## Determinants of Quality of Regional Financial Reports Using Fraud Triangle Theory

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Abstract. The research aims to find empirical evidence of the determinants of the quality of regional financial statements in Central Java Province from the perspective of the fraud triangle theory. The research sample is limited to local government financial reports in Central Java Province for the 2016-2019 fiscal year, with a total sample of 175 observations. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis. The research results found that pressure and rationalization did not affect the quality of financial reports in the regional government of Central Java Province. Meanwhile, the opportunity negatively influence the local government's financial information quality. The higher the opportunity to cheat, the lower the quality of local government financial reports will be of higher quality if the opportunity to commit fraud is low. While the policy implications for the government, implementing good supervision is needed so that the opportunity for cheating is reduced and the financial reports presented can be of good quality. The novelty of this research is the use of fraud theory, namely the fraud triangle theory, to explain the factors that affect the quality of financial reports in local governments. So far, research in the field of Public Accounting has focused chiefly on researching changes in accounting methods, so research linking fraud theory and the quality of financial reports in local governments is still limited in number.

Keywords. Opportunity; Pressure; Quality of regional financial statements; Rationalization

**Abstrak**. Tujuan riset ini adalah untuk menemukan bukti empiris determinan dari kualitas laporan keuangan pemerintah daerah di Provinsi Jawa Tengah dari persepktif teori *fraud triangle*. Sampel riset ini adalah laporan keuangan pemerintah daerah di Provinsi Jawa Tengah untuk tahun anggaran 2016-2019. Total sampel 175 observasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis regresi linear berganda. Hasil riset menemukan bahwa faktor tekanan dan rasionalisasi tidak memiliki pengaruh pada kualitas laporan keuangan pemerintah daerah di Provinsi Jawa Tengah. Sedangkan, faktor kesempatan memiliki pengaruh negatif pada kualitas laporan keuangan. Ini artinya, semakin tinggi kesempatan untuk berbuat curang maka semakin rendah kualitas laporan keuangan pemerintah daerah, dan sebaliknya. Implikasi teori, riset ini menemukan bukti empiris bahwa laporan keuangan pemerintah daerah akan semakin berkualitas jika kesempatan berbuat curang rendah. Sedangkan implikasi kebijakan bagi pemerintah, implementasi sistem pengendalian internal yang baik diperlukan agar kesempatan berbuat curang dan laporan keuangan yang disajikan dapat berkualitas. Kebaruan riset ini ada pada penggunaan teori *fraud*, yaitu teori *fraud triangle* untuk menjelaskan faktor yang memperngaruhi kualitas laporan keuangan di pemerintah daerah. Selama ini, riset di bidang Akuntansi Publik kebanyakan hanya fokus meneliti tentang perubahan metode akuntansi, sehingga riset yang menghubungkan teori *fraud* dan kualitas laporan keuangan di pemerintah daerah masih terbatas jumlahnya.

Kata kunci. Kualitas Laporan Keuangan; Pemerintah Daerah; Kesempatan; Rasionalisasi; Tekanan

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Quality financial management occurs when financial statement information is fully presented for users (Yesiariani & Rahayu, 2017) and financial statements are free from fraudulent actions (Primadhany & Puspaningsih, 2018). The government strives to improve financial report quality by reforming regional financial management. The milestone for regional financial management reform began with the implementation of the regional autonomy policy as regulated in Law No. 22/1999, which was later revised into Law No. 32/2004 dan Law No. 23/2014 on Regional Government and Law No. 33/2004 concerning Financial Balance between the Central

Government and Regional Governments. Consequently, local governments can regulate the sources of funds to determine the direction, objectives, and targets for using the budget. The preparation of government financial statements must also refer to Government Regulation No. 71/2010 concerning Government Accounting Standards (GAS). GAS stipulates that the management and reporting of government finances must be done honestly, accountable, and transparently. The government must also control risk in its institutions by implementing an internal control system (ICS). The aim is to provide adequate confidence in achieving effectiveness and efficiency, reliability of financial reporting, safeguarding state assets, and compliance with laws and regulations (Government Regulation No. 60/2008) to create a clean and free state administration from corruption, collusion, and nepotism.

