

Extent of Availability of Necessary Skills in LACPA Members to Practice Forensic Accounting – An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Lebanon has long been suffering from corruption among the various public organizations. Recently, there has been a lot of discussion on the urgent need for forensic accounting in the public sector in Lebanon to uncover any suspicious accounts at the Banque du Liban (BDL). Thus, the Lebanese government made a contract with Alvarez and Marsal to conduct a forensic audit at the BDL. At this, many financial and economic experts demanded to let local experts do it and save the high fees that Alvarez and Marsal will charge the government, especially that Lebanon has a problem in the availability of US Dollars. The researchers asked whether or not members of the Lebanese Association of Certified Public Accountants (LACPA) have the necessary requirements to practice forensic accounting. Consequently, this study examines the availability of required skills in LACPA members to practice forensic accounting. A five-point Likert style questionnaire was constructed and distributed to the sample which consisted of 300 LACPA members. The researchers retrieved 261 responses that were valid for testing and analysis. The study rendered some important results, mainly that LACPA members had four of the five main required skills to practice forensic accounting, and there is a lack in the remaining skill which is quick wits and analytical thinking.

Keywords: forensic accounting, investigations, courts of law, LACPA

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I. Introduction

One of the most recent domains in accounting is forensic accounting that holds great opportunities for future needs. It serves as an integrated framework for accounting and law together in order to present more profound investigations that can be related more to lawsuits. Forensic accounting prepares a prominent forensic accountant to be an efficient expert and advisor who can perform investigations that are conducted with more comprehensiveness, accuracy and profoundness than done by an external auditor. In addition, a forensic accountant's report comes with sufficient legal evidence that may assist in supporting lawsuits, enlighten judicial authorities and help them achieve justice.

Interest in forensic accounting has increased greatly among parties involved in the financial sector after the financial crises in East Asia, Latin America and Russia in the nineties of the previous century, which were followed by the financial and banking collapse of some international American companies in 2002, 2007 and 2008. There are countless occurrences of scandals and frauds that have overwhelmed societies at all times and in all countries, even before the year 1750. These financial frauds and scandals constituted turning points with historical importance. Following is a list of companies which include just a few examples of renowned financial scandals: Enron, WorldCom and Xerox (USA), Sanyo Electric (Japan), One.Tel and HIH Insurance (Australia), Hugo Boss and Zapf Creation (Germany), Bangkok Bank of Commerce (Thailand) Global Trust Bank (India) and Parmalat (Italy). However, what is not so renowned is that almost every nation has its own financial scandals and frauds (Bhasin, 2013-a). The media has occasionally made a lot of reports about scandals and bankruptcies in some reputable organizations, both from developed and developing countries. The aforementioned financial scandals have led to major changes in the accounting domain worldwide, mainly through the issuance of new governance laws, which contributed greatly to judicial laws relative to the profession of accounting.

The research at hand investigates whether or not members of the Lebanese Association of Certified Public Accountants (LACPA) have the necessary skills required to practice forensic accounting in Lebanon.

II. Material and Methods

Forensic accounting is one of the many accounting methods which emerged centuries ago, about the beginning of the first industrial revolution in the second half of the eighteenth century, to settle disputes arising between commercial enterprises and concerned parties. This is considered a key task for certified auditors and accountants who are accredited by the judicial authorities to give their professional opinion regarding financial statements and reports or contracts among all parties dealing with the commercial enterprises.

The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA, 2018) defined forensic accounting as applying investigative skills and specialized knowledge which CPAs possess to collect evidence, analyze it, and evaluate it in addition to interpreting and communicating their findings in the court of law, boardroom, or other legal or administrative setting (par. 1).

The literature on this subject matter has shown that there is no immunity for any organization from fraud (Chui, 2010; NFAAFI, 2013; Popoola et al., 2014 & Wuerger, 2011). It is indispensable for authorities of organizations to devise suitable methods for the principal purpose of identifying and taking action against fraud in a way which it may become extremely complicated for fraud performers to have any kind of freedom to act.

