

BUSINESS REVIEW



VOLUNTARY NON-FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE AND ITS IMPACT ON CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE IRAQ STOCK EXCHANGE

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ARTICLE INFO	<u>ABSTRACT</u>		
Article history:	Purpose: This Study aims to test the impact of voluntary non-financial disclosure on		
Received 31 January 2023	corporate environmental responsibility, In other words, examining the relationship between voluntary non-financial disclosure and corporate environmental responsibility.		
Accepted 28 April 2023	Theoretical framework. The theoretical aspect of this study was covered by previous		
Keywords:	Theoretical framework: The theoretical aspect of this study was covered by previous studies published in international journals related to voluntary non-financial disclosure and corporate environmental responsibility.		
Voluntarynon-Financial Disclosure; Corporate Environmental Responsibility; Iraq Stock Exchange.	Design/methodology/approach: The main tool for data collection was the questionnaire, by surveying the opinions of 211 CEOs, certified accountants and academics In the Iraq Stock Exchange, the statistical program SPSS was used to analyze this data.		
	Finding: The results showed that voluntary non-financial disclosure has a positive effect on encouraging Companies to disclose environmental information and increase their responsibility in this direction.		
OPEN DATA OPEN MATERIALS	Research, Practical & Social implications: This study explains the environmental responsibility of companies and clarifies the role of companies in addressing environmental issues as they have the economic and human capabilities to face these issues. This study also helps direct the attention of decision makers and users of		

Originality: To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first of its kind at the local level, which discusses the impact of voluntary non-financial disclosure of companies listed on the Iraq Stock Exchange on the environmental responsibility of these companies.

financial reports towards environmental issues by increasing voluntary non-financial

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DIVULGAÇÃO NÃO FINANCEIRA VOLUNTÁRIA E SEU IMPACTO NA RESPONSABILIDADE AMBIENTAL CORPORATIVA NA BOLSA DE VALORES DO IRAQUE

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este estudo tem como objetivo testar o impacto da divulgação não financeira voluntária na responsabilidade ambiental corporativa, ou seja, examinar a relação entre a divulgação não financeira voluntária e a responsabilidade ambiental corporativa.

Referencial teórico: O aspecto teórico deste estudo foi coberto por estudos anteriores publicados em periódicos internacionais relacionados à divulgação voluntária não financeira e responsabilidade ambiental corporativa.

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Voluntary Non-Financial Disclosure and its Impact on Corporate Environmental Responsibility in the Iraq Stock Exchange

Desenho/metodologia/abordagem: A principal ferramenta para coleta de dados foi o questionário, por meio do levantamento das opiniões de 211 CEOs, contadores certificados e acadêmicos. Na Bolsa de Valores do Iraque, o programa estatístico SPSS foi usado para analisar esses dados.

Constatação: Os resultados mostraram que a divulgação não financeira voluntária tem um efeito positivo em incentivar as empresas a divulgar informações ambientais e aumentar sua responsabilidade nesse sentido.

Pesquisa, implicações práticas e sociais: Este estudo explica a responsabilidade ambiental das empresas e esclarece o papel das empresas na abordagem de questões ambientais, pois possuem as capacidades econômicas e humanas para enfrentar essas questões. Este estudo também ajuda a direcionar a atenção dos tomadores de decisão e usuários de relatórios financeiros para questões ambientais, aumentando a divulgação voluntária não financeira. Originalidade: Até onde sabemos, este estudo é o primeiro desse tipo em nível local, que discute o impacto da divulgação não financeira voluntária de empresas listadas na Bolsa de Valores do Iraque sobre a responsabilidade ambiental dessas empresas.

Palavras-chave: Divulgação não Financeira Voluntária, Responsabilidade Ambiental Corporativa, Bolsa de Valores do Iraque.

DIVULGACIÓN NO FINANCIERA VOLUNTARIA Y SU IMPACTO EN LA RESPONSABILIDAD AMBIENTAL CORPORATIVA EN LA BOLSA DE VALORES DE IRAQ

RESUMEN

Propósito: Este estudio tiene como objetivo probar el impacto de la divulgación no financiera voluntaria en la responsabilidad ambiental corporativa. En otras palabras, examinar la relación entre la divulgación no financiera voluntaria y la responsabilidad ambiental corporativa.

Marco teórico: El aspecto teórico de este estudio fue cubierto por estudios previos publicados en revistas internacionales relacionados con la divulgación no financiera voluntaria y la responsabilidad ambiental empresarial.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque: La principal herramienta para la recopilación de datos fue el cuestionario, encuestando las opiniones de 211 directores ejecutivos, contadores certificados y académicos. En la Bolsa de Valores de Irak, se utilizó el programa estadístico SPSS para analizar estos datos.

