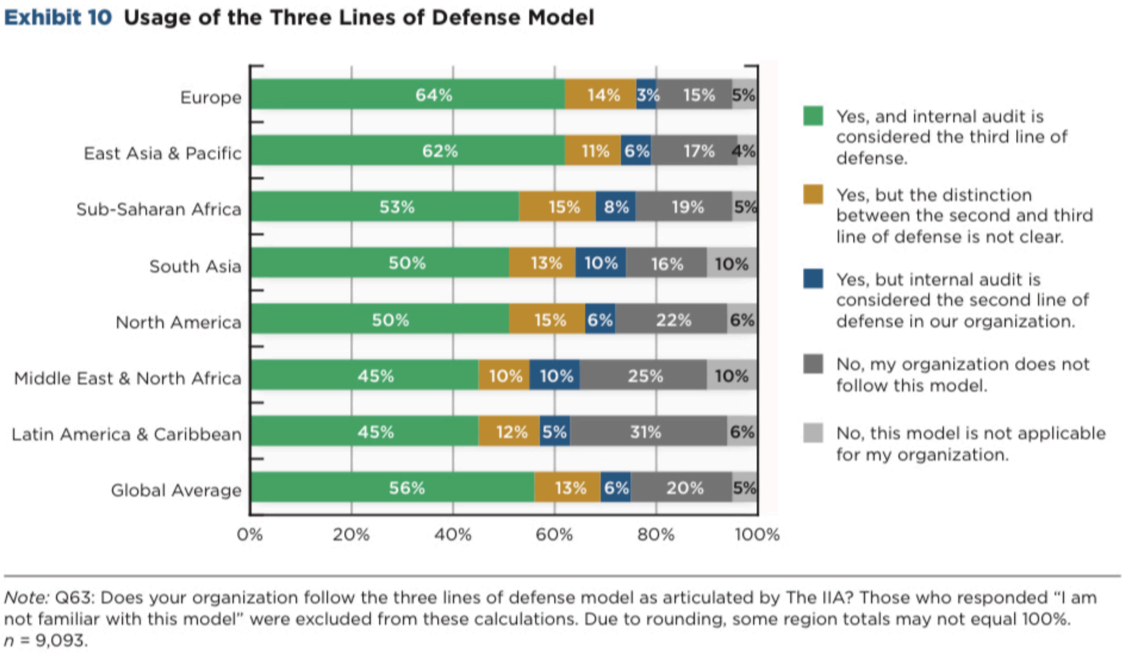


Source: The Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors: Application of the three-line model

Each line of defense represents a different assurance provider who has a specific role to play towards the management of risks. The first line of defense represents management. Management is responsible for the identification of risks and implementation of remedial action plans. The second line of defense depends on the size and nature of the organisation.

This includes risk management, compliance, and legal, amongst others. These levels provide assurance on management's function. The third line of defense consists of both internal and external assurance providers such as internal auditors, external auditors and regulators. They provide independent assurance to the board and senior management on the effectiveness of risks, governance and internal controls. According to Madondo (2021) implementing combined assurance results in compliance with and alignment of assurance processes, which efficiently and effectively reduces the danger of self-serving interest being pursued.

Figure 5 below shows that the global average on the usage of the Three Lines of Defense Model



Source: Adapted from Combined assurance: One language, one voice, one view. *IIA CBOK Raporu*.

Sub-Saharan Africa is rated number three in the world with 53% of implementing the three lines of defense model. 23% is confused with role of the second and third lines of defense, while 24% is not using the model at all.

2.6.3 Business Ethics and Organisational Performance

It is crucial to note that one of the drivers of successful organisations is an ethical culture. King IV requires the governing body to lead ethically and effectively (IoDSA,2016), as it is argued that the fish rots from the head. However, Madondo (2021) suggests that the fact that South African organizations have successfully developed compliance cultures does not always mean that combined assurance is successful in achieving moral growth or dealing with agency problem. IoDSA (2016) defines business ethics as “ethical values applied to decision-making conduct, and the relationship between organisations, its stakeholders and the broader community”. Organisational performance and sustainability are driven by the full implementation of the triple bottom line. Investors and other stakeholders are concerned with financial and non-financial affairs of the organisation as part of integrated reporting. If organisations want to be seen as good corporate citizens, they should focus on how they maintain the environment and empower the communities in which they operate.

Since 2010, Transparency International has shown that the South African corruption perceptions index has never crossed the 50-point mark on a scale of 100 (extremely clean) to 0 (very corrupt).Figure 6 below refers:-

This is concerning and undermines efforts by the government and regulating bodies to promote an ethical climate in South Africa. Madondo (2021) reported mixed views that corporate governance scandals can be significantly reduced through combined assurance, on the other hand, despite organizations' claims that they had implemented combined assurance, there have been controversies involving corporate governance. Maharaj and Karodia (2013) states that there is direct financial loss associated with corruption. Corruption is also an indicator that the three lines of defense are ineffective as evidenced by corporate failures discussed above. There is a need for organisational leaders to consider an ethical approach over legal compliance (Adekoya,2011).

Hypothesis 3 (H3)

Null Hypothesis- The three lines of defense has no impact in promoting positive organisational positive.

Alternative Hypothesis- Effective three lines of defense contributes positively to organisational performance.

2.7 Chapter Conclusion

The agency problem was identified as the main corporate governance theory driving the need for combined assurance in organisations. In order to prove and support the validity of the research problem, a thorough literature study that is in line with the research objectives and research questions was documented. Both null and alternative hypothesis were formulated to determine the outcome of the research problem.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the researcher's choice of research design and methodology, data collection methods, population and sample, data analysis and interpretation, research trustworthiness, as well as ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design & Methodology

The research project followed a quantitative research design. According to Queirós, Farai, and Almeida (2017) quantitative research focuses on objectivity and is especially suitable when it is possible to gather measurable assessments of variables and inferences from samples of a population. Quantitative research design is commonly used to analyse numerical data through the use of statistical procedures (Queirós, Farai, & Almeida,2017). Forte and Barac (2015) posits that quantitative research is descriptive in nature. The methodological approach followed was a survey research as supported by studies performed by (Lewis., 2014; Madondo.,2021; Forte& Barac.,2015)

Table 2 below outlines advantages and disadvantages of survey research: -

Advantages of Survey Research	Disadvantages of Survey Research
• Enables the cost-effective collection of a significant amount of data from a sizable population; • Ensures that the data is in a standard format and enables easy comparisons; • Makes the data easy to understand; • Enables the researcher to conduct the research alone; and • Produces findings that can be applied to the entire population.	• In order for results and conclusions to be accurate, the sample must be representative; • It is also dependent on participant information; • Limited by the number of questions in the questionnaire and/or interview; • Captures a snapshot of an ongoing process: and • Is subject to the memories and attitudes of the participants.

Source: Lewis (2014).

3.3 Data Collection Method

The research project data was collected through a structured survey questionnaire. A survey is a research method that enables the direct gathering of data from a participant in the study using a set of questions arranged in a specific order (Queirós, Farai, & Almeida 2017). Structured questions were answered based on the likert scale of one to five ranging from "Strongly disagree to Strongly agree" respectively as seen in studies by (Prinsloo.,2015; Madondo., 2021; Christopher., 2015); Birhane., 2020).

The survey questionnaire was developed using Qualtrics. The survey questionnaire was distributed to targeted participants via e-mail. This allowed the researcher to gain insight and understanding on combined assurance and its role in organisational performance.

3.4 Population and sample

Research done by (Sarens et al., 2012; Decaux et al., 2014; Schreurs et al., 2015; Decaux et al., 2015) revealed the need to include the first and second lines of defense to gain a holistic overview of combined assurance. The targeted population for this research project are risk professionals in South Africa. This target population is the second line of defense and have influence in the implementation of combined assurance

A purposive sampling method was used to identify participants who responded to the survey questionnaire. Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, (2016) states that "The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses". (Bernard, 2002, as cited in Etikan et al.,2016) put emphasis on the importance of gathering research data as data contributes to a better understanding of a theoretical framework. The researcher determines what information is required and sets out to discover people who can and will supply it based on their knowledge or experience (Etikan et al.,2016). Sample size for similar studies based on previous research ranged between 50-140 participants. The sample size of a study by Prinsloo (2015) on the effectiveness of risk management in small and very small businesses engaged in retail trade in Bellville South Africa, as a result of combined assurance programs was 50 respondents .Boateng, Owusu-Manu, Adesi, Parn, and Edwards, (2019) in their study on aligning strategic objectives to corporate governance objectives in construction professional service firms had 115 top management as a sample size. Another study by Masegare (2018) on implementing combination assurance initiatives with value for South African organizations sampled 140 board of directors. As a result, the sample size for this study was 120 risk professionals.

3.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Quantitative data analysis is the process of applying reasoning to transform unstructured data into meaningful data. This is done to find evidence which either confirm or disprove research hypothesis. Data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences tool (SPSS). This software was used to organize the data and provide data based on statistics utilities such as *Frequencies, Descriptive, Reliability and Correlations* to test the effectiveness of the *Alternative Hypothesis*

3.6 Limitations of the study

The risk of loadshedding and network connection may result in participants not responding to the survey questionnaire. Since participation to the research is voluntary, some key participants may opt not to partake in the study.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are important to the success of the research. "Validity is determined by the meaningful and appropriate interpretation of the data obtained from the measuring instrument as a result of the analyses" (SÜRÜCÜ & MaslakÇI, 2020). Heale and Twycross (2015) posits that the accuracy with which an idea is measured determines its validity in quantitative research.

The consistency of results obtained by a research instrument across time is evaluated through reliability (Heale & Twycross, 2015). When using any experimental measure, reliability coefficients should always be specified (Larson-Hall & Plonsky, (2015).The reliability of the research instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha.A Cronbach alpha of 0.7 or higher indicates an acceptable internal consistency (Taber, 2017). Therefore, the adopted measuring instrument for this study was tested for reliability and was acceptable with Cronbach alpha at 0.702. Table 3 indicates the validity measures of the research instrument:-

Table 3 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.702	.768	13

3.8 Ethical considerations

The research project commenced after an approved ethics clearance was offered by the Wits Business School's Ethics and Integrity Committee. All participants were informed that the survey questionnaire is for research purposes only. Participants were informed of their right to not participate in the study, and those who opted to participate did so without intimidation and were required to fill out a permission form as part of the Qualtrics online survey.

To ensure that the research is conducted with integrity, no reward was offered to participants. Participation in the research was on a voluntary basis. The identity of participants was kept anonymous. Participants' survey questionnaire results will be saved in the researcher's password-protected folder on the researcher's drive for a period prescribed by the Wits Business School.