Sadiq (2009) studied financial crimes in developing countries where corruption and fraud have negatively impacted the lives of citizens. The study compared financial corruption in both public and private sectors in Nigeria and concluded that forensic accounting should have an essential role in curbing fraud and corruption mainly in the public sector. Forensic accounting is considered a typical accounting practice as relevant to disputes and lawsuits (Okoye & Akamobi, 2009). A forensic accountant provides courts with accounting analysis that is regarded as the basis for discussion and making the right decision, in addition to being a perfect witness for the court as it is seeking and interpreting the truth.

In a study about the main activities of a forensic accountant to solve complicated financial problems, Oyedokun (2015) found that forensic accounting is a preventive profession that offers a high rate of faith in the varied services which are presented to the client; in addition, it presents essential techniques that are utilized in prevention and discovery of all types of financial fraud.

In another study from Nigeria titled "Relevance of Forensic Accounting in the Detection and Prevention of Fraud in Nigeria", Eliezer and Emmanuel (2015) depicted the difference between a traditional accountant and a forensic accountant in addition to depicting features and efficiency of forensic accounting in detecting and preventing fraud. They emphasized that a forensic accountant has a very essential role in helping judicial authorities and the police not only in investigating and documenting frauds but also in preventing them.

Being a successful and effective accountant does not always mean being an effective forensic accountant. A forensic accountant requires that the professional should possess a wide-ranging variety of knowledge and skills (Davis et al., not dated). After surveying 126 attorneys, 603 CPAs and 50 accounting/auditing professors, they concluded that forensic accountants should have good knowledge of laws, court procedures and problem-solving skills. They should also be proficient in planning and preparation, which includes gathering information and preserving it, no matter whether it be documentation, interrogation or electronic data. Their study showed that a forensic accountant should possess many characteristics and skills which include being analytical, ethical, and detail-oriented as top characteristics.

A study done by McMullen & Sanchez (2010) pointed out that forensic accounting is among the top of the most wanted positions list according to the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). The study concluded that the most required skills for forensic accountants are analytical skills followed by accounting skills and problem-solving skills in addition to others. While Ojo, (2012) suggested in a study titled "Forensic Accounting and the Law" that a forensic accountant should be independent and objective in cases that require the presence of one. Although professional skepticism holds the attitude of an inquisitive mind and a critical appraisal of audit evidence, auditors can have a less inquiring attitude and assess audit evidence in a less critical way than forensic accountants.

Some researchers from developing countries agree that corruption and fraud are dominant in both private and public sectors; therefore, the need for forensic accounting is greater to curb these two problems. However, there are no basic skills available for accountants to take the role of forensic accounting (Bhasin, 2013-b). These skills include, but are not restricted to gathering, analyzing and relating information together, adequate methods in presenting information in the court and having an investigative character to be able to face cases of financial fraud. On the other hand, other researchers from developing countries suggest that there are qualifications among accountants, knowledge-based and applied, to take the role of forensic accountants; however, applications of forensic accounting are more wide-spread in advanced countries (Islam et al., 2011).

Forensic accounting requires acquiring knowledge and skills according to Hopwood and others (2008). They stated that a forensic accountant takes profound training in auditing since collecting information and providing evidence entails analytical skills. In addition, they emphasize investigative skills such as control, conducting interviews and interrogation techniques. Another important type of knowledge required for forensic accountants is criminology, mainly criminal psychology since effective investigation skills sometimes depend

on knowledge of the motives behind the crime and the psychological nature of the criminal. It is also evident that accounting skills help forensic accountants interpret and analyze necessary financial information in addition to knowledge of internal control and corporate governance. Moreover, forensic accountants should have knowledge about the laws, regulations and procedures followed at courts of law which will help them specify the type of evidence necessary to be presented to the court, which complies with legal standards of judicial authorities. Also, it is essential that forensic accountants have information technology knowledge, which is necessary at least in computers and software programs since forensic accountants use this type of technology to save data, process it and deduce information. Finally, forensic accountants should have proper communication skills that help them communicate their deductions, analysis and investigation results clearly and accurately to users of forensic accounting services.