Hallazgo: Los resultados mostraron que la divulgación no financiera voluntaria tiene un efecto positivo para alentar a las empresas a divulgar información ambiental y aumentar su responsabilidad en esta dirección.

Implicaciones de investigación, prácticas y sociales: este estudio explica la responsabilidad ambiental de las empresas y aclara el papel de las empresas al abordar los problemas ambientales, ya que tienen las capacidades económicas y humanas para enfrentar estos problemas. Este estudio también ayuda a dirigir la atención de los tomadores de decisiones y los usuarios de los informes financieros hacia las cuestiones ambientales mediante el aumento de la divulgación no financiera voluntaria.

Originalidad: Hasta donde sabemos, este estudio es el primero de su tipo a nivel local, que analiza el impacto de la divulgación no financiera voluntaria de las empresas que cotizan en la Bolsa de Valores de Irak sobre la responsabilidad ambiental de estas empresas.

Palabras clave: Divulgación Voluntaria no Financiera, Responsabilidad Ambiental Corporativa, Bolsa de Valores de Irak.

INTRODUCTION

Typically, two contrasting views are put forward With respect to the corporate environmental reporting (CER) and its appropriateness as a representation of the environmental performance of a firm, (Cormier & Magnan, 2015). On the one hand, CER can provide a means for executives to communicate relevant and reliable information about the underlying environmental activities and performance of a company to stakeholders in the company particularly financial ones such as analysts or investors, (Braam, Uit De Weerd, Hauck &

Huijbregts, 2016). But at the other hand, through impression management, CER may portray an opportunistic maneuver by executives trying to seek legitimacy for the company's environmental management, (Wei, 2020). Reconciling these findings is based on an integration of both the economic and legitimacy perspectives, (Wang, 2016). The management of a company decides the policy for environmental transparency, (Serra et al., 2022). taking into account both capital markets and non-financial stakeholders, (Brockhaus, Fawcett, Knemeyer, & Fawcett, 2017). Hence, one of the objectives of management is to communicate knowledge that eliminates information asymmetry with the actors in capital markets, financial analysts, (Turki, Wali, & Boujelbene, 2016).

A primary CER solution to public policy relies on accountability by requiring the disclosure. Of non-financial .information. For starters, the European Union (EU) recently implemented a new Directive (2014/95 / EU) which makes non-financial disclosure (NFD) mandatory for the largest European corporations (Kinderman, forthcoming); eu members had to transpose this into their national legislation. Company self-regulation on its own may result in major information asymmetries, (Hess, 2014), rendering it difficult for shareholders to assess whether or not managers are genuinely working in their best interests. As a consequence, certain moral behavior may be undervalued and reckless overvalued, (Lopatta, Buchholz, & Kaspereit, 2016). Governments utilize legislation that promote greater openness to create confidence and enhance the knowledge accessible to stakeholders regarding Corporate environmental practices expecting that they in exchange can successfully reward or sanction companies for their business actions as customers buyers workers, etc. NFD law usually outlines the details companies ought to report, but also allows firms complete control about the essence of environmentally 'good' corporate practices, (Jackson, Bartosch, Avetisyan, Kinderman, & Knudsen, 2020). For illustration, it typically does not suggest additional reporting forms nor does it allow an external auditor to validate them. Although voluntary NFD have become common, relatively little work has been .carried out into their impact on CER operations, (Szadziewska, Spigarska, & Majerowska, 2018).

This paper therefore raises the following. study question: How. does a new NFD policy influence the environmental components of the CER operations of companies? They concentrate on the environmental aspect of ethical and unethical business practices being impacted by voluntary NFD, (De Luca & De Luca, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous work has explored the relationship between optional and compulsory reporting, (Einhorn, 2005), indicating that optional financial disclosure may offer valuable transparency to investors, (Cohen, Holder-Webb, Nath, & Wood, 2011). (Ball & Shivakumar, 2008) Argue that mandatory financial reports are not the main source of timeously new information, and, (Beyer, Cohen, Lys, & Walther, 2010) find, that mandatory earnings and. SEC filings account for (12%) of total. stock price movement Anecdotal evidence suggests investors use valuable voluntary disclosures.and compulsory disclosures to verify voluntary disclosures, (Giannarakis, Konteos, & Sariannidis, 2014). Scientific work further underpins the significance of the partnership between compulsory and voluntary disclosures, (Bertomeu & Magee, 2015). On the one hand, voluntary disclosures. can provide private information for existing competitors and potential entrants, (Almshabbak & Chouaibi, 2023) as well as decrease the competitiveness and profitability of the firm, described as proprietary costs by (Prencipe, 2004). On the other side, by reducing information asymmetry, voluntary transparency will provide advantages for both investors and management, (e.g., Boone & White, 2015;Cho, Lee, & Pfeiffer, 2013;Cormier, Ledoux, Magnan, & Aerts, 2010).