3.9 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology followed for this study. A quantitative research design was followed to collect data using a Qualtrics survey. SPSS was used to analyse data. The target population of the study was risk professionals within South Africa, with a sample size of 120 professionals. The reliability of data was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and was at an acceptable level. The necessary ethical considerations were highlighted during the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the information gathered and examined using a statistical program. A quantitative approach was used to collect data using a Qualtrics survey. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to analyze data collected. This chapter will present results as follows: -

- Section A- Participants Profile,
- Section B- Combined Assurance and Its Role in Organisational Performance,
- Section C- Effect of Combined Assurance Drivers *(Laws, Regulations, Professional Standards)* on Organisational Performance, and
- Section D- Effectiveness of The Three Lines of Defense in Organisational Performance.

4.2 Section A- Participants Profile

An overview of the participants' demographics is given in this section. The information was gathered to give the researcher a complete picture of the participants' backgrounds. The researcher gathered information on the participants' gender, age, level of education, occupation level, years of experience and the sector in which they operate. To make it simple for the researcher to quickly scan the whole set of data, frequency distribution, a structured tabulation representation of the number of participants in each category on the scale of measurement was developed.

Table 4 below indicates that a total number of n=44 participants responded to the survey. While n=44 responses where received, eight participants (18.2%) did not disclose their gender. Male participants accounted for 58.3% (n=21) of responses with females accounting for 41.7% (n=15). This reflects that even though participants for the purposes of this research are dominated by male respondents, both genders are fairly represented in the research, allowing different perspectives to be gathered with gender dynamics in mind.

Table 4-Gender					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Female	15	34.1	41.7	41.7
	Male	21	47.7	58.3	100.0
	Total	36	81.8	100.0	
Missing	System	8	18.2		
Total		44	100.0		

Survey results according to **Table 5** indicates that a total number of 44 participants responded to the survey. Most participants were in the 35-44 years age group with 58.1% (n=25), followed by those who were between 45-54 years old with 27.9% (n=12), age groups between 25-34 years with 9.3%% (n=4), and 55-64 with 4.7% (n=2) and 5.9%. One participant did not specify his/her age.

Table 5-How old are you?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	25-34 years old	4	9.1	9.3	9.3
	35-44 years old	25	56.8	58.1	67.4
	45-54 years old	12	27.3	27.9	95.3
	55-64 years old	2	4.5	4.7	100.0
	Total	43	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.3		
Total		44	100.0		

Table 6 survey results show that 46.5% (n=20) of participants have a post graduate degree. The second highest qualification which participants hold is a degree with 27.9% (n=12). Only 9.3% (n=4) of participants have a diploma. The 16.3% (n=7) of participant specified that they have other qualifications such as Master of Business Leadership and Master of Business Administration. One participant did not specify his/her level of education. The level of education which participants hold demonstrate that they are adequately qualified to provide valuable inputs into the study.

Table 6-Level of Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Diploma	4	9.1	9.3	9.3

	Degree	12	27.3	27.9	37.2
	Post Graduate	20	45.5	46.5	83.7
	Other - Please specify	7	15.9	16.3	100.0
	Total	43	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.3		
Total		44	100.0		

Level of Education – Other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		38	86.4	86.4	86.4
	CA(SA) and GCMA	1	2.3	2.3	88.6
	Master of Business Administration	1	2.3	2.3	90.9
	Masters	1	2.3	2.3	93.2
	Masters of Business Leadership	1	2.3	2.3	95.5
	MBA	2	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	44	100.0	100.0	

The occupational levels of the participants, as shown in **Table 7**, ranged from high management to junior staff. According to survey results, 41.9% of participants (n=18) are in middle management. Executive management and senior management are both at 11.6% (n=5), senior staff is at 16.3% (n=7), followed by junior staff at 9.3% (n=4). As a result, the findings show that this study was able to capture the perspectives of many occupational levels, from the highest level to the lowest level. These occupational levels presuppose that participants have a fair amount of subject knowledge, allowing the researcher to make accurate interpretations and derive reliable results.

Table 7-Occupation Level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Executive Management	5	11.4	11.6	11.6
	Senior Management	5	11.4	11.6	23.3
	Middle Management	18	40.9	41.9	65.1

	Junior Management	4	9.1	9.3	74.4
	Senior Staff	7	15.9	16.3	90.7
	Junior Staff	4	9.1	9.3	100.0
	Total	43	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.3		
Total		44	100.0		

Table 8 demonstrate that the participates has the necessary knowledge and experience in risk management as the second line of defense. As a result,44.2% (n=19) participants had over 15 years of experience, with 32.6% (n=14) falling within the 11-15 years' experience category, and lastly with 23.3% (n=10) having 5-10 years' experience in risk management.

Table 8-Years of Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5 - 10	10	22.7	23.3	23.3
	11 - 15	14	31.8	32.6	55.8
	15+	19	43.2	44.2	100.0
	Total	43	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.3		
Total		44	100.0		

The focus of the study is to gain an understanding of combined assurance and its role in organisational performance in the South African context. Therefore, participants occupy various position in both the public and private sector were targeted. **Table 9** shows that a large percentage of 72.7% (n=32) is within the public sector, with the remaining 25.6% (n=11) within the private sector.

Table 9-Sector

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Private	11	25.0	25.6	25.6
	Public	32	72.7	74.4	100.0
	Total	43	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.3		
Total		44	100.0		

4.3 Section B- Combined Assurance and Its Role in Organisational Performance

The purpose of Section B was to test **Objective 1: To determine how combined assurance impacts on organisational performance**. The researcher designed six questions namely 1.Combined assurance is implemented with the intention to manage organisational risks and achieve set goals; 2. Combined assurance fosters organisational confidence and permits competent and informed decision-making, 3. Combined assurance provides insight to management and the board on governance processes, 4. By implementing combined assurance organisations can identify emerging risks before they materialise, 5. Combined assurance is a source of positive change and innovation within the organisation and 6.In my view, there is a relationship between the applications of combined assurance and positive organisational performance

The participants' comprehension of whether combined assurance is implemented with the intention to manage organisational risks and achieve set goals was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree". The results show that 100% (n=42) of participant (61.9% (n=26) strongly agree and 38.1% (n=16) agree) believe that there is a good relationship between combined assurance and the management of risks and achievement of organisational goals. **Table 10** below refers.

Table 10- Combined assurance is implemented with the intention to manage organisational risks and achieve set goals

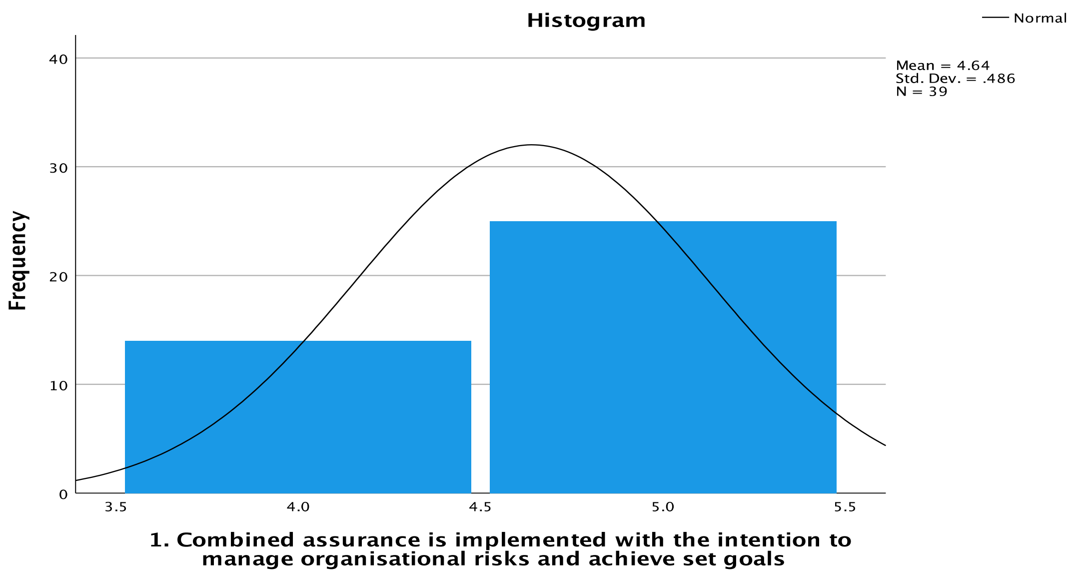
Q1		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	16	36.4	38.1	38.1
	Strongly Agree	26	59.1	61.9	100.0
	Total	42	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	2	4.5		
Total		44	100.0		

Table 11 results shows that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a negative skew value of -0.612 was noted which indicates that participants' responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that all participants agree that there is a positive link between combined assurance and the management of risks and achievement of organisational goals.

Table 11-Descriptives

Q1			**Statistic**	**Std. Error**
1. Combined assurance is implemented with the intention to manage organisational risks and achieve set goals	Mean		4.64	.078
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.48	
		Upper Bound	4.80	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.66	
	Median		5.00	
	Variance		.236	
	Std. Deviation		.486	
	Minimum		4	
	Maximum		5	
	Range		1	
	Interquartile Range		1	
	Skewness		-.612	.378
	Kurtosis		-1.717	.741

Figure 7 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



The participants' comprehension of whether combined assurance in helping with inspiring organisational confidence and enables a competent and informed decision-making process was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree". The results show that 95.2% (n=42) of participants (47.6% (n=20) strongly agree and 47.6% (n=20) agree) agree that combined assurance helps with informed decision-making, whereas 4.8% (n=2) neither agree nor disagree with the view. **Table 12** below refers.