Based on the above previous studies, the researchers find that forensic accounting is a novel accounting domain that is deeply rooted in history and founded on the integration of accounting and auditing experience, legal knowledge, and investigative and inquisitive skills. It is an information system that goes beyond the numbers and business deals to supply the relevant parties with facts related to cases under dispute or under investigation. Forensic accounting requires several skills that are examined in the study at hand, among which are professional expertise in accounting and law, compliance to the International Ethics Standards, leadership skills, continuous learning and training and quick wits and intuition, which are the main domains of the study.

Concept of Forensic Accounting

As cited in Abou-Zeid et al. (2020), a reliable definition of forensic accounting is that which the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA, 2020) set forth and states that forensic accounting entails applying analytic skills and the particular knowledge that CPAs have gained through experience to gather evidence, study and assess it, and correspond the findings at court proceedings, a boardroom or as required (par. 1). According to Deloitte (deloitte.com), forensic accountants can predict, detect, and answer to the risks that arise from corruption, proceedings, fraud, financial mismanagement, and other threats. Al-Khalidi (2014) defines forensic accounting as one of the modern accounting branches is Forensic accounting, which incorporates computer and Internet sciences, accounting and law, all of which are utilized to assist the expert in searches and inquiries that will eventually lead to detecting fraud and/or financial crimes. Also, forensic accountants will be able to present adequate evidence in front of parties of interest by following particular methodologies and precise evidence that can be employed in convicting suspects of fraud. Thus, the researcher finds that the above definitions create an explicit reflection of what forensic accounting is. These definitions agree that forensic accounting is a contemporary branch of accounting that look for facts that lie beyond the numbers and prepares them to be readily available in courts of law or other authoritative settings; it includes applying exceptional skills in information technology, law, accounting and auditing, coupled with investigative skills, inquiry and analytic skills to interpret and communicate the results the forensic accountants find to settle related lawsuits.

Characteristics and skills of a Forensic Accountant

There are certain characteristics of a forensic accountant to be taken into consideration when assigning one to a case (Ramaswamy, 2007):

- **Commitment to Professional Ethics:** Forensic accountants are independent and objective in their work. This means they have to be away from conflicts of interest, accurate and committed to honesty in performing their work and have good knowledge of the International Ethics Standards and its application.
- **Leadership and Communication skills:** Communication is a great tool that leaders should acquire, and for forensic accountants to have leadership and communication skills, they should possess good knowledge about their work environment, know the necessary procedures of investigative field operations, know how to use different measurement and analysis tools and have good communication skills. They should be able to conduct investigations, elicit information, analyze their findings and communicate them in front of a court of law supported by adequate evidence.
- **Continuous Learning and Training:** Learning new skills and acquiring knowledge is vital in all situations and at all times, especially for forensic accountants. They have to continuously update their computer knowledge and accounting systems. They should also have good knowledge of novelties in interrogation methods and financial investigation, good knowledge about updates of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), Principles of Governance, and International Standards on Auditing (ISA). They should also be knowledgeable about the updates of International Ethics Standards and about updates of various local legislations.
- **Professional expertise:** Learning and development in practice and continuing professional education as a means of developing professional expertise are vital for forensic accountants since this helps in being able to discover fraud. They should also acquire enough experience about different legal legislations and the

current legal system in Lebanon. Their experience should go beyond the local, to all international standards related to the profession and should be adept in financial analysis and its methods. In addition, they must have enough experience in using modern systems related to auditing and have enough experience in various accounting information systems.

- **Quick wits and analytical thinking:** Quick thinking is a helpful asset in an environment where change is fast. Thus, it is a prerequisite that forensic accountants have basics knowledge in principles of Psychology which enables them to detect criminal behavior and have enough experience in human nature and body language to judge based on mimic gestures. They should also be adept at means of interrogation and financial investigation which give them deductive abilities through posing specific, professional questions, in addition to the ability to detect money laundering and to interpret financial figures logically. All this help forensic accountants discuss in a scientific, practical and logical manner to solve disputes based on their investigations, discussions and fast responses to occurring incidents.