Research on the determinants of the quality of regional financial reports has been carried out in Indonesia. such as the research Karmila et conducted by al. (2012). Yendrawati (2013), Pradono & Basukianto (2015), Suarmika & Suputra (2016). Previous research has examined the role of human resources, information technology, internal control system. the role of Financial Administration Officials for Regional Apparatus Work Units (in Indonesia called PPK-SKPD), and reconciliation on the quality of financial reporting. The quality of financial reporting is measured using a questionnaire developed based on the qualitative information characteristics of financial according to Government Regulation No. 71/2010, as relevant, reliable, comparable, and understandable. The research results found that human resource capacity influences the quality of regional financial reporting.

An exciting thing is Susanti & Budiwitjaksono's (2020) research which tries to test the theory of fraud to identify factors that affect the quality of financial statement management in the Malang City Government. Susanti & Budiwitjaksono (2020) found that pressure, opportunity, rationalization, and ability influence the quality of financial

statement management. Research that tries to test the theory of fraud with the quality of financial reports is still few, so Susanti & Budiwitjaksono (2020) suggest that future research still needs to be done. Research in the Government Accounting field has only focused on identifying changes in accounting methods (Maria et al., 2019). This condition makes research examining the relationship between fraud theory and the quality of financial reports interesting. Therefore, this research was conducted to find empirical evidence of the quality determinants of regional financial statements from the perspective of the fraud triangle theory (Cressey, 1953), namely pressure, opportunity, and rationalization. The fraud triangle theory is used because this theory can explain the phenomenon of fraud that occurs in local governments in Indonesia (Maria & Gudono, 2017; Muhtar et al., 2018).

This research was conducted at the district/city government in Central Java Province for two reasons. First, although many audit opinions in district/city governments in Central Province have Java received Unqualified Opinions, the Finance Bureau of the Regional Secretariat of Central Java Province still finds inaccurate Local Government Financial Report data, SKPD also has not been able to present financial statement items properly. The Notes to Financial Statements are also still offered less informative and complete (Pradono & Basukianto, 2015). Not a few, even a regional head, such as Indra Kusuma (Regent of Brebes), Soemarmo (Mayor of Semarang), Ikmal Jaya and Siti Masitha Soeparno (Mayor of Tegal), Sri Hartini (Regent of Klaten), and Tasdi (Regent of Purbalingga). Therefore, research needs to be done to identify the determinants of the quality of financial reports from the perspective of the fraud triangle theory in district/city governments in Central Java Province.

This research is expected to provide two contributions. First, research results contribute to the development of knowledge in the field of Public Accounting because it provides empirical evidence of factors determining the quality of regional financial reports. Second, contribute to the government, both the central government and local governments as policymakers because the research results provide information on what factors need to be considered by local governments to improve the quality of regional financial reports and eliminate fraud that occurs in local governments.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY Research Samples and Data**

The population of this research is the district/city government in Central Java Province, namely 29 district governments and governments. city District/city six governments in Central Java Province because audit opinions in district/city although governments in Central Java Province are already many that are Unqualified, the Finance Bureau of the Regional Secretariat of Central Java Province still finds data on Regional Government Financial Reports, which is not accurate (Pradono & Basukianto, 2015) and several regional heads in Central Java Province who were caught in the Corruption Eradication Commission (in Indonesia called KPK) Hand Arrest Operation. This research sample is limited to district/city local governments in Central Java Province during the 2016-2019 fiscal year. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling method with three criteria. First, local governments have been audited by the State Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia (in Indonesia called BPK-RI). Second, the type of BPK-RI audit is an audit of financial statements. Third, the Audit Report of BPK-RI contains an Audit Report on Compliance with the Internal Control System (ICS) and Compliance with the Law.