Table 12- Combined assurance helps inspire organisational confidence and enables a competent and informed decision-making process

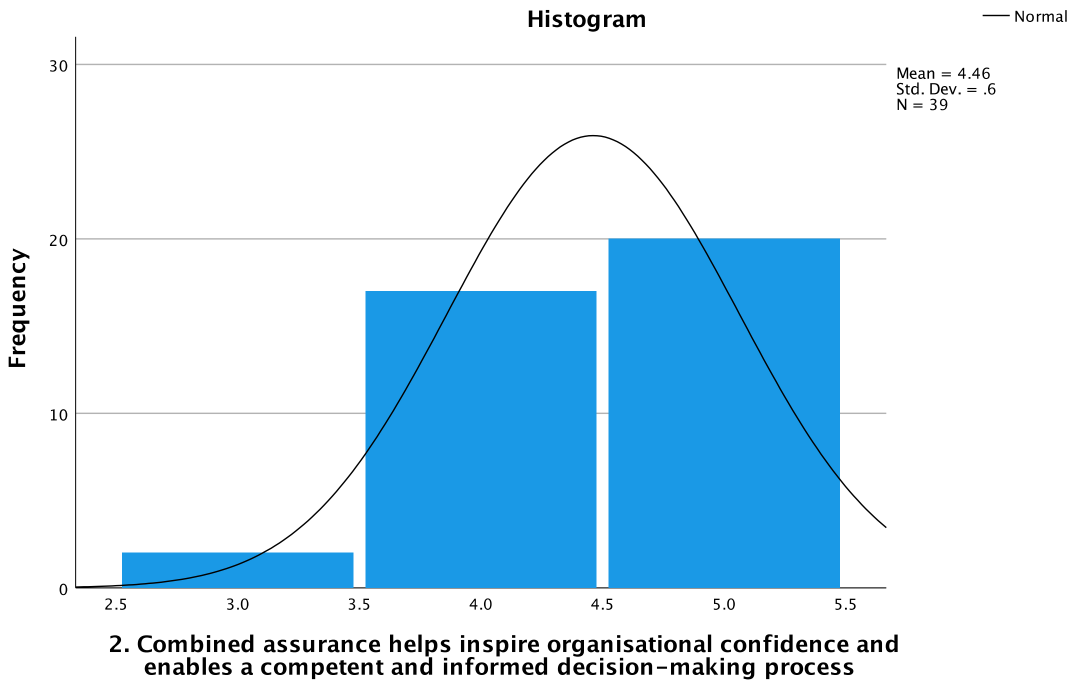
Q2		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neither Agree nor Disagree	2	4.5	4.8	4.8
	Agree	20	45.5	47.6	52.4
	Strongly Agree	20	45.5	47.6	100.0
	Total	42	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	2	4.5		
Total		44	100.0		

As shown in **Table 13** below, the results show that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a negative skew value of -0.615 was noted which indicates that participants' responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that most participants agree that combined assurance helps with inspiring organisational confidence and enables a competent and informed decision-making process.

Table 13-Descriptives

Q2			Statistic	Std. Error
2. Combined assurance helps inspire organisational confidence and enables a competent and informed decision-making process	Mean		4.46	.096
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.27	
		Upper Bound	4.66	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.51	
	Median		5.00	
	Variance		.360	
	Std. Deviation		.600	
	Minimum		3	
	Maximum		5	
	Range		2	
	Interquartile Range		1	
	Skewness		-.615	.378
	Kurtosis		-.504	.741

Figure 8 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



The participants' comprehension of combined assurance in providing insight to management and the board on governance processes helping with inspiring organisational confidence and enables a competent and informed decision-making process was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree”. The results show that 95.2% (n=42) of participants (42.9% (n=18) strongly agree and 52.4% (n=22) agree) agree that combined assurance helps with informed decision-making, whereas 2.4% (1=2) neither agree nor disagree with the view and 2.4% (1=2) strongly disagree with the view. **Table 14** below refers

Table 14- Combined assurance provides insight to management and the board on governance processes

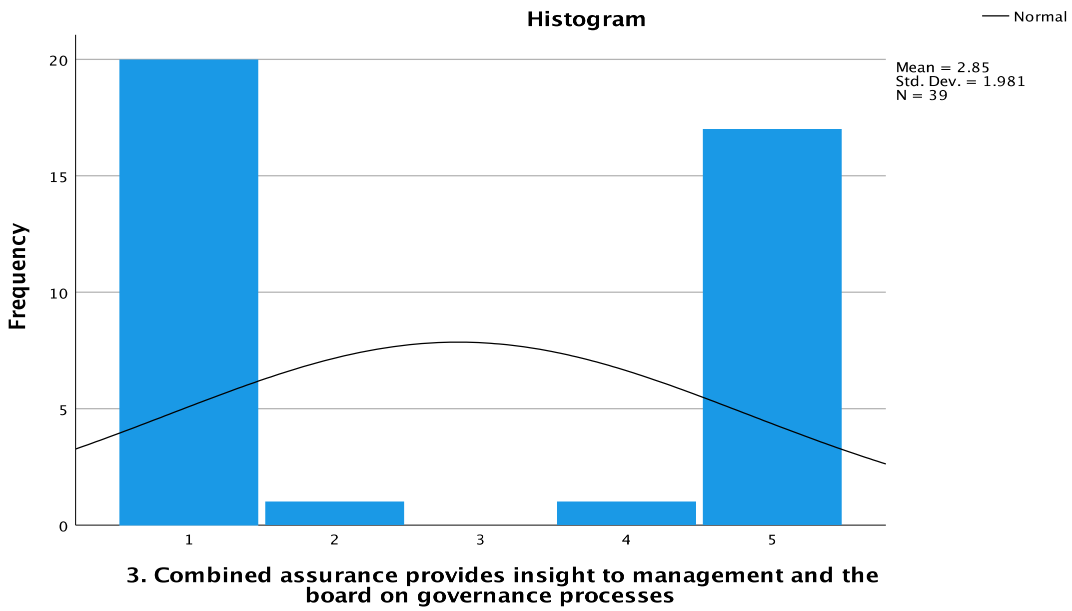
Q3		**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Agree	22	50.0	52.4	52.4
	Strongly Disagree	1	2.3	2.4	54.8
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	2.3	2.4	57.1
	Strongly Agree	18	40.9	42.9	100.0
	Total	42	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	2	4.5		
Total		44	100.0		

As shown in **Table 15** below, the results show that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a value of 0.160 was noted which indicates that participants' responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that most participants agree that combined assurance provides insight to management and the board on governance processes

Table 15-Descriptives

Q3			Statistic	Std. Error
3. Combined assurance provides insight to management and the board on governance processes	Mean		2.85	.317
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.20	
		Upper Bound	3.49	
	5% Trimmed Mean		2.83	
	Median		1.00	
	Variance		3.923	
	Std. Deviation		1.981	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		5	
	Range		4	
	Interquartile Range		4	
	Skewness		.160	.378
	Kurtosis		-2.050	.741

Figure 9 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



The participants' comprehension that the implementation of combined assurance can identify emerging risks before they materialise was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree”. The results show that 90.5% (n=42) of participants (47.6% (n=20) strongly agree and 42.9% (n=18) agree that emerging risks can be identified by applying combined assurance, whereas 7.2% (2.4% (n=1) strongly disagree and 4.8% (n=2) disagree) disagree with the view and 2.4% (n=1) neither agree nor disagree with the view. **Table 16** below refers.

Table 16-By implementing combined assurance organisations can identify emerging risks before they materialise

Q4		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.3	2.4	2.4
	Disagree	2	4.5	4.8	7.1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	2.3	2.4	9.5
	Agree	18	40.9	42.9	52.4
	Strongly Agree	20	45.5	47.6	100.0
	Total	42	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	2	4.5		
Total		44	100.0		

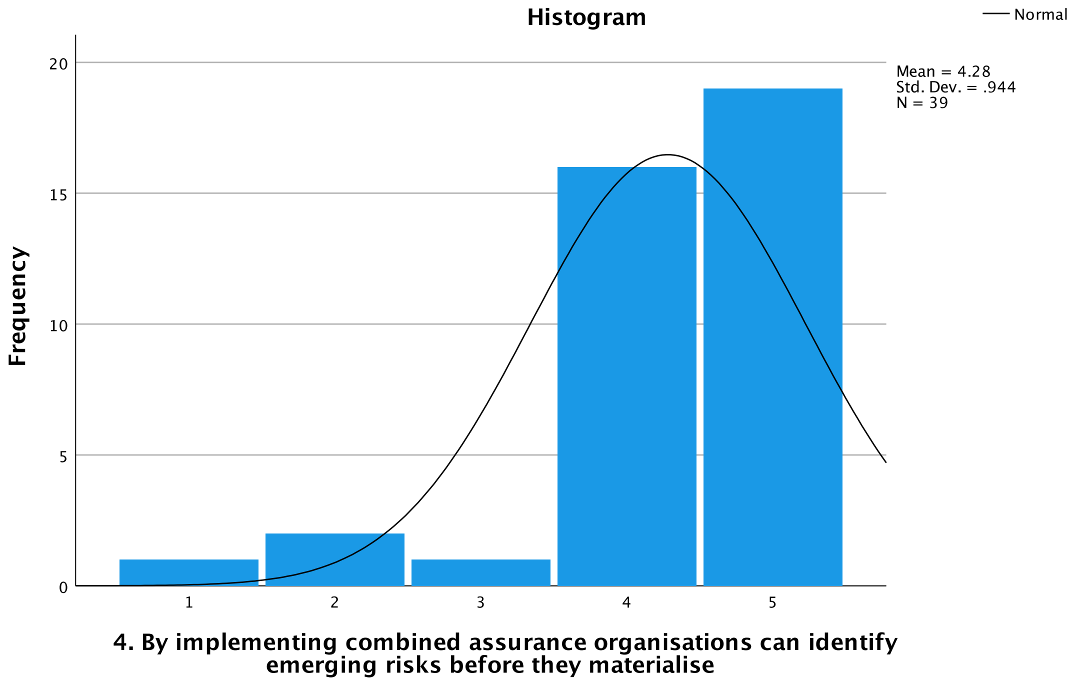
As shown in **Table 17** below, the results show that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a negative skew value of -1.796 was noted which indicates that participants’ responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that most participants agree that combined assurance assists organisations to identify emerging risks before they materialise.

Table 17-Descriptives

Q4			Statistic	Std. Error
4. By implementing combined assurance organisations can identify emerging risks before they materialise	Mean		4.28	.151
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.98	
		Upper Bound	4.59	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.40	
	Median		4.00	
	Variance		.892	

	Std. Deviation	.944	
	Minimum	1	
	Maximum	5	
	Range	4	
	Interquartile Range	1	
	Skewness	-1.796	.378
	Kurtosis	3.647	.741

Figure 10 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



The participants' comprehension of combined assurance organisations as a source of positive change and innovation within the organisation was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree". The results show that 87.8% (n=41) of participants (34.1% (n=14) strongly agree and 53.7% (n=22) agree that combined assurance is a source of positive change and innovation within the organisation, whereas 2.4% (n=1) strongly disagree with the view and 9.8% (n=4) neither agree nor disagree with the view. **Table 18** below refers.