One of the most important skills that a forensic accountant should possess is the ability to think critically, which is also known as cognitive skills. Analytical skills allow a forensic accountant to be creative and innovative in executing his/her work. They also allow the forensic accountant to conduct interrogations and make deductions through posing specific, professional questions, which makes the forensic accountant a more proficient person at interviewing and obtaining information from personnel, witnesses and others. This emphasizes the position that forensic accountants should be resourceful. Because the main task of forensic accountants is investigating and detecting fraud, good forensic accountants must have some knowledge of psychology to improve their aptitude in cross-examination of suspects or witnesses. They should also have a deep knowledge of auditing and operations of organizations and in accounting. Forensic accountants must enjoy high oral and written communication skills that would help them be dexterous in practicing the accounting profession. (Okoye & Akamobi, 2009).

Di Gabriele (2009) identifies a number of abilities that a forensic accountant should have to be proficient at work, which include deductive skills, critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities and analytical adeptness. Objectivity is an essential aspect for a forensic accountant who engages in witness testimonies. The experts' objectivity is fundamental from a critical perspective since it eventually sets up the reliability of the expert's conclusions (Di Gabriele & Ojo, 2013).

Tempone et al. (2012) acknowledged that presentation and interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, technological proficiency, and skills of planning and organizing are the most frequently non-technical required skills for a forensic accountant. The study also recognized that accounting graduates should possess team-work and self-management skills, communication skills in order to enter the accounting profession.

Other skills, particularly personality attributes, have also been acknowledged as important for forensic accountants. These include being inquisitive, thorough patient and open-minded (Wallace, 1984). Also, Weil et al., (2001) and Uyar & Gungormus (2011) acknowledge that personality traits such as curiosity, persistence, creativity, and communication skills help in the development of a successful forensic accountant. Some other personal features include interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, continuous learning.

Expert witnesses, such as, forensic accountants have a responsibility to be ethical and protective as to the public interests; and they are held accountable since they can affect a case either positively or negatively depending on their level of proficiency (Reinstein and Lander, 2004). Forensic accountants are an influential force in courts since they can give their expert opinions or conclusions based on the information they have compiled or other evidence they could reach.

Benefits of Forensic Accounting

The most important benefits of forensic accounting include:

- a. Preventing or limiting fraud
- b. Working with efficiency in expenditure to prevent wasting both public and private funds.
- c. Playing security role: According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, there has been an increase in the demand for forensic accountants in security as a result of expanding economic, financial or commercial operations especially in the light of the limited domain of work for external auditors.

Despite the importance of forensic accounting, there is no law issued in Lebanon to establish and organize this profession. Instead, there is legislation issued in September 1983 that mentions forensic experience. Among the various divisions of forensic experience, there is one for accounting, which is called forensic experience in accounting. The accountants appointed by the court are called certified public accountants and they must be practicing members of the Lebanese Association of Certified Public Accountants.

Because Lebanon has long been suffering from corruption among the various public organizations, there is a rising need for forensic accounting. Some high ranking governmental officials have been openly and publically accused of corruption. Those include prime ministers, ministers, general managers of ministries, and members of the parliament. This gave rise to the discussion on the urgent need for forensic accounting in the various public sector organizations and the Central Bank (BDL) in Lebanon to uncover any suspicious activities which might have lead to the present financial crisis. Hence, the Lebanese government contracted Alvarez and Marsal to conduct a forensic audit in the BDL accounts, and later, in all other public organizations.