The accountingand financeliterature, in discussing administrative opportunities for voluntary reporting, focuses on financial voluntary reports of management earnings estimates (MEF) and non-financial voluntary environmental, social and governance (ESG) sustainability, (Rezaee, 2016). (Healy & Palepu, 2001: 425) Arguing that "The extent to which voluntary transparency mitigates assets misallocation on the stock market determines the degree to which information is reliable." Unlike financial voluntary MEF reports which will subsequently be backed up by auditors' facts and which are sometimes viewed as equivalent to compulsory financial statements, auditors often neglect to validate voluntary non-financial reports, (Ball, Jayaraman, & Shivakumaretal, 2012), particularly environmental records. Therefore, if they tend to be fantastic ex post, management has more freedom to choose the form, material, and timing of these disclosures without carrying a heavy risk of disclosure, (Cheng, Luo, & Yue, 2013).

The voluntary disclosure decision of a company is the product of a compromise between the inherent incentives and. disincentives for disclosure, (Li & Yang, 2016). Incentives and voluntary disclosure policies of companies have been debated extensively and inconclusively in the literature One study source consists of many studies analyzing management opportunities to make voluntary transparency, including reducing operating expenses, (Nelson & Shrimali,

2014), minimizing agency costs and information asymmetries, (Guariglia & Yang, 2016) and intelligence asymmetries and releasing confidential details, (Cormier et al., 2010). Another stream is papers relating to the link between voluntary disclosures and the earnings quality, (Alsaadi, Ebrahim, & Jaafar, 2017; Ji, Lu, & Qu, 2017; Pyo & Lee, 2013), These studies show that voluntary disclosure is. a substitute for quality of earnings, and suggest that companies with a lower quality of earnings tend to disclose more information Other research says companies with higher income levels appear to reveal more detail, (Di Giuli & Kostovetsky, 2014; Lee & Kim, 2009). Through exploring the connection between voluntary non-financial disclosures environmental responsibility as illustrated in the segment below, we extend prior study.

Corporate environmental malfeasance is widely recognized as a misbehavior that puts the public at risk, infringes the expectations of behavioral environmental standards, and generally endangers public health or environmental stability, (Du, 2015). These misconducts often include accidents related to corporate environmental concerns, such as the release or possible future release into the air, land, or water of petroleum, radioactive materials, or dangerous materials, (Greve, Palmer, & Pozner, 2010). Corporate environmental protection and conservation activities among all economic actors have become a major problem over the past few years, particularly after the Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997, (Bruno & Déjean, 2007). As a result, the expanded visibility has triggered the rise of environmental reporting. Environmental information provided by companies is meant to provide an analysis of these problems and their underlying risks coupled with a measure of the level of company environmental effectiveness, (Déjean & Martinez, 2009).

In France, the act on new economic regulations (NER), adopted on May 15, 2001, defined standards for transparency and imposes that all publicly listed firms provide a description of the social and environmental consequences of their operations in their annual reports. NER Law Enforcement Decree No. 2002-221 lists the categories of social and environmental information needed, thus defining the initial criteria for a social reporting process which serves as an instrument for corporate environmental and social achievements, (Montr, Mahugnon, Sciences, & Zinsou, 2013). Public participation has been expressed in a number of projects such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), which seeks to establish and facilitate a popular structure for reporting on corporate economic, environmental and social success and more broadly, every governmental or non-governmental organization since its creation in 1997, (Marimon, Alonso-Almeida, Rodríguez, & Cortez Alejandro, 2012).

In this context it is worth knowing why certain companies voluntarily publish information about the environment. In other terms, what motivates these companies who report them? Thus recognizing these motives contributes to the quest for influencing causes, it also contributes to the analysis into the effects into voluntary disclosure.