The data used in this research is secondary data. The Audit Report of BPK-RI data on district/city governments in Central Java Province for the 2016-2019 fiscal year were obtained from the BPK-RI office. Data on names of autonomous regions, sub-district data, and population data for districts/cities in Central Java Province for 2016-2019 were obtained from the website of the Central Bureau of Statistics (in Indonesia called BPS). The method of data collection was carried out using a documentation study, namely by collecting secondary data in the form of notes, financial reports, and other information related to this research.

### **Operational Definition and Measurement of** Variables

The dependent variable of the research is the quality of financial reports. This research has three independent variables: pressure, opportunity, and rationalization. The summary of operational definitions and measurement of variables in this research is presented in Table 1.

Variable	Code	Measurement	Reference
Financial	FRQ	Audit Opinion, score 1 if Disclaimer	The audit report of
Report Quality		Opinion, score 2 if Adverse Opinion, score 3	BPK-RI during
		if Qualified Opinion, score 4 of Unqualified	2019-2021
		Opinion with Paragraph Emphasizing	
		Matter, score 5 if Unqualified Opinion.	
Pressure	Р	Regional Original Income, the ratio of	The audit report of
		Regional Original Income divided by total	BPK-RI during
		Regional Income (ROIRI), and the ratio of	2019-2021.
		Regional Original Income divided by total	
		Regional Expenditure (ROIRE).	
Opportunity	0	Number of sub-districts, natural logarithm of	The audit report of
		total assets, total population, and natural	BPK-RI during
		logarithm of capital expenditures.	2019-2021 and the
			BPS report.

Table 1. Measurement of Research Variables

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Rationalization	R	Number of auditee responses.	The audit report of
			BPK-RI during
			2019-2021.

#### **Financial Report Quality**

Ouality financial reports are financial reports that are relevant, reliable, comparable, and understandable (Government Regulation No. 71/2010). Measurement of the quality of financial reports is the same as research conducted by Djanegara (2017) using audit opinion proxies. The smaller the misstatement or discrepancy with Government Accounting Standards, the better the quality of local government financial reports. This is because the Unqualified Opinion gains more trust and is considered more reliable by users of financial statements (Djanegara, 2017: Sasmita, 2021). The audit opinion of BPK-RI on the financial statements is measured using a dummy variable. Score 1 for Disclaimer Opinion, 2 for Adverse Opinion, 3 for Qualified Opinion, 4 for Unqualified Opinion with Paragraph Emphasizing Matter, 5 for Unqualified opinion.

#### Pressure, Opportunity, and Rationalization

This research uses the definition of pressure in Maria & Gudono's study (2017), namely conditions that encourage fraud in organizations. Pressure is measured using proxies generated from research Maria et al. (2018), namely the amount of Regional Original Income, the ratio of Regional Original Income divided by total Regional Income (ROIRI), and the ratio of Regional Original Income divided by total Regional Expenditure (ROIRE). If Regional Original Income, ROIRI, and ROIRE show high values, the local government is under pressure. Regional Original Income data is transformed into natural logarithms to avoid high data variability.

This research uses the definition of opportunity in Maria & Gudono's study (2017), namely opportunities that allow someone to realize their actions, namely conditions when the organizational control system is weak. Opportunity is measured by the number of subdistricts, total assets, population, and capital expenditures. The proxy for measuring this opportunity result from research Maria et al. (2019b). The number of sub-districts show the complexity of the area, total assets, and population shows the larger an area (Hartono et al., 2014; Maria et al., 2019b), while the amount of capital expenditure indicates regional expenditures for capital formation (Maria et al., 2019b). The more complex and larger an area and the greater the funds for capital expenditure, more excellent the opportunity for fraud to occur, so the region requires an excellent internal control system. Data on total assets and capital expenditures are transformed into natural logarithms to avoid high data variability.