Following the announcement of the contract with Alvarez and Marsal, there were many voices that demanded to let local experts (the LACPA members) conduct the forensic audit and save the high fees that Alvarez and Marsal will charge the Lebanese government (\$2,100,000), especially that Lebanon is currently facing a problem in the availability of US Dollars. However, some other voices rejected the idea of local associations conducting the forensic audit arguing that they might be biased. They argued that international organizations are a better choice since they work according to international standards and their work would be transparent, which is highly evaluated both on the local and international levels. Thus, the researchers wondered whether or not members of the LACPA have the necessary requirements to practice forensic accounting.

Research Problem

Researchers in Lebanon agree that the origin of the economic crisis that Lebanon is going through is the financial and administrative corruption in both public and private organizations. The researchers have the following question in mind:

Do LACPA members have the required skills to practice forensic accounting?

The following sub-questions arise from the above question:

1. Do LACPA members have professional ethics which is required to practice forensic accounting?
2. Do LACPA members have leadership skills which are required to practice forensic accounting?
3. Are LACPA members committed to continuous learning and training which is required to practice forensic accounting?
4. Do LACPA members have experience in accounting, auditing and law which is required to practice forensic accounting?
5. Do LACPA members have quick wits and analytical thinking which is required to practice forensic accounting?

Hypotheses

Based on the above question, the researchers have the following hypothesis:

LACPA members have the required skills to practice forensic accounting.

From the above hypothesis, the following sub-hypothesis arise:

H₁ LACPA members have professional ethics which is required to practice forensic accounting.

H₂ LACPA members have leadership skills which are required to practice forensic accounting.

H₃ LACPA members are committed to continuous learning and training which is required to practice forensic accounting.

H₄ LACPA members have experience in accounting, auditing and law which is required to practice forensic accounting.

H₅ LACPA members have quick wits and analytical thinking which is required to practice forensic accounting.

Procedures Methodology

Population and Sample Size

The population of the study is represented by the certified public accountants in Lebanon whereas the sample was randomly chosen among practitioners of the profession. The researchers distributed 300 questionnaires among practitioners, 264 were retrieved of which 261 were valid for testing their opinions about the topic of the research.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Sample according to Demographic Information

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Academic Qualification	Bachelor	154	59.0%
	Masters	96	36.8%
	Ph.D.	11	4.2%
Major	Accounting	167	64%
	Economics	15	5.7%
	Business Administration	61	23.4%
	Banking and Finance	18	6.9%
	Less than 5 years	21	8.0%
Years of Experience	5 to less than 10 years	43	16.5%

	10 to less than 15 years	89	34.1%
	15 years and more	108	41.4%
Total		261	100.0%

It is evident from Table 1 that the majority (59%) of the selected sample has a Bachelor’s degree. The researchers believe that the reason behind this is that the majority of certified accountants start practicing the profession as soon as they graduate from universities; moreover, the LACPA allows Bachelor's degree graduates into the association if they pass the required tests. The table also shows that the majority of the sample have studied Accounting which is represented in the 64 percentage, which is the most relevant major to the current study. Moreover, the table shows that the majority of the sample (75.5%) have experience of more than 10 years, which will add to the reliability of their responses.

Instrumentation

Following the literature review and interviews conducted with judges and members of the Lebanese Association of Certified Public Accountants in addition to the researchers’ personal experience, the researchers constructed a five-point Likert Style questionnaire and asked the sample to respond to the items in it. The scale ranges as follows:

Table 2. Correct Tool of the Study

Answer	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Degree	5	4	3	2	1

Findings of the current study show reliability in the data collected through the study tool (questionnaire), having Cronbach’s Alpha as shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3. The Value of Cronbach’s Alpha

N of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
42	0.784	0.792

III. Data Analysis And Discussion

The research adopts the standard illustrated in Table 4 that follows to judge the inclination of each item when using the quintet Likert Scale depending mainly on the mean value and relative weight to determine the extent of consent to the items and domains of the questionnaire.