Table 18-Combined assurance is a source of positive change and innovation within the organisation

Q5		**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.3	2.4	2.4

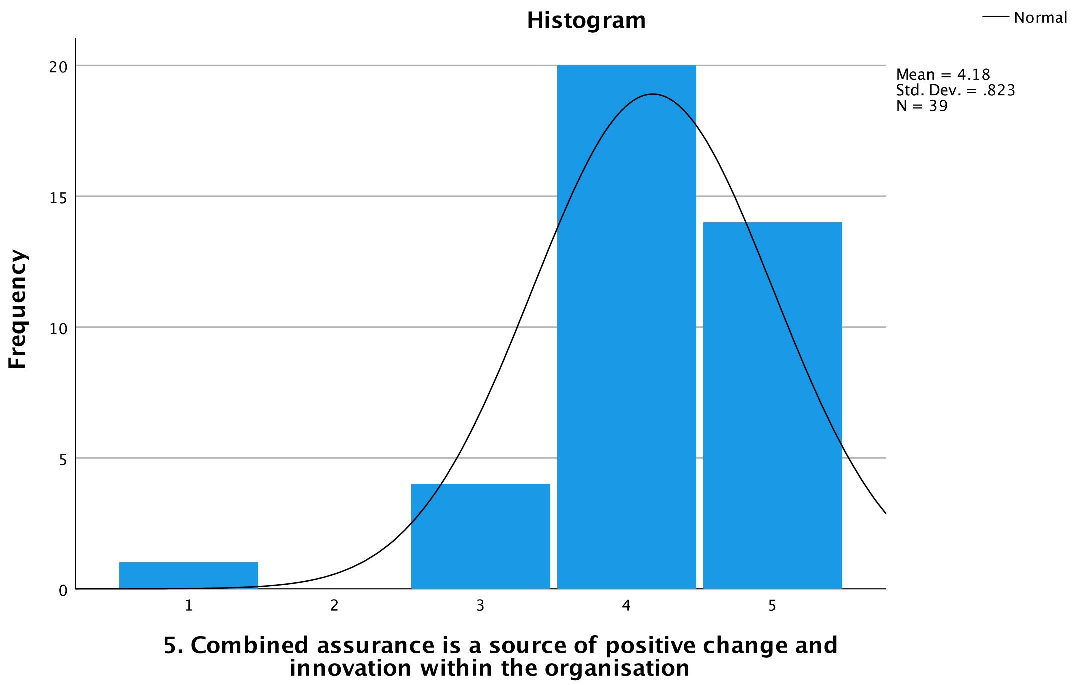
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	4	9.1	9.8	12.2
	Agree	22	50.0	53.7	65.9
	Strongly Agree	14	31.8	34.1	100.0
	Total	41	93.2	100.0	
Missing	System	3	6.8		
Total		44	100.0		

As shown in **Table 19** below, the results show that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a negative skew value of -1.546 was noted which indicates that participants' responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that most participants agree that combined assurance is a source of positive change and innovation within the organisation.

Table 19-Combined assurance is a source of positive change and innovation within the organisation

Q5			**Statistic**	**Std. Error**
5. Combined assurance is a source of positive change and innovation within the organisation	Mean		4.18	.132
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.91	
		Upper Bound	4.45	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.26	
	Median		4.00	
	Variance		.677	
	Std. Deviation		.823	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		5	
	Range		4	
	Interquartile Range		1	
	Skewness		-1.546	.378
	Kurtosis		4.558	.741

Figure 11 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



The participants' comprehension of the relationship between the application of combined assurance and positive organisational performance was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree". The results show that 97,6% (n=42) of participants (26.2% (n=11) strongly agree and 71.4% (n=30) there is a relationship between the application of combined assurance and positive organisational performance, whereas 2.4% (n=1) neither agree nor disagree with the view. **Table 20** below refers.

Table 20- Relationship between the application of combined assurance and positive organisational performance

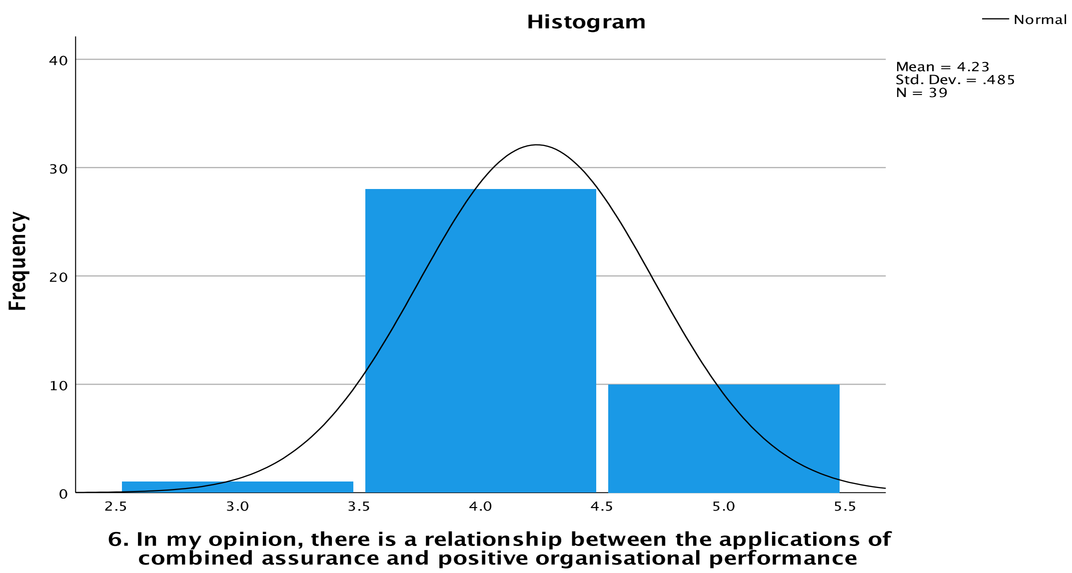
Q6		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	2.3	2.4	2.4
	Agree	30	68.2	71.4	73.8
	Strongly Agree	11	25.0	26.2	100.0
	Total	42	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	2	4.5		
Total		44	100.0		

As shown in **Table 21**, the results show that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a negative skew value of 0.571 was noted which indicates that participants' responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that most participants agree that there is a relationship between the application of combined assurance and positive organisational performance

Table 21-Relationship between the applications of combined assurance and positive organisational performance

Q6			Statistic	Std. Error
6. In my opinion, there is a relationship between the applications of combined assurance and positive organisational performance	Mean		4.23	.078
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.07	
		Upper Bound	4.39	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.23	
	Median		4.00	
	Variance		.235	
	Std. Deviation		.485	
	Minimum		3	
	Maximum		5	
	Range		2	
	Interquartile Range		1	
	Skewness		.571	.378
	Kurtosis		.032	.741

Figure 12 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



The Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized to evaluate the connections between the items and test the conclusions. Objective one results are shown in **table 22** below:-

Table 22:Objective 1 Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Correlations[c]								
		1.Combined assurance is implemented with the intention to manage organisational risks and achieve set goals	2.Combined assurance helps inspire organisational confidence and enables a competent and informed decision-making process	3.Combined assurance provides insight to management and the board on governance processes	4. By implementing combined assurance organisations can identify emerging risks before they materialise	5.Combined assurance is a source of positive change and innovation within the organisation	6.In my opinion, there is a relationship between the applications of combined assurance and positive organisational performance
1. Combined assurance is implemented with the intention to manage organisational risks and achieve set goals	Pearson Correlation	1	.514**	.336*	.126	.235	.268
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	.032	.433	.139	.091
2. Combined assurance helps inspire organisational confidence and enables a competent and informed decision-making process	Pearson Correlation	.514**	1	.329*	.510**	.678**	.448**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		.036	<.001	<.001	.003

3. Combined assurance provides insight to management and the board on governance processes	Pearson Correlation	.336*	.329*	1	.298	.343*	.406**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	.036		.059	.028	.009
4. By implementing combined assurance organisations can identify emerging risks before they materialise	Pearson Correlation	.126	.510**	.298	1	.578**	.547**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.433	<.001	.059		<.001	<.001
5. Combined assurance is a source of positive change and innovation within the organisation	Pearson Correlation	.235	.678**	.343*	.578**	1	.555**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.139	<.001	.028	<.001		<.001
6. In my opinion, there is a relationship between the applications of combined assurance and positive organisational performance	Pearson Correlation	.268	.448**	.406**	.547**	.555**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.091	.003	.009	<.001	<.001	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							
c. Listwise N=41							

4.4 Section C- Effect of Combined Assurance Drivers (Laws, Regulations, Professional Standards) on Organisational Performance

The purpose of Section C was to test **Objective 2: To establish reason behind the implementation of combined assurance by organisations** .To uncover why combined assurance is implemented in organisations, the researcher designed three questions namely 1.Combined assurance drivers are being implemented with a goal of achieving good organisational performance; 2. The goal of implementing combined assurance is to attain compliance within the organisation; and 3. Combined assurance drivers are effective in fostering positive organisational performance

The participants' comprehension on the implementation of combined assurance organisations with a goal of achieving good organisational performance was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree".The results show that 95,1% (n=41) of participants (36.6% (n=15) strongly agree and 58.5% (n=25) agree that combined assurance drivers are implemented with a goal of achieving good organisational performance, whereas 2.4% (n=1) neither agree nor disagree with the view and 2.4% (n=1) strongly disagrees Table 23 below refers.

Table 23-Combined assurance drivers are being implemented with a goal of achieving good organisational performance

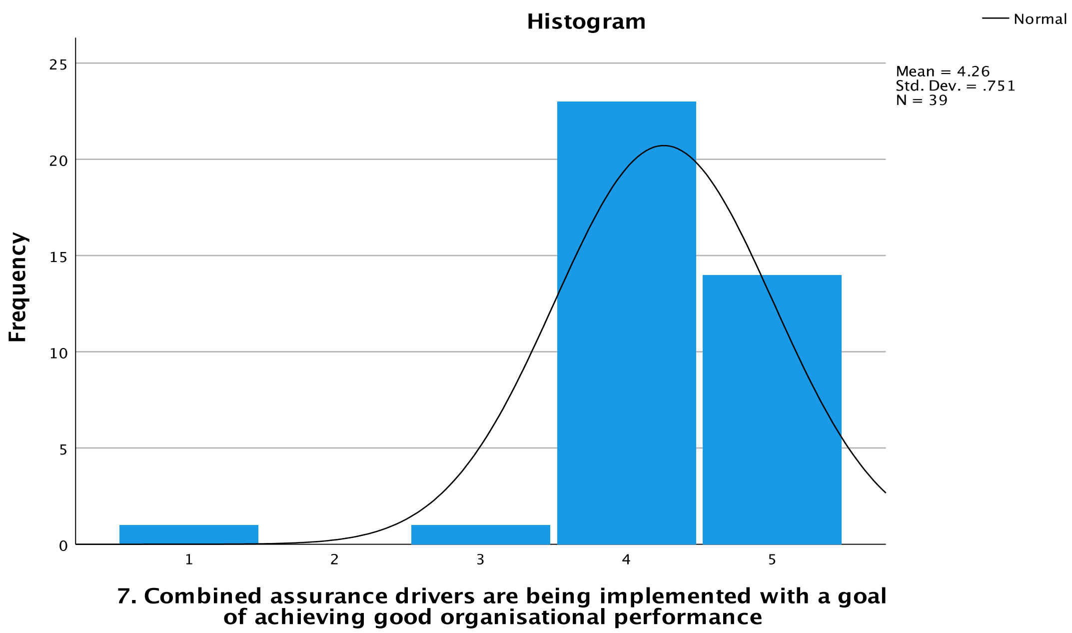
Q7		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.3	2.4	2.4
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	2.3	2.4	4.9
	Agree	24	54.5	58.5	63.4
	Strongly Agree	15	34.1	36.6	100.0
	Total	41	93.2	100.0	
Missing	System	3	6.8		
Total		44	100.0		

As shown in **Table 24**, the results show that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a negative skew value -2.039 was noted which indicates that participants' responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that most participants agree that combined assurance drivers are implemented with a goal of achieving good organisational performance**.**

Table 24- Combined assurance drivers are being implemented with a goal of achieving good organisational performance

Q7			**Statistic**	**Std. Error**
7. Combined assurance drivers are being implemented with a goal of achieving good organisational performance	Mean		4.26	.120
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.01	
		Upper Bound	4.50	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.34	
	Median		4.00	
	Variance		.564	
	Std. Deviation		.751	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		5	
	Range		4	
	Interquartile Range		1	
	Skewness		-2.039	.378
	Kurtosis		8.305	.741

Figure 13 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



The participants' comprehension on combined assurance emphasis on achieving compliance within the organisation was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree".The results show that 78.1% (n=41) of participants (36.6% (n=15) strongly agree and 41.5% (n=17) agree that the emphasis of combined assurance implementation is on achieving compliance within the organisation, whereas 19.5% (n=8) disagree with the view and 2.4% (n=1) neither agree nor disagree. **Table 25** below refers.