This research uses the definition of rationalization in Maria & Gudono's study (2017), namely the attitude of management to justify fraudulent acts in organizations. In local governments, the State Auditing Standard (BPK, 2017) stipulates that the auditor, namely the BPK-RI, must request a written response from the auditee regarding the findings, conclusions, and recommendations and report it in the BPK-RI Audit Report. The measurement of the rationalization variable is the same as the research of Maria & Gudono (2017) by calculating the number of auditee responses to justify their actions. The auditor reports the auditee's response in writing in the Audit Report on Compliance with Internal Control System (ICS) and Compliance with Laws.

#### **Analysis Method**

This research hypothesis was tested using multiple linear regression with a significance level ( $\alpha$ ) of 5 percent (Gudono, 2017). This analytical tool determines the relationship between pressure, opportunity, and rationalization on the quality of district/city financial reports in Central Java Province. The multiple regression model that will be tested in this research is presented in equation 1 as follows:  $FRQ = \beta_0 + \beta_1 P_{it} + \beta_2 O_{it} + \beta_3 R_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$ . (1) FRQ is the quality of financial reports, *i* is district/city government in Central Java Province, *t* is year,  $\beta_0$  is constant,  $\beta_{1-3}$  is coefficient of independent variable: P is pressure, O is opportunity, R is rationalization,  $\varepsilon$  is confounding variable.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Descriptive Statistics**

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics. The results of descriptive statistics show that there are 175 district and city governments in Central Java Province that are the sample of this research, with the 2016-2019 fiscal year. The financial report quality variable has a minimum value of 39.33 and a maximum value of 163.00 with a mean value of 87.54 and a standard deviation of 22.14, which means the minimum increase in the average financial report quality variable is 22.14. While the maximum decrease in the average financial report quality variable is 22.14, or it can be said that the average value of financial report quality is 22.15 percent. The pressure variable has a minimum value of 0.16 and a maximum

value of 0.31 with a mean value of 1.15 and a standard deviation of 5.05, which means that the minimum increase in the average pressure variable is 5.05. While the maximum decrease in the average pressure variable is 5.05, or it can be said that the average pressure is 5.05 percent.

opportunity variable has a The minimum value of 0.22 and a maximum value of 11.30, with a mean value of 4.24 and a standard deviation of 1.84, which means that the minimum increase in the average opportunity variable is 1.84. While the maximum decrease in the average opportunity variable is 1.84, or it can be said that the average value of opportunity deviation is 1.84 percent. The rationalization variable has a minimum value of 0.80 and a maximum value of 22.27 with a mean value of 3.78 and a standard deviation of 3.04, which means that the minimum increase in the average rationalization variable is 3.04. While the maximum decrease in the average rationalization variable is 3.04 or it can be said that the average deviation value of rationalization is 3.04 percent.

	Table 2. Descriptive Statistics				
	Ν	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.
					Deviation
Pressure	175	0.16	0.31	1.15	5.05
Opportunity	175	0.22	11.30	4.24	1.84
Rationalization	175	0.80	22.27	3.78	3.04
Financial Report Quality	175	39.33	163.00	87.54	22.14

Source: Processed Secondary Data (2022)

#### **Hypothesis Testing Results**

This research hypothesis test uses multiple linear regression analysis with t-test to determine the effect of independent variables, namely pressure, opportunity, and rationalization, on the quality of local government financial reports in Central Java Province. The results of the hypothesis test are presented in Table 3. The results of the H<sub>1</sub> test obtained t-test for the pressure variable of -0.699 and p-value of 0.125. The p-value of this pressure variable is>0.05, meaning that pressure does not affect the quality of local government financial reports in Central Java Province, so  $H_1$  is not supported. The results of the H<sub>2</sub> test obtained t-test for the pressure variable of 3.550 and p-value of 0.002. The pvalue of this opportunity variable is<0.05, meaning that opportunity affects the quality of local government financial reports in Central Java Province, so H<sub>2</sub> is supported. The negative correlation between opportunity and quality of financial statements indicates the higher the opportunity, the lower the quality of financial statements, and vice versa. The lower the opportunity, the higher the quality of financial statements. The results of the H<sub>3</sub> test obtained t-test for the rationalization variable of -0.514 and p-value of 0.608. The p-value of this pressure variable is>0.05, meaning that rationalization has no effect on the quality of

local government financial reports in Central Java Province, so H<sub>3</sub> is not supported.