Table 4. The Scale Used in the Study to the Mean and Relative Weight

Mean	Relative Weight	Extent of Agreement
1 to less than 1.80	20% to less than 36%	Strongly Disagree
1.80 to less than 2.60	36% to less than 52%	Disagree
2.60 to less than 3.40	52% to less than 68%	Neutral
3.40 to less than 4.20	68% to less than 84%	Agree
More than 4.20	More than 84%	Strongly Agree

This gives statistical significance that averages that are less than 1.8 show very low consent to the item or the domain as a whole, and averages ranging between 1.80 and 2.59 show low consent to the item or the domain as a whole. Whereas averages between 2.60 and 3.39 indicate medium consent of the members of the sample to the item or the domain as a whole. Averages between 3.40 and 4.19 show high consent to the item or the domain and averages higher than 4.20 show very high consent to the item or the domain as a whole.

IV. Results

The first sub-hypothesis

This hypothesis states: “LACPA members have professional ethics which is required to practice forensic accounting.”

Table 5. Availability of Professional Ethics

Items	Mean	Std. D	Relative weight	T-test	Sig.	Extent of agreement	Rank
1 LACPA members have the ability to be far from conflicts of interest.	4.19	0.86	83.9%	22.35	0.000**	Agree	2
2 LACPA members have integrity	3.96	0.71	79.3%	21.84	0.000**	Agree	9

	when auditing and analyzing.							
3	LACPA members are accurate in performing their work.	4.18	0.59	83.6%	32.31	0.000**	Agree	3
4	LACPA members are committed to honesty in performing their work.	4.02	0.79	80.4%	20.86	0.000**	Agree	7
5	LACPA members are committed to confidentiality in their work.	4.21	0.78	84.2%	25.06	0.000**	Strongly agree	1
6	LACPA members have independence in performing their work.	3.97	0.91	79.5%	17.22	0.000**	Agree	8
7	LACPA members are objective in performing their work.	4.15	0.51	83.0%	36.43	0.000**	Agree	4
8	LACPA members have good knowledge of the International Ethics Standards.	4.05	0.80	81.0%	21.20	0.000**	Agree	6
9	LACPA members have good knowledge in the application of the International Ethics Standards.	4.07	0.84	81.4%	20.58	0.000**	Agree	5
	All items	4.02	0.39	80.5%	42.25	0.000**	Agree	

In general, the mean of the sample's responses to all items of the domain Availability of Professional Ethics is 4.02 with a relative weight of 80.5%. Also, the value of the calculated 'T' test is 42.25, which is greater than the value of tabulated 'T' at the significance level 0.05. This means that there is an increase of statistical significance to the neutral level in the average responses of the members of the sample; consequently, the hypothesis of the study which states "LACPA members have professional ethics which is required to practice forensic accounting" is accepted. The researchers believe that LACPA members know the professional code of ethics since it is required in entrance exams to the Association. Moreover, the Association always conducts workshops and training sessions regarding professional ethics.

The second sub-hypothesis

This hypothesis states: "LACPA members have leadership skills which are required to practice forensic accounting."

Table 6. Availability of Leadership Skills

	Items	Mean	Std. D	Relative weight	T-test	Sig.	Extent of agreement	Rank
1	LACPA members have good knowledge about their work environment.	4.50	0.63	89.9%	38.47	0.000**	Strongly agree	1
2	LACPA members know the necessary procedures of investigative field operations.	3.69	0.80	73.7%	13.93	0.000**	Agree	6
3	LACPA members have good knowledge of constructing specialized teams.	4.23	0.58	84.6%	34.26	0.000**	Strongly agree	2
4	LACPA members have leadership traits.	4.12	0.58	82.4%	31.20	0.000**	Agree	4
5	LACPA members know how to use different measurement and analysis tools.	3.84	0.78	76.7%	17.40	0.000**	Agree	5
6	LACPA members have communication skills.	4.17	0.56	83.4%	33.75	0.000**	Agree	3
	All items	4.09	0.36	81.08%	48.92	0.000**	Agree	

In general, the mean of the sample's responses to all items of the domain Availability of Leadership Skills is 4.09 with a relative weight of 81.08%. Also, the value of the calculated 'T' test is 48.92, which is greater than the value of tabulated 'T' at the significance level 0.05. This means that there is an increase of statistical significance to the neutral level in the average responses of the members of the sample; consequently, the hypothesis of the study which states "LACPA members have leadership skills which are required to practice forensic accounting" is accepted.