Table 25-In implementing combined assurance, the emphasis has been on achieving compliance within the organisation

Q8		**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Disagree	8	18.2	19.5	19.5
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	2.3	2.4	22.0
	Agree	17	38.6	41.5	63.4
	Strongly Agree	15	34.1	36.6	100.0
	Total	41	93.2	100.0	
Missing	System	3	6.8		
Total		44	100.0		

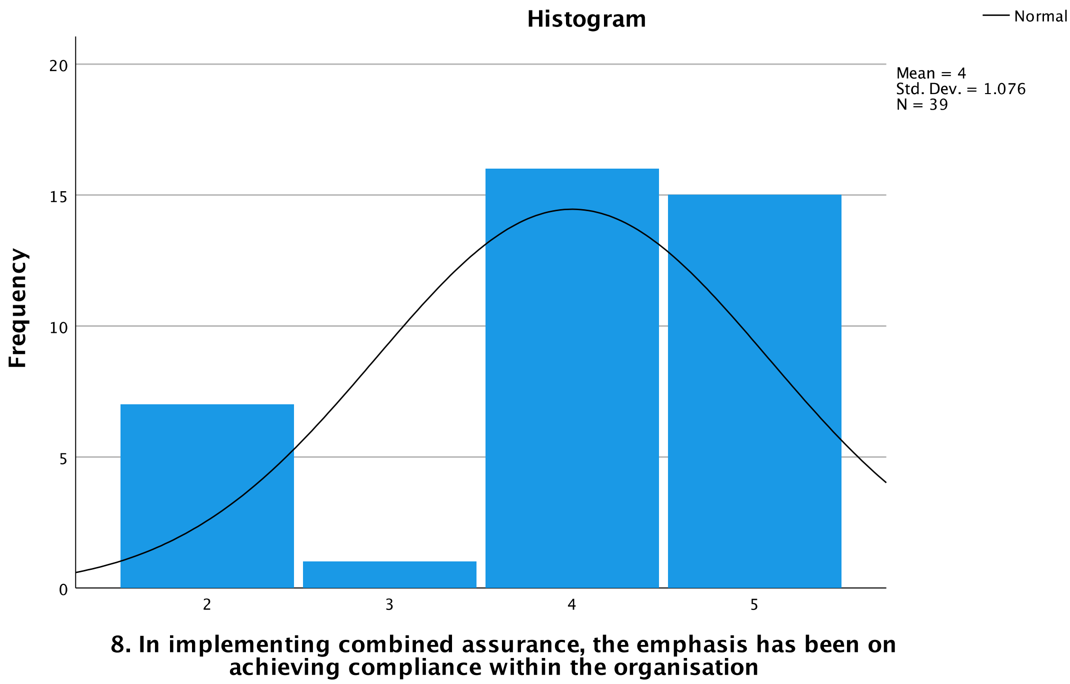
As shown in **Table 26**, the results show that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a negative skew value -0.935 was noted which indicates that participants' responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that most participants agree that combined assurance emphasis on achieving compliance within the organisation.

Table 26- Combined assurance emphasis on achieving compliance within the organisation

Q8			**Statistic**	**Std. Error**
8. In implementing combined assurance, the emphasis has been on achieving compliance within the organisation	Mean		4.00	.172
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.65	
		Upper Bound	4.35	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.06	
	Median		4.00	
	Variance		1.158	
	Std. Deviation		1.076	
	Minimum		2	
	Maximum		5	
	Range		3	
	Interquartile Range		1	

	Skewness	-.935	.378
	Kurtosis	-.310	.741

Figure 14 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



The participants' comprehension on the effectiveness of combined assurance drivers in fostering good organisational performance was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree".The results show that 87.8% (n=41) of participants (24.4% (n=10) strongly agree and 63.4% (n=26) agree that combined assurance drivers are effective in fostering positive organisational performance, whereas 7.3% (n=3) disagree with the view, 2.4% (n=1) strongly disagree with the view and 2.4 (n=1) neither agree nor disagree with the view. Table **27** below refers.

Table 27- Combined assurance drivers are effective in fostering positive organisational performance

Q9		**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.3	2.4	2.4
	Disagree	3	6.8	7.3	9.8
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	2.3	2.4	12.2
	Agree	26	59.1	63.4	75.6
	Strongly Agree	10	22.7	24.4	100.0
	Total	41	93.2	100.0	
Missing	System	3	6.8		

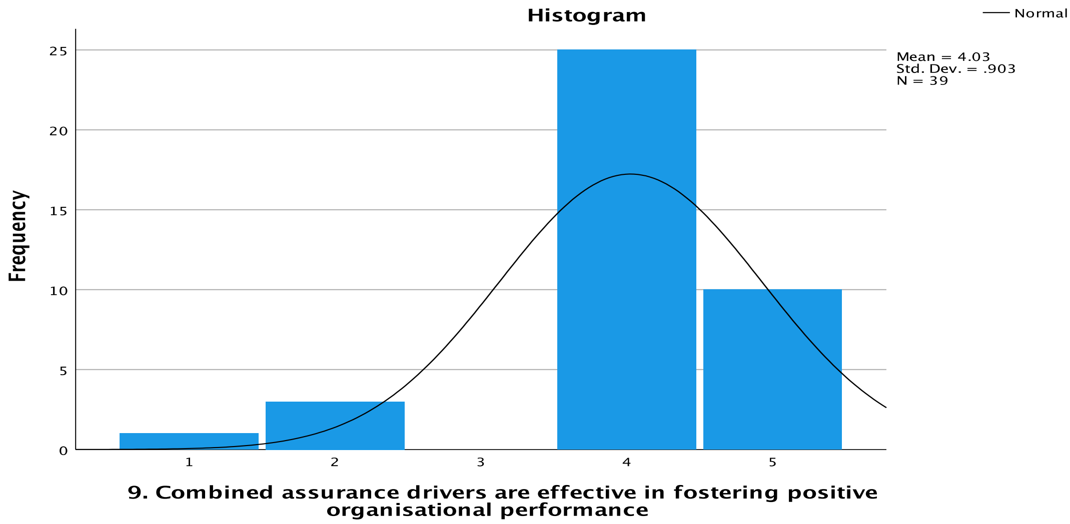
Total	44	100.0		

As shown in **Table 28**, the results show that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a negative skew value -1.635 was noted which indicates that participants' responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that most participants agree that combined assurance drivers are effective in fostering positive organisational performance

Table 28- Combined assurance drivers are effective in fostering positive organisational performance

Q9			**Statistic**	**Std. Error**
9. Combined assurance drivers are effective in fostering positive organisational performance	Mean		4.03	.145
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.73	
		Upper Bound	4.32	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.11	
	Median		4.00	
	Variance		.815	
	Std. Deviation		.903	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		5	
	Range		4	
	Interquartile Range		1	
	Skewness		-1.635	.378
	Kurtosis		3.396	.741

Figure 15 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



The Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized to evaluate the connections between the items and test the conclusions.Objective 2 results are shown in **table 29** below:-

Table 29: Objective 2 Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Correlations[b]				
		7.Combined assurance drivers are being implemented with a goal of achieving good organisational performance	8.In implementing combined assurance, the emphasis has been on achieving compliance within the organisation	9.Combined assurance drivers are effective in fostering positive organisational performance
7. Combined assurance drivers are being implemented with a goal of achieving good organisational performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.109	.640**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.498	<.001
8. In implementing combined assurance, the emphasis has been on achieving compliance within the organisation	Pearson Correlation	.109	1	.102
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.498		.525

9. Combined assurance drivers are effective in fostering positive organisational performance	Pearson Correlation	.640**	.102	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.525	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				
b. Listwise N=41				

4.5 Section D- Effectiveness of The Three Lines of Defense in Organisational Performance

The purpose of Section D was to test **Objective 3: To determine if the three lines of defense is effective in achieving organisational performance.** The researcher designed four questions namely 1. Self-serving interests in organisations can be dealt with successfully using the three lines of defense; 2. By applying the three lines of defense in organisations, corporate governance scandals can be reduced; 3. Failure of one or more of the three lines of defense could be the cause of corporate governance failures in organisations; and 4. Ethical conduct in the application of the three lines of defense increases good organisational performance.

The participants' comprehension on the effectiveness of the three lines in dealing with self-serving interest in organisations was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree”.The results show that 67.5% (n=40) of participants (20% (n=8) strongly agree and 47.5% (n=19) agree that the three lines is effective in dealing with self-serving interest in organisations, whereas 20% (n=8) disagree with the view, 5% (n=2) strongly disagree with the view and 7.5% (n=3) neither agree nor disagree with the view. Table **30** below refers.