The test results in Table 3 also show that the coefficient of determination ( $\mathbb{R}^2$ ) is 0.651. This means that the independent variables in this research jointly affect the dependent variable, namely the quality of the financial statements of 0.651, and the rest, which is 0.349, is

ports in Central influenced by other variables not included in this research model. Meanwhile, the adjusted  $R^2$  value is 0.655. This means that the percentage of the influence of pressure, opportunity, and rationalization variables on the quality of financial reports is 65.5 percent and the remaining 34.5 percent is influenced by other variables outside this research. Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Results

$FRQ = \beta_0 + \beta_1 P_{it} + \beta_2 O_{it} + \beta_3 R_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$				
Variable	В	t-count	Sig.	Note
(Constant)	0.648	2.410	0.018	
Pressure	0.195	-0.699	0.125	Not Supported
Opportunity	-0.048	3.550	0.002	Supported
Rationalization	0.682	-0.514	0.608	Not Supported
$R^2: 0.651$				
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> : 0.655				

Note: significant on  $\alpha = 0.05$ 

Source: Processed Secondary Data (2022)

# The Effect of Pressure on the Quality of Local Government Financial Reports

The test results found that hypothesis 1 of this research is not supported by empirical evidence. Pressure was found not to affect the quality of local government financial reports in Central Java Province. This research is not in line with the research findings of Wonar et al. (2018), Susanti & Budiwitjaksono (2020), and Halim & Miharjo (2020). Pressure factors, such as fiscal distress conditions in local governments (Maria & Gudono, 2017). compensation (Wonar et al., 2018; Susanti & Budiwitjaksono, 2020), and orders from superiors (Mayhew & Murphy, 2014; Febriani & Suryandari, 2019; Halim & Miharjo, 2020) were found not to affect the quality of financial reporting there.

Local governments will continue to present quality financial reports because local governments have employees and public officials who uphold professional attitudes (Liu & Lin, 2012; Darwanis et al., 2016; Basar, 2017). Professional human resources will perform their duties and functions optimally and optimally (Basar, 2017; Nursito et al., 2020). Professional Civil Servants have independence, firmness in the profession, and good cooperation. Every task of financial management and reporting will be carried out by civil servants carefully and thoughtfully, and they use all of their professional abilities so that the quality of their work is optimal (Basar, 2017). Professional local government financial report preparers know that their work is not merely an obligation but also a form of social service to the community (Leviany et al., 2020).

professional attitudes, Not only competent civil servants and public officials can produce accurate financial reports and meet the elements of quality financial statements (Pradono & Basukianto, 2015; Darwanis et al., 2016; Pujanira & Taman, 2017). Competence describes knowledge, skills, experience so that competent employees understand what they are doing. The correct understanding will produce quality government financial reports (Sukarno et al., 2020; Yulanda & Oktala, 2021). Competent local financial managers will respond quickly if there are irregularities in financial management and reporting there (Basar, 2017; Nursito *et al.*, 2020). Professional and competent public officials will carry out their duties by applicable norms and standards to prevent fraudulent acts (Liu & Lin, 2012; Maria & Halim, 2021).