The third sub-hypothesis

This hypothesis states: "LACPA members are committed to continuous learning and training which is required to practice forensic accounting."

Table 7. Continuous Learning and Training

	Items	Mean	Std. D	Relative weight	T-test	Sig.	Extent of agreement	Rank
1	LACPA members continuously update their computer knowledge and accounting systems.	3.49	0.93	69.9%	8.51	0.000**	Agree	5
2	LACPA members have good knowledge of novelties in interrogation methods and financial investigation.	3.72	0.87	74.4%	13.37	0.000**	Agree	4
3	LACPA members are knowledgeable about updates of International Financial Reporting Standards.	3.83	0.86	76.6%	15.59	0.000**	Agree	3
4	LACPA members are knowledgeable about updates of International Standards on Auditing.	4.06	0.91	81.2%	18.82	0.000**	Agree	1
5	LACPA members are knowledgeable about updates of Principles of Governance.	3.45	1.37	69.8%	5.31	0.000**	Agree	6
6	LACPA members are knowledgeable about updates of International Ethics Standards.	3.91	0.71	78.2%	20.71	0.000**	Agree	2
7	LACPA members are knowledgeable about updates of various local legislations.	3.42	1.43	69.1%	4.74	0.000**	Agree	7
	All items	3.74	0.88	74.7%	13.59	0.000**	Agree	

In general, the mean of the sample’s responses to all items of the domain Continuous Learning and Training is 3.74 with a relative weight of 74.7%. Also, the value of the calculated ‘T’ test is 13.69, which is greater than the value of tabulated ‘T’ at the significance level 0.05. This means that there is an increase of statistical significance to the neutral level in the average responses of the members of the sample; consequently, the hypothesis of the study which states “LACPA members are committed to continuous learning and training which is required to practice forensic accounting” is accepted. The researchers believe that the LACPA conducts workshops and training sessions relative to the updates in IFRS and ISA from time to time. In addition, the Association continuously provides members with novelties related to the profession through email.

The fourth sub-hypothesis

This hypothesis states: “LACPA members have experience in accounting, auditing and law which is required to practice forensic accounting.”

Table 8. Experience in Accounting, Auditing and Law

	Items	Mean	Std. D	Relative weight	T-test	Sig.	Extent of agreement	Rank
1	LACPA members have enough experience to discover fraud.	4.06	0.69	81.2%	24.82	0.000**	Agree	5
2	LACPA members have enough experience in internal auditing systems.	4.62	0.65	92.3%	40.26	0.000**	Strongly agree	1
3	LACPA members have enough experience in different legal legislations.	3.49	0.93	69.9%	8.51	0.000**	Agree	8
4	LACPA members have enough experience in the current legal system in Lebanon.	3.71	0.98	74.1%	11.70	0.000**	Agree	7
5	LACPA members have enough experience in all international standards related to the profession.	4.11	0.71	82.2%	25.26	0.000**	Agree	4
6	LACPA members have enough experience in financial analysis and its methods.	3.79	0.51	75.7%	25.03	0.000**	Agree	6
7	LACPA members have enough experience in using modern systems related to auditing.	4.21	0.67	84.2%	29.18	0.000**	Strongly agree	2
8	LACPA members have enough experience in various accounting information systems in companies.	4.16	1.05	83.3%	17.85	0.000**	Agree	3
	All items	4.09	0.47	81.9%	37.47	0.000**	Agree	

In general, the mean of the sample's responses to all items of the domain Experience in Accounting, Auditing and Law is 4.09 with a relative weight of 81.9%. Also, the value of the calculated 'T' test is 37.47, which is greater than the value of tabulated 'T' at the significance level 0.05. This means that there is an increase of statistical significance to the neutral level in the average responses of the members of the sample; consequently, the hypothesis of the study which states "LACPA members have experience in accounting, auditing and law which is required to practice forensic accounting" is accepted. The researchers believe that LACPA members have good experience in accounting and auditing according to the sample responses. This is typical since all members of the Association should have a three-year training at accounting firms as a prerequisite to become members of the Association. Furthermore, the majority of the sample that responded has an experience of more than 10 years.