Table 30-The three lines of defense is effective in dealing with self-serving interest in organisations

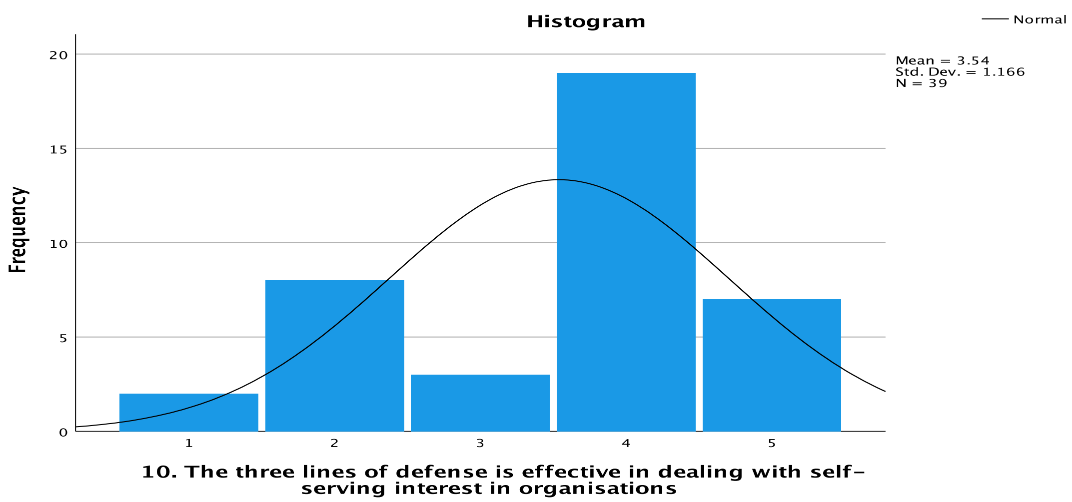
Q10		**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	4.5	5.0	5.0
	Disagree	8	18.2	20.0	25.0
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	3	6.8	7.5	32.5
	Agree	19	43.2	47.5	80.0
	Strongly Agree	8	18.2	20.0	100.0
	Total	40	90.9	100.0	
Missing	System	4	9.1		
Total		44	100.0		

As shown in **Table 31**, the results show that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a negative skew value -0.675 was noted which indicates that participants' responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that most participants agree that the three lines of defense is effective in dealing with self-serving interest in organisations

Table 31- The three lines of defense is effective in dealing with self-serving interest in organisations

Q10			Statistic	Std. Error
10. The three lines of defense is effective in dealing with self-serving interest in organisations	Mean		3.54	.187
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.16	
		Upper Bound	3.92	
	5% Trimmed Mean		3.60	
	Median		4.00	
	Variance		1.360	
	Std. Deviation		1.166	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		5	
	Range		4	
	Interquartile Range		2	
	Skewness		-.675	.378
	Kurtosis		-.572	.741

Figure 16 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



The participants' comprehension on the minimization of corporate governance scandals by implementing the three lines of defense in organisations was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree”.The results show that 82.5% (n=40) of participants (37.5% (n=15) strongly agree and 45% (n=18) agree that corporate governance scandals can be minimized by implementing the three lines of defense in organisations, whereas 7.5% (n=3) disagree with the view, 2.5% (n=1) strongly disagree with the view and 7.5% (n=3) neither agree nor disagree with the view. Table **32** below refers.

Table 32-Corporate governance scandals can be minimized by implementing the three lines of defense in organisations

Q11		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.3	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	3	6.8	7.5	10.0
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	3	6.8	7.5	17.5
	Agree	18	40.9	45.0	62.5
	Strongly Agree	15	34.1	37.5	100.0
	Total	40	90.9	100.0	
Missing	System	4	9.1		
Total		44	100.0		

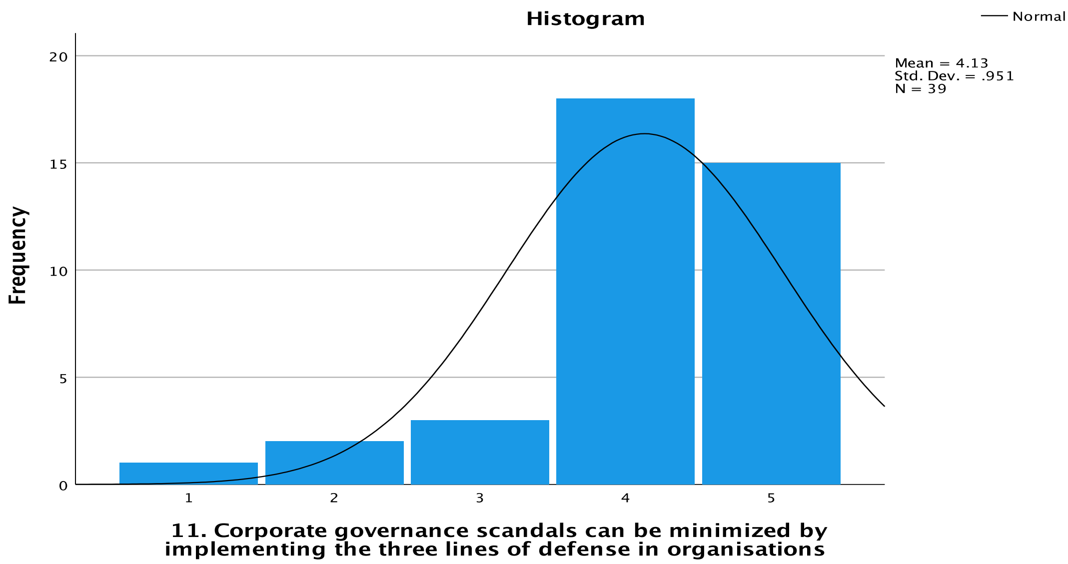
As shown in **Table 33**, the results show that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a negative skew value -1.429 was noted which indicates that participants’ responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that most participants agree that corporate governance scandals can be minimized by implementing the three lines of defense in organisations

Table 33- Corporate governance scandals can be minimized by implementing the three lines of defense in organisations

Q11			Statistic	Std. Error
11. Corporate governance scandals can be minimized by implementing the three lines of defense in organisations	Mean		4.13	.152
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.82	
		Upper Bound	4.44	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.23	

	Median	4.00	
	Variance	.904	
	Std. Deviation	.951	
	Minimum	1	
	Maximum	5	
	Range	4	
	Interquartile Range	1	
	Skewness	-1.429	.378
	Kurtosis	2.414	.741

Figure 17 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



The participants' comprehension on the role of three lines of defense in corporate governance failure in South Africa was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree".The results show that 95% (n=44) of participants (50.% (n=20) strongly agree and 45% (n=18) agree) agree that corporate governance failures in South African organisations could be attributed to the failure at some level of the three lines of defense, whereas 5% (n=2) disagree with the view. **Table 34** below refers.

Table 34-Corporate governance failures in South African organisations could be attributed to the failure at some level of the three lines of defense (i.e., their management, internal and/or external auditors as well as directors)

Q12		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.5	5.0	5.0
	Agree	18	40.9	45.0	50.0
	Strongly Agree	20	45.5	50.0	100.0
	Total	40	90.9	100.0	

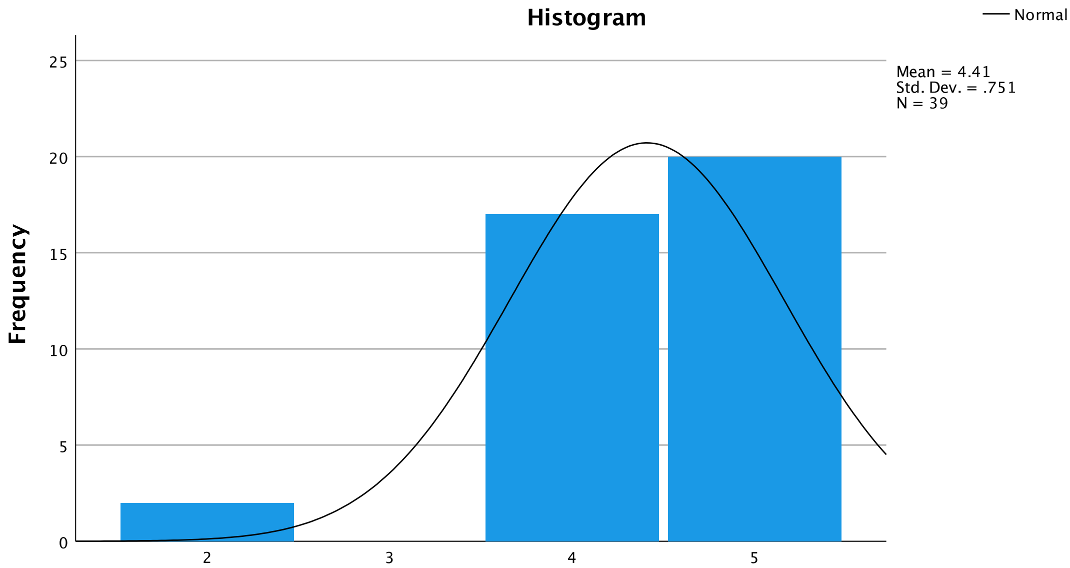
Missing	System	4	9.1		
Total		44	100.0		

As shown in **Table 35**, the results show that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a negative skew value -1.642 was noted which indicates that participants' responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that most participants agree that corporate governance failures in South African organisations could be attributed to the failure at some level of the three lines of defense

Table 35- Corporate governance failures in South African organisations could be attributed to the failure at some level of the three lines of defense (i.e., their management, internal and/or external auditors as well as directors)

Q12			**Statistic**	**Std. Error**
12. Corporate governance failures in South African organisations could be attributed to the failure at some level of the three lines of defense (i.e., their management, internal and/or external auditors as well as directors)	Mean		4.41	.120
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.17	
		Upper Bound	4.65	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.51	
	Median		5.00	
	Variance		.564	
	Std. Deviation		.751	
	Minimum		2	
	Maximum		5	
	Range		3	
	Interquartile Range		1	
	Skewness		-1.642	.378
	Kurtosis		3.566	.741

Figure 18 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



12. Corporate governance failures in South African organisations could be attributed to the failure at some level of the three lines of defense (i.e., their management, internal and/or external auditors as well as directors)

The participants' comprehension on the application of moral development by the three lines of defense was assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree”.The results show that 82.5% (n=40) of participants (10% (n=4) strongly agree and 72.5% (n=29) agree) agree that with increased moral development focus in the application of the three lines of defense good organisational performance increases in South African organisations, whereas 10% (n=4) disagree with the view, and 7.5% (n=3) neither agree nor disagree with the view **Table 36** below refers.