First, about the regulation, Voluntary NFD is expected to improve firms' acceptance of CER, (Jackson, Bartosch, & Avetisyan, 2017). Several surveys have shown that companies in reaction to NFD legislation have substantially expanded their CER operations, (Mion & Adaui, 2019; Nilsen & Ellingsen, 2015; Evangelinos & Skouloudis, 2014). Because companies will have, to disclose certain types of activities or compare their disclosed activities with peer firms, adoption of CER will tend to increase the scope of CER activities in more issues, (Kim, Park, & Ryu, 2017). We argue, therefore that disclosure may increase rigor by having varying effects on firms depending on their previous level of CER activity Companies are unlikely to maintain very low Engagement levels with CER in the face of NFD regulation, since greater regulation will place them under greater scrutiny compared to competitor firms By highlighting the gap in their activities, transparency can induce behavioral changes, especially among companies with low CER levels relative to their peers, (Braam et al., 2016). But at the other hand, as a result of Voluntary Disclosure, firms with higher CER levels will be less likely to modify their CER commitment, (Plumlee, Brown, Hayes, & Marshall, 2015). Thus, NFD regulation can make it difficult for companies with a very low sense of responsibility to ignore CER issues as they did under self-regulation, thus Increasing rigor or reducing complacency around CER.

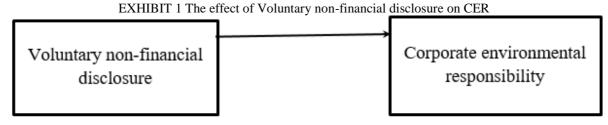
EXPLORING CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY IN IRAQ

Environmental responsibility of companies has become one of the biggest challenges facing the economic and social systems of developing countries, especially Iraq. The high volume of industrial activities, especially the oil industry, contributed directly to environmental pollution, which included water, air, soil and noise, which led to the imbalance of components and elements of the ecosystem. Therefore, there is a need to disclose the environmental responsibility of companies within the financial statements issued by them for the purpose of determining the contribution of these companies in reducing environmental problems. There is a need to assess this problem and bridge the research gap in this area. This is especially necessary in the ill-considered parts of the world, such as Iraq.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

Based on what was presented from the previous literature, and in order to address the problem of the study, we put the following hypothesis:

H: Voluntary non-financial disclosure regulation will lead to a larger increase in the level of CER activity (increasing stringency/reducing complacency).



Source: prepared by the authores (2023)

In response to these issues, the researchers distributed 250 questionnaires to a randomly chosen sample that included executives, certified accountants, and academics throughout Iraq. Out of 250 questionnaires, 211 were returned with correct answers, resulting in a 84% response rate. Respondents' characteristics were presented in Exhibit 2.

Table 1. Respondent demographics

	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Age	>30	40	19
	30 to <40	86	40.5
	40 to <50	40	19
	50 or more	45	21.5
	Total	211	100
Educational level	Bachelor	40	19
	Master	100	47.7
	PhD	71	33.3
	Total	211	100
Years of experience	>5 years	60	28.6
	5–10	60	28.6
	10–15	20	9.5
	15–20	20	9.5
	<20	51	23.8
	Total	211	100
Specialization	accounting	171	81
•	Business Administration	20	9.5
	Economic	20	9.5
	Total	211	100

Source: prepared by the authores (2023)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher used the statistical program (SPSS vr. 24), and we obtained the following results, which were divided into two parts. The first section included descriptive statistics and the characteristics of the study variables, and the second section included the analytical statistics of the questionnaire form to determine the directions of the sample answers, and the researcher relied on analyzing the correlation and impact relationships between the study variables, The study also included the use of (Cronbach's alpha coefficients to test the reliability and validity of the resolution, linear regression method, correlation, t-test, F-test and a set of illustrative tables).

To measure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, the researcher used the Alpha Cronbach parameter whose value lies between zero and the correct one, so that if the value is zero, this is evidence of the instability of the questionnaire and its paragraphs, and therefore it has no ability to measure what it was designed for, but if the value is equal to the correct one, that is evidence The existence of complete stability of the resolution, and the values ranging from zero to one indicate the level of stability and reliability of the questionnaire, and from it we conclude the possibility of generalizing the results obtained from the sample to the studied community, and thus the questionnaire is able to measure what was set for it and the following table includes the values of the Alpha Cronbach parameter:

Table 2. Values of alpha Cronbach coefficients

	Scale Mean If	Scale Variance if Item	Corrected Item-Total	Cronbach's Alpha if Item
	Item Deleted	Deleted	Correlation	Deleted
NFD1	89.42	65.266	.310	.781
NFD2	90.28	62.060	.298	.784
NFD3	89.57	63.493	.407	.776
NFD4	89.83	62.073	.376	.777
NFD5	89.76	64.086	.252	.785
NFD6	89.49	64.738	.295	.782
NFD7	89.59	67.630	.088	.791
NFD8	89.64	65.864	.182	.788
NFD10	89.28	66.547	.167	.788
NFD	89.64	64.206	.804	.771
CER1	89.23	64.546	.305	.781
CER2	90.42	61.331	.349	.780
CER3	88.97	65.904	.338	.781
CER4	89.33	62.966	.506	.772
CER5	89.30	62.385	.617	.768
CER6	89.21	64.178	.385	.777
CER7	90.33	65.759	.129	.794
CER8	89.38	62.752	.447	.773
CER9	90.16	63.346	.247	.787
CER10	89.35	65.301	.284	.782
CER11	89.40	61.808	.491	.771
CER12	89.21	64.250	.427	.776