The fifth sub-hypothesis

This hypothesis states: "LACPA members have quick wits and analytical thinking which is required to practice forensic accounting."

Table 9. Availability of Quick Wits and Analytical Thinking

	Items	Mean	Std. D	Relative weight	T-test	Sig.	Extent of agreement	Rank
1	LACPA members are knowledgeable about the basics and principles of Psychology.	1.89	1.18	37.7%	15.20	0.000**	Disagree	9
2	LACPA members are able to detect criminal behavior.	2.46	1.72	49.29%	5.07	0.000**	Disagree	6
3	LACPA members are able to detect money laundering.	2.56	1.22	51.11%	5.83	0.000**	Disagree	5
4	LACPA members have personal means related to interrogation and financial investigation.	2.59	1.70	51.72%	3.90	0.000**	Disagree	4
5	LACPA members do not have the ability to deduce through posing specific, professional questions.	3.72	0.87	74.4%	13.37	0.000**	Agree	2
6	LACPA members have good knowledge about human behavior.	2.37	1.53	47.47%	6.65	0.000**	Disagree	7
7	LACPA members have the ability to solve disputes based on investigations and discussions.	3.74	0.88	74.7%	13.59	0.000**	Agree	1
8	LACPA members have fast responses to occurring incidents.	2.91	1.16	58.15%	1.25	0.099	Neutral	3
9	LACPA members have enough experience in human nature and body language.	2.35	1.93	47.07%	5.44	0.000**	Disagree	8
	All items	2.57	1.45	51.32%	4.79	0.000**	Disagree	

In general, the mean of the sample's responses to all items of the domain Availability of Quick Wits and Analytical Thinking is 2.57, which is less than the neutral level represented in the value 3. To test the significance of the decrease in the mean of the responses, it is noted that the value of T-test is 4.79, which is greater than the value of tabulated T. This denotes that the test is significant; consequently, the hypothesis of the study which states "LACPA members have quick wits and analytical thinking which is required to practice forensic accounting" is rejected. The researchers noticed that this domain has the lowest acceptance among the sample responses. This may be because LACPA members need observation, analytical and deductive skills, in addition to special knowledge of body language and human nature, all of which require special knowledge and training.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

As noted in the literature review, most of the studies examined the general term and practices of forensic accounting, in addition to services that the profession provides. However, the current study examines the extent of availability of skills necessary for LACPA members to practice forensic accounting.

Based on the analysis above, the research rendered the following results:

1. LACPA members have professional ethics.
2. LACPA members have leadership skills.
3. LACPA members are committed to continuous learning and training.
4. LACPA members have experience in accounting, auditing and law.
5. LACPA members do not have quick wits and analytical thinking.

Based on the above results, the researchers recommend that the LACPA conduct specialized workshops and continuous training programs for the members to prepare them to practice forensic accounting. Basically, the workshops should include one that supplies enough knowledge in basics and principles of Psychology. This may help LACPA members acquire knowledge about human behavior and body language, which can help them detect criminal behavior through scientific methods to investigate, analyze and arrive at conclusions. Other workshops should include practice on monitoring transactions across multiple channels, which help in detecting criminal activity such as money laundering, illegal financing and other activities. The LACPA should also conduct workshops to help members gain personal means related to interrogation and financial investigation, which will add to the members' ability to deduce through posing specific, professional questions. This supports the LACPA members' ability to solve disputes based on investigations and discussions. The government can participate with the LACPA in sending a number of the LACPA members to foreign countries that are considered friends to have them trained by forensic accountants. This practical training can help LACPA members acquire more knowledge about various situations that might arise as investigations are in process, which results in getting fast responses to occurring incidents.

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