Table 36-With increased moral development focus in the application of the three lines of defense good organisational performance increases in South African organisations

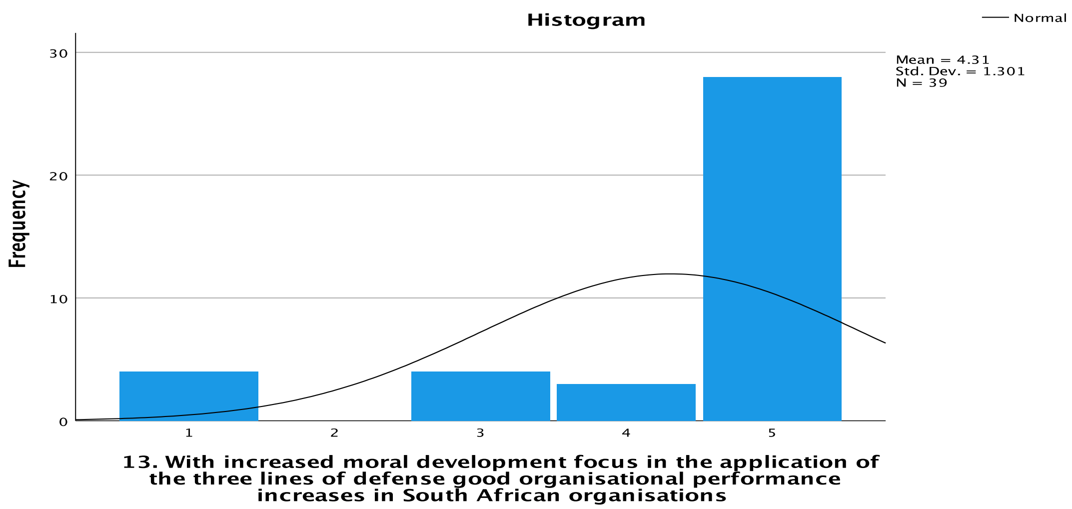
Q13		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	4	9.1	10.0	10.0
	Disagree	4	9.1	10.0	20.0
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	3	6.8	7.5	27.5
	Agree	29	65.9	72.5	100.0
	Total	40	90.9	100.0	
Missing	System	4	9.1		
Total		44	100.0		

As shown in **Table 37**, the results show that data were not dispersed normally in the analysed variable. For the variable analysed, a negative skew value -1.828 was noted which indicates that participants' responses or frequency of scores were leaning more towards agree and strongly agree. It can be concluded that most participants agree that with increased moral development focus in the application of the three lines of defense good organisational performance increases in South African organisations

Table 37- With increased moral development focus in the application of the three lines of defense good organisational performance increases in South African organisations

Q13			**Statistic**	**Std. Error**
13. With increased moral development focus in the application of the three lines of defense good organisational performance increases in South African organisations	Mean		4.31	.208
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.89	
		Upper Bound	4.73	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.45	
	Median		5.00	
	Variance		1.692	
	Std. Deviation		1.301	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		5	
	Range		4	
	Interquartile Range		1	
	Skewness		-1.821	.378
	Kurtosis		2.096	.741

Figure 19 below shows the graphical representation of the results.



The Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized to evaluate the connections between the items and test the conclusions. Objective 3 results are shown in **table 38** below:-

Table 38 -Objective 3 Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Correlations[b]					
		10.The three lines of defense is effective in dealing with self-serving interest in organisations	11.Corporate governance scandals can be minimized by implementing the three lines of defense in organisations	12.Corporate governance failures in South African organisations could be attributed to the failure at some level of the three lines of defense (i.e., their management, internal and/or external auditors as well as directors)	13.With increased moral development focus in the application of the three lines of defense good organisation al performance increases in South African organisations
10.The three lines of defense is effective in dealing with self-serving interest in organisations	Pearson Correlation	1	.335*	-.387*	-.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.035	.014	.961
11.Corporate governance scandals can be minimized by implementing the three lines of defense in organisations	Pearson Correlation	.335*	1	-.076	-.119
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035		.641	.464
12.Corporate governance failures	Pearson Correlation	-.387*	-.076	1	-.380*

in South African organisations could be attributed to the failure at some level of the three lines of defense (i.e., their management, internal and/or external auditors as well as directors)	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	.641		.016
13. With increased moral development focus in the application of the three lines of defense good organisational performance increases in South African organisations	Pearson Correlation	-.008	-.119	-.380*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.961	.464	.016	
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					
b. Listwise N=40					

4.7. Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter a survey was used to gather quantitative data. Various statistical data analysis including frequencies, descriptive, correlations, skewness, as well as histograms we presented per research objective.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

The aim of the study was to examine combined assurance and its role in organisational performance from risk professional's perspective in South Africa. The purpose of this chapter is to present findings which the researcher identified from the data collected and analysed. Research findings aim to determine if the research aim was met, if developed objectives were accomplished, and if formulated research questions were answered.

5.2 Demographics

Data was collected using a survey to have an overview of the participants' demographics and to give the researcher a complete picture of the participants' backgrounds. The researcher gathered information on the participants' and found that the study was dominated by males as opposed to females. Although risk professionals from various age groups participated in the study, it was evident that the majority of participants were in the 35-44 years' age group.

Another observation made by the researcher was that participants were qualified to participate in study with majority of them holding a postgraduate degree, followed by bachelor degree as well as a few master degree and professional certification. Most of the participants are in middle management positions, some are senior staff and in senior management and executive management. The analysis on the years of experience revealed that then majority of participants have over 15 years' experience in risk management. Lastly, most participants are from the public sector as opposed to the private sector. Based on the data collected, the researcher is satisfied that qualified respondents participated in the study.

5.3 Objective 1: To determine how combined assurance impacts on organisational performance.

The researcher found that there is a positive relationship between combined assurance and the management of risks and achievement of organisational goals. The researcher also found that that combined assurance provides insight to management and the board on governance processes. These findings are supported by a study by Waweru (2014) which revealed that there is "a significant positive relationship between firm performance and the quality of corporate governance". In addition, the researcher found that combined assurance helps inspire organisational confidence and enables a competent and informed decision-making process. Mutevhe (2019) asserts that decisions can be made because information will be consistent throughout governance structures as a result of combined assurance, which offers consistent message to the multiple oversight committees.

The researcher further found that by implementing combined assurance organisations can identify emerging risks before they materialise. A study by Prinsloo (2015) found that SMMEs realised value in the implementation of either combined assurance, or the use of other assurance providers. Madondo (2021) posits that effective and efficient risk management may be attained through combined assurance implementation. The researcher found that combined assurance is a source of positive change and innovation within the organisation. One of the lessons learned from a study by Peinado-Vara (2006) is that organisations achieved objectives and profitability when they observe good social action. The research further found that there is a relationship between the application of combined assurance and positive organisational performance. In core, value is primarily added by enhancing internal control effectiveness (achieving organisational goals objectives) and helping personnel advance their skills to improve customer satisfaction (Prinsloo, 2015). However, a study by (Masegare,2016 as cited in Masegare, 2018) found that organisations still fail to achieve a clean audit even with combined assurance in place. This indicates that combined assurance may be in place but be ineffective.

Hypothesis 1 (H1)

Based on the empirical evidence discussed, the null hypothesis being that combined assurance does not have an impact on organisational performance is rejected. As a result, the alternative hypothesis being that effective combined assurance seems to contribute positively to organisational performance is accepted.

5.4 Objective 2: To establish reason behind the implementation of combined assurance by organisations.

The researcher found that combined assurance drivers are implemented with a goal of achieving good organisational performance. A research hypothesis by Aregbeshola and Radebe (2012) suggests that there is “a positive relationship between corporate financial performance and the CSR performance". The researcher also found that the emphasis of combined assurance implementation is on achieving compliance within the organisation. This finding is supported by a study by Madondo (2021) which states that the goal of combined assurance implementation in South African organizations has been to achieve organizational compliance However, a study by Mutevhe (2019) found a contradicting view that combined assurance was frequently turned into a check-the-box exercise when it was motivated by the need to adhere to governance standards or listing requirements. As a result, combined assurance was ineffective when its motive was "compliance".

The researcher found that combined assurance drivers are effective in fostering positive organisational performance. Donkor, Djajadikerta, and Mat Roni (2021) revealed that JSE listed companies apply combined assurance as an effective tool which impacts positively on integrated reporting and ESG Qualities. As there are laws and regulations that control how the tiers or lines of defense are established and function, combined assurance suitability is demonstrated by its ability to facilitate organizational compliance with those laws and regulations (Madondo,2021).

Hypothesis 2 (H2)

Based on the empirical evidence discussed, the null hypothesis being that drivers of combined assurance make no difference in promoting organisational performance is rejected. As a result, the alternative hypothesis being that drivers of combined assurance seem to be associated with positive organisational performance is accepted.

5.5 Objective 3: To determine if the three lines of defense is effective in achieving organisational performance.

The researcher found that the three lines of defense is effective in dealing with self-serving interest in organisations. According to Madondo (2021) implementing combined assurance results in compliance with and alignment of assurance processes, which efficiently and effectively reduces the danger of self-serving interest being pursued. The researcher further discovered that corporate governance scandals can be minimized by implementing the three lines of defense in organisations, and that corporate governance failures in South African organisations could be attributed to the failure at some level of the three lines of defense.

Madondo (2021) reported mixed views that corporate governance scandals can be significantly reduced through combined assurance, and that despite organizations' claims that they had implemented combined assurance, there have been controversies involving corporate governance.

Maharaj and Karodia (2013) states that there is direct financial loss associated with corruption. Corruption is also an indicator that the three lines of defense is ineffective as evidenced by corporate failures discussed in the literature review. The researcher found that with higher emphasis on moral growth when using the three lines of defense ,good organisational performance increases in South African organisations. According to Madondo (2021) compliance obsession was not advantageous to organizations in terms of minimizing agency problem however, some participants were of the view that focusing on compliance was crucial when dealing with the agency problem. There is a need for organisational leaders to consider an ethical approach over legal compliance (Adekoya,2011). The majority of survey respondents, according to Madondo (2021), indicated disapproval of the adoption of combined assurance with a moral development focus. Madondo (2021) further reported that the fact that South African organizations have successfully developed compliance cultures does not always mean that combined assurance is successful in achieving moral growth or dealing with agency.

Hypothesis 3 (H3)

Based on the empirical evidence discussed null hypothesis being that the three lines of defense has no impact in promoting positive organisational positive is rejected. As a result, the alternative hypothesis being that effective three lines of defense contributes positively to organisational performance is accepted.

5.6. Chapter Conclusion

Research findings were presented in this chapter with the focus on hypothesis testing based on the outcome of from the analysed quantitative data. The conclusion for Objective 1 which aimed to determine how combined assurance impacts on organisational performance was that the *null hypothesis* being that combined assurance does not have an impact on organisational performance is rejected. As a result, the *alternative hypothesis being that e*ffective combined assurance seems to contribute positively to organisational performance is accepted.

Objective 2 which aimed to establish reason behind the implementation of combined assurance by organisations, the conclusion was that *the null hypothesis* being that drivers of combined assurance make no difference in promoting organisational performance is rejected. *As a result, the alternative hypothesis* being that drivers of combined assurance seem to be associated with positive organisational performance is accepted.

Lastly, objective 3 which aimed to determine if the three lines of defense is effective in achieving organisational performance, the conclusion was that *null hypothesis* being that the three lines of defense has no impact in promoting positive organisational positive is rejected. As a result, the a*lternative hypothesis* being that effective three lines of defense contributes positively to organisational performance.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Chapters Recap

Chapter 1 highlighted the structure of the research and introduced the purpose of the study. The research problem, together with research objectives and research questions were identified to fulfil the aim of the study. Research delimitations and assumptions were discussed to outline the scope of the research. **Chapter 2** identified agency problem as the main corporate governance theory driving the need for combined assurance in organisations. A detailed literature review which is aligned to the research objectives and research questions was documented to demonstrate and support the existence of the research problem. Both null and alternative hypothesis were formulated to determine the outcome of the research problem.