#### The Effect of Opportunity on the Quality of Local Government Financial Reports

The test results found that hypothesis 2 of this research is supported by empirical evidence. Opportunity influences the quality of local government financial reports in Central Java Province. The negative correlation between opportunity and the quality of financial reports indicates the higher the opportunity, the lower the quality of local government financial reports in Central Java Province, and vice versa. The lower the opportunity, the higher the quality of local government financial reports in Central Java Province. From the fraud triangle theory perspective, the individual will look the opportunities if the individual believes that the problem can be solved by committing fraud (Cressey, 1953). Opportunity is a condition in an organization that opens up opportunities for fraud. Financial management changes occur employees advantage when take of opportunities for personal and or group interests (Ruankaew, 2016; Febriani & Suryandari, 2019).

This research's findings align with the results of Susanti & Budiwitjaksono (2020). The quality of financial information will decrease if Civil Servants have the opportunity to commit fraudulent acts (Susanti & Budiwitjaksono, 2020). Opportunities can reduce the quality of financial reports, if the internal control system (ICS) in local governments is weak (Maria & Gudono, 2017; Muhtar et al., 2018; Maria et al., 2019a; Febriani & Suryandari, 2019). When the ICS is weak, organizational governance becomes less effective and has an impact on decreasing the quality of financial reports, and fraud is easy to occur there (Yendrawati, 2013; Suarmika & Suputra, 2016; Mokoginta et al., 2017;

Chodijah & Hidayah, 2018; Yulistyawati et al., 2019; Maria et al., 2019a; Maria et al., 2019b). If the ICS is good, the financial reports are of higher quality, but vice versa. Weak ICS makes financial reports even less qualified. An effective ICS can provide reasonable assurance about the reliability of financial compliance with laws statements. and regulations, and effective and efficient operations (Mokoginta et al., 2017; Desviana et al., 2020). Therefore, effective internal control is needed in local governments to produce quality regional financial reports.

## The Effect of Rationalization on the Quality of Local Government Financial Reports

The test results found that hypothesis 3 of this research is not supported by empirical evidence. Rationalization was found to not affect the quality of local government financial reports in Central Java Province. The rationalization defined by Cressey (1953) as a just before the perpetrator committed a fraudulent act was found not to affect the quality of local government financial reports in Central Java Province. Individuals commit to their religion's teachings, so their attitudes and behavior will reflect that commitment (Johnson et al., 2001). Although there are many justifications for cheating to be committed, individuals with a high level of religiosity will not be tempted to commit acts that violate the teachings of their religion (Johnson et al., 2001). Individuals with a high level of religiosity tend to avoid cheating (Wiebe & Fleck, 1980; Cipta, 2021). Research by Dyreng et al. (2012) found that leaders with high levels of religiosity will not engage in tax avoidance behaviors. This shows that financial managers with a high level of religiosity will further minimize fraud and errors when compiling their financial statements so that the quality of financial reports can be maintained properly. This research does not align with the findings of Wahyuni & Budiwitjaksono (2017) and Susanti & Budiwitjaksono (2020). Rationalization does not affect the quality of financial reports in the local government of Central Java Province.

#### CONCLUSION

This research finds empirical evidence that pressure and rationalization factors do not affect the quality of local government financial reports in Central Java Province. The opportunity factor negatively influences the quality of local government financial reports in Central Java Province. This means the higher the opportunity to cheat, the lower the quality of local government financial reports in Central Java Province, and vice versa. The lower the opportunity to commit fraud, the higher the quality of regional government financial reports in Central Java Province. The findings of this research align with the results of Susanti & Budiwitjaksono (2020), which state that opportunity influences the quality of financial reporting in local governments. Therefore, internal control in the management and presentation of good financial statements must be made so local governments in Central Java Province can present quality financial reports.

This research has two limitations. First, this research examines the determinants of financial statement quality using only the fraud triangle perspective. Even though there are many other factors that can affect the quality of local government financial reports, such as the competence and ability of human resources, the application of the government accounting system, and others. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine these other factors to obtain more in-depth results about what determinants affect the quality of local government financial reports. Second, this research is limited to researching local governments in Central Java Province, so the research results cannot be generalized to all local governments in Indonesia. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the sample to all local governments in Indonesia so that the research results can be generalized to the context of local government in Indonesia.

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