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CER	89.52	63.150	.888	.767	

Source: prepared by the authores (2023)

Determine the direction of the sample answers:

Table 3. General statistical indicators of NFD

	Mean	Std. Deviation
NFD1	4.05	.697
NFD2	3.19	1.215
NFD3	3.90	.790
NFD4	3.64	1.032
NFD5	3.71	1.019
NFD6	3.98	.811
NFD7	3.88	.739
NFD8	3.83	.881
NFD9	3.95	.764
NFD10	4.19	.773
Valid N (listwise)		

Source: prepared by the authores (2023)

It is clear from the table that the second paragraph ranked first in terms of the order of relative importance, while the fourth paragraph came in the second place in terms of the order of relative importance, and the fifth paragraph came in the third place in terms of the order of relative importance, while the rest of the paragraphs were close to some extent in terms of relative importance For respondents.

Table 4. General statistical indicators of CER

	Mean	Std. Deviation
CER1	4.24	.821
CER2	3.05	1.188
CER3	4.50	.552
CER4	4.14	.718
CER5	4.17	.660
CER6	4.26	.734
CER7	3.14	1.095
CER8	4.10	.821
CER9	3.31	1.158
CER10	4.12	.739
CER11	4.07	.867
CER12	4.26	.665
CER		
Valid N (listwise)		

Source: prepared by the authores (2023)

It is clear from the table that the second paragraph came in the first place in terms of the order of relative importance, while the ninth paragraph came in the second place in terms of the order of importance, while the seventh paragraph came in the third place in terms of the order

of relative importance, while the other paragraphs were close in terms of importance Relative to the respondents.

Testing the Hypothesis

The researcher here tested the main hypothesis of the research related to the effect of the NFD, in the variable the CER.

The researcher prepared Table No. (5), which shows a function calculation of the NFD on the CER:

Table 5. function calculation of the NFD on the CER

		Tuon	3. Tanetion care	aration o	1 1110 1 11 12 1	on the CER		
R ²	Corrected R ²	The value of the regression parameter	The computed t value	Sig.	Sig. T	The computed F value	Sig.	Sig. f
75%	75%	0.76	12.664	0.000	Sig level of 5%	160.378	0.000	Sig level of 5%

Source: prepared by the authores (2023)

Through Table No. 5, the value of the determination coefficient was 0.75 and the corrected determination coefficient is 0.75. This means that the model of the effect of the NFD on the CER has explained the amount of 75% of the total deviations and the remainder has been explained from other variables not included in studying.

The results of Table No. 5 showed that the effect parameter amounted to 0.76 and the value of its t-test was 12.664 and it was a significant function at the level of significance of 5%, and the value of F computed was 160.378 and it was a significant function at the level of significance of 5%, therefore we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. That is, there is a statistically significant effect of the NFD on the CER, in other words, the increase in the NFD by one unit leads to an increase in the CER by 0.76.

CONCLUSION

Not only should companies operating in the market be successful, but they should also be environmentally and socially responsible. In this procedure, non-financial reporting plays an important role. This engagement approach encourages companies to be accountable, democratic and open to their stakeholders. Non-financial information submitted by businesses should, however, be available, reliable and comparable. To date, the lack of standardized and compulsory non-financial reporting requirements in Iraq has caused this type of information to differ in shape, scope and consistency.

As the optional non-financial disclosure in the financial reports increases the credibility of the information in the financial reports, improves the decision-making process, and also enables the prediction of environmental risks, as Iraqi companies must be encouraged to non-financial optional disclosure, especially with regard to environmental issues due to the country's suffering Major environmental problems.

The results of this study show that voluntary non-financial disclosure can have an impact on increasing the environmental responsibility of companies, and this affects encouraging investors and improving the relationship with stakeholders by increasing confidence in the information provided by companies, despite the need for more work on this. the field.

This study indicates that, in practical and theoretical terms, researchers need to pay more attention to interacting with environmental problems and their accounting effects on corporate performance. Likewise, any future analyzes must take into account the positive results that the optional non-financial disclosure and corporate environmental and social responsibility can generate in under appropriate conditions.

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