Chapter 3 outlined the research methodology followed for this study. A quantitative research design was followed to collect data using a Qualtrics survey. SPSS was used to analyse data. The target population of the study was risk professionals within South Africa, with a sample size of 120 professionals. The reliability of data was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and was at an acceptable level. The necessary ethical considerations were highlighted during the study.

Chapter 4 highlighted that quantitative data was collected using a survey. Various statistical data analysis including frequencies, descriptive, correlations, skewness, as well as histograms we presented per research objective. **Chapter 5** presented research findings with the focus on hypothesis testing based on the outcome from the analysed quantitative data. **Chapter 6** will highlight how each objective endeavoured to answer the research question and hypothesis. Research findings as well as conclusions will be presented. Recommendations and suggestions for future research will be discussed.

6.2. Conclusion on Objective 1: To determine how combined assurance impacts on organisational performance

Objective 1 was developed to address the following research question and hypothesis: -

- **Research Question 1**: How Does Combined Assurance Impact on Organisational Performance?

- **Hypothesis 1 (H1**): *Null Hypothesis*-Combined assurance does not have an impact on organisational performance and a*lternative hypothesis*-Effective combined assurance seems to contribute positively to organisational performance.

Based on the survey results, the researcher found that: -

- There is a positive relationship between combined assurance and the management of risks and achievement of organisational goals.
- Combined assurance provides insight to management and the board on governance processes.
- Combined assurance helps inspire organisational confidence and enables a competent and informed decision-making process.
- By implementing combined assurance organisations can identify emerging risks before they materialise.
- Combined assurance is a source of positive change and innovation within the organisation.
- There is a relationship between the application of combined assurance and positive organisational performance.

Based on findings presented, the conclusion was that the *null hypothesis* being that combined assurance does not have an impact on organisational performance is rejected. As a result, the *alternative hypothesis being that e*ffective combined assurance seems to contribute positively to organisational performance is accepted.

6.3. Conclusion on Objective 2 To establish reason behind the implementation of combined assurance by organisations

Objective 2 was developed to address the following research question and hypothesis: -

- **Research Question 2:** What Are the Drivers of Combined Assurance and Their Impact on Organisational Performance?
- **Hypothesis 2 (H2)-***Null hypothesis*-Drivers of combined assurance make no difference in promoting organisational performance and *alternative hypothesis* -Drivers of combined assurance seem to be associated with positive organisational performance.

Based on the survey results, the researcher found that: -

- Combined assurance drivers are implemented with a goal of achieving good organisational performance.
- The emphasis of combined assurance implementation is on achieving compliance within the organisation.
- Combined assurance drivers are effective in fostering positive organisational performance.

Based on findings presented, the conclusion was that *the null hypothesis* being that drivers of combined assurance make no difference in promoting organisational performance is rejected. *As a result, the alternative hypothesis* being that drivers of combined assurance seem to be associated with positive organisational performance is accepted.

6.4. Conclusion on Objective 3 To determine if the three lines of defense is effective in achieving organisational performance

Objective 3 was developed to address the following research question and hypothesis: -

- **Research Question 3**: Does the three lines of defense have an impact on organisational performance?
- **Hypothesis 3 (H3)**-*Null hypothesis*- The three lines of defense has no impact in promoting positive organisational positive and a*lternative hypothesis*- Effective three lines of defense contributes positively to organisational performance.

Based on the survey results, the researcher found that: -

- The three lines of defense is successful in dealing with organizations' self-serving interests.
- The three lines of defense can be implemented in organizations to reduce corporate governance scandals.
- Failure of one or more of the three lines of defense could be the cause of corporate governance failures in South African organizations.
- In South African organizations, good organizational performance rises when moral growth is given more attention in the application of the three lines of defense.

Based on findings presented the conclusion was that *null hypothesis* being that the three lines of defense has no impact in promoting positive organisational positive is rejected. As a result, the a*lternative hypothesis* being that effective three lines of defense contributes positively to organisational performance.

6.5. Recommendations

Based on the research findings and conclusions, the researcher recommends that: -

- Organisations must implement combined assurance with the purpose of achieving good organisational performance and not implement it as a compliance tick box.
- To mitigate against the risk of having an ineffective three lines of defense, organisations should promote an ethical business culture, and consequence management should be applied on those who violate ethical practises.
- A focus on moral development is for organisations as it minimises the risk of corporate scandals as well as poor organisational performance

6.6. Suggestion for Future Research

Below are suggestions for future research: -

- Based on available literature review and findings of this study, it is suggested that future research be considered for combined assurance and its impact on organisational performance from the perceptive of the first line of defense.
- The researcher found that failure of one or more of the three lines of defense could be the cause of corporate governance failures in South African organizations.Future research to investigate reasons behind failures at some level of the three lines of defense is recommended.
- The researcher found that the emphasis of combined assurance implementation is on achieving compliance within the organisation. A future study to investigate the effectiveness of combined assurance in organisations who implements combined assurance with the purpose of achieving compliance is warranted.
- One of the research findings was that by implementing combined assurance organisations can identify emerging risks before they materialise. It is recommended

that future research to investigate the management of risks by organisations which implements combined assurance.

6.8. Contribution to Body of Knowledge

The study contributed to the body of knowledge by providing the perspective of the second line of defence on combined assurance and how it impacts organisational performance.

6.9. Chapter Conclusion

The chapter outlined a recap of all chapter. A discussion on how each objective endeavoured to answer the research question and hypothesis was presented. Research conclusions, recommendations, and ideas for additional study were discussed. The research report concludes with this chapter, and the appendices and references are included thereafter.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A- Consistency Matrix

Question	Literature Review	Source of data	Type of data	Analysis
Question 1: How does combined assurance impact on organisational performance?	**2.4.1** Combined Assurance and Organisational Performance **2.4.2** Combined Assurance Gone Wrong **2.4.3** Combined Assurance Success Stories	Survey questions 1-6	Survey Questionnaire	Descriptive Analysis
Question 2: What are the drivers of combined assurance and their impact on organisational performance?	**2.5.1** King IV **2.5.2** The Institute of Internal Auditors **2.5.3** Public Finance Management Act (PFMA)	Survey questions 7-9	Survey Questionnaire	Descriptive Analysis

Question 3: Which parties are involved in the implementation of combined assurance, and what impact do they have on organisational performance?	**2.6.1** Combined assurance implementation **2.6.2** The three lines of defence **2.6.3** Ethics and corporate governance	Survey questions 10-13	Survey Questionnaire	Descriptive Analysis

Appendix B- Survey Questionnaire

Please answer all the questions honestly and accurately to assist the researcher to gather as much information as possible

SECTION A: PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

Gender

Male	Female

Age

22-29	40-49
30-39	50 +

Level of Education

Diploma	Post Graduate
Bachelors Degree	Other (Please specify)

Occupational Level

Executive	Junior Management
Senior Management	Senior Staff
Middle Management	Junior Staff

Years of Experience

<5 years	11-15 years
5-10 years	>15 years

Sector

Private Sector	Public Sector

Industry

Please specify

SECTION B- COMBINED ASSURANCE AND ITS ROLE IN ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

1. Combined assurance is implemented with the intention to manage organisational risks and achieve set goals

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. Combining assurance fosters organisational confidence and permits competent and informed decision-making.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. Combined assurance provides insight to management and the board on governance processes

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. By implementing combined assurance organisations can identify emerging risks before they materialise

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. Combined assurance is a source of positive change and innovation within the organisation

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. In my view, there is a relationship between the applications of combined assurance and positive organisational performance

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

SECTION C-EFFECT OF COMBINED ASSURANCE DRIVERS *(LAWS, REGULATIONS, PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS)* ON ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

7. Combined assurance drivers are being implemented with a goal of achieving good organisational performance

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. The goal of implementing combined assurance is to attain compliance within the organisation.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. Combined assurance drivers are effective in fostering positive organisational performance

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

SECTION D-EFFECTIVENESS OF THE THREE LINES OF DEFENSE IN ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

10. Self-serving interests in organisations can be dealt with successfully using the three lines of defense.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

11. By applying the three lines of defense in organisations, corporate governance scandals can be reduced

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. Failure of one or more of the three lines of defense could be the cause of corporate governance failures in organisations

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

13. Ethical conduct in the application of the three lines of defense increases good organisational performance

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Appendix C- Participation Motivation

Dear Participant,

My name is Lebogang Kekana and I am currently a second year MBA student at Wits Business School (WBS) . In order for me to complete my qualification it is a requirement of WBS that I conduct an applied research project. My research topic is “Combined assurance and its role in organisational performance: A case study on risk professionals’ perspective in South Africa. I am trying to find out more about:

- The drivers of combined assurance implementation in organisations.
- Parties involved in the implementation of combined assurance; and
- Impact of combined assurance on organisational performance.

You are one of the participants identified to partake in the research based on your profession in risk management. My research will follow a quantitative approach using a survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire is anticipated to take no longer than 20 minutes

Information gathered during the survey will be confidential and used for academic purposes only. Participation in the research is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without any consequences.

I look forward to your positive response.

Kind Regards,

Lebogang Kekana
Cell: 071 445 5797 Email: Lebogang.Nkhokhola@gmail.com or
2526685@students.wits.ac.za

Appendix D- Consent Form

I, ………………………………………., agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

- That I am voluntarily participating in the research and can withdraw at any time;
- That my participation will remain anonymous;
- That my participation will be anonymous; and
- That the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.

Please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr. Grant Sieff on grant.sieff@wits.ac.za should you have any questions or comments regarding this research.

Name of participant:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix E- Ethics Certificate

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/BA2526685/546

This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).

This certificate is only valid if accompanied by formal permission from the relevant stakeholder(s).

Project title	Combined assurance and its role in organisational performance: A case study on risk professionals' perspective in South Africa
Investigator / Researcher	Ms Lebogang Kekana
Nature of Project	MBA (Research Article)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed confidentialty.
Issue Date of Certificate	2022-11-01
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Prof Anthony Stacey ☎ +27 11 717 3587 +27 82 880 4531 anthony.stacey@wits.ac.za

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

02/11/2022
Date:

Appendix F- Topic Approval

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Private Bag 3 Wits, 2050
Fax:
Tel:

Reference: Ms Jennifer Mgolodela
E-mail: jennifer.mgolodela@wits.ac.za

01 November 2022
Person No: 2526685
PAG

Miss LN Kekana
31 Symphony,Plantation Road,Midrand
Midrand
Noordwyk
1687
South Africa

Dear Miss Lebogang Kekana

Master of Business Administration: Approval of Title

We have pleasure in advising that your proposal entitled *Combined assurance and its role in organisational performance: A case study on risk professionals' perspective in South Africa* has been approved. Please note that any amendments to this title have to be endorsed by the Faculty's higher degrees committee and formally approved.

Yours sincerely

M Bosman

Mrs Marike Bosman
Faculty Registrar
Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management

100 1922 2022