

Disclosure of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Context of Social Cost and Benefit Reports

الإفصاح عن المسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات في سياق تقارير التكلفة والمنافع الاجتماعية

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المستخلص

تعتبر محاسبة المسؤولية الاجتماعية أحدث مراحل تطور المحاسبة وقد ظهر هذا التطور نتيجة زيادة حجم وقرارات الشركات التي لها تأثير مالي واقتصادي واجتماعي وواسع النطاق مما أدى إلى الاهتمام بها من قبل المنظمات والجمعيات المحاسبية والمهنية والأكاديمية. الخ، ومن هنا ما كان الإطار المفاهيمي المحاسبي يعاني من قصور لعدم قدرته على تقديم إجابات محددة لعدة مشاكل يواجهها المحاسب مثل قياس التكلفة والعائد الاجتماعي، وهو السؤال الرئيسي الذي يطرح نفسه وتتمثل المشكلة في توافر أدوات قياس محاسبية تعتمد عليها في قياس التكاليف والمنافع الاجتماعية تساعد في توفير المعلومات للجهات المعنية لضمان عملية تقييم شامل للمجتمع وحالة مستوى الأداء الاجتماعي الذي يحققه المشروع.

الكلمات الافتتاحية: المسؤولية الاجتماعية، المحاسبة الاجتماعية الأداء الاجتماعي

Abstract

Social responsibility Accounting is considered the latest stage of development of accounting and has emerged this development as a result of the increase in the size and the decisions of companies that have a financial impact, economic, social, and large-scale, leading to attention by organizations, associations accounting and professional, academic..etc, hence what was the conceptual accounting framework suffers from shortcomings of his inability to provide specific answers to several problems faced by the accountant, such as measuring the cost and social return, the main question of the problem is the availability of accounting measurement tools based on it in the measurement of costs and social benefits that help provide information to the parties concerned to ensure a process of a comprehensive assessment of the society and the state of the level of social performance achieved by the project.

Keywords: social responsibility, social accounting, social performance.

1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a crucial facet of corporate governance in today's commercial environment. Bussineess are supposed to have significant impacts on society and it is necessary to recognize that making benefits is not their fundamental objective. Concerning this paradigm change, a great emphasis on social cost and benefits reports appear as a means of corporate social responsibility disclosure. Recently, companies outline their CSR policies depending on comprehensive reports to illustrate their commitment to social responsibility and sustainable improvement. Many information on the essential effects of bussiness processes on the the social and environmental activities are provided in the mentioned reports. Thus, they are regarded as plain instrument for stakeholders to determine the advantages and disadvantages of a

business process. The current investigation aims to study the main complexities of CSR disclosure concerning social cost and benefit reports. In addition to investigating the reasons, challenges, and results of these disclosures, the changing dynamics between corporations and society are also considered in this work. Furthermore, many case studies and relevant literature are clarified for identifying trends and best practices which may assist businesses in enhancing their social responsibility declarations. The role of corporate transparency in supporting sustainable business practices and having positive social effects is also taken into consideration. The following sections are concerned with the theoretical backgrounds, experimental part, practical implications, and results of Corporate Social Responsibility regarding social cost and benefits reports.

2. Research Problem

Disclosure of social responsibility is more necessary than ever. Determining measurement standards and assessing a company's social impact are challenging challenges, notwithstanding the growing emphasis. Firms publish a rising number of social performance reports; governments offer guidelines for firms to follow when preparing social reports; rating agencies categorize enterprises; and companies construct evaluation instruments by standards that meet their objectives. Despite these efforts, stakeholders in financial reports are dissatisfied and seek more information about how institutions affect society and how they balance that influence with social needs. In this situation, the following concern could be expressed: To what extent is the conceptual framework appropriate for illuminating social responsibility?

3. The importance and objectives of research

For various reasons and to achieve several goals, research on the disclosure of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the context of social cost and benefit is essential.

- Research plays a crucial role in comprehending the expectations of different stakeholders, including investors, customers, employees, communities, and regulatory agencies, concerning corporate social responsibility (CSR) disclosures. Companies can effectively satisfy stakeholder expectations by customizing their CSR reporting to align with their needs and preferences.
- Improving Accountability and openness: Research aids in determining the degree of accountability and openness in CSR reporting procedures. Enhancing stakeholders' trust and confidence in the company's operations is achieved by transparent disclosure of CSR efforts and their impact on social and environmental issues.
- Assessing Societal Costs and Benefits: Research attempts to assess the societal costs and advantages of corporate social responsibility programs. Researchers can evaluate the total effects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on society and the environment by examining their results, which include community development, environmental conservation, and ethical business practices.

4. Conceptual framework for social responsibility accounting

4.1 The concept of social responsibility accounting

There has been a variety of opinions and views regarding social responsibility accounting, but there is a definition that can be a comprehensive framework, referring to those activities that adopt the measurement and analysis of the social performance of enterprises and the communication of such information to groups and competent authorities to assist them in the decision-making process and evaluate the social performance of those organizations. This definition highlights the interest of social accounting in the functions of measuring the social performance of organizations and reporting on the results of the measurement to ensure an assessment of the social performance of any organization by society[1].

4.2 Social Accounting Objectives

The conceptual framework indicates that several objectives of social accounting can be summarized as follows:

- A. Identification and measurement of the net social contribution of the enterprise, which includes not only a set of special and internal costs and benefits of the enterprise, but also a set of external social costs and benefits that have an impact on a wide range of social groups, and this objective is linked to the accounting function [2].
- B. Assessing the social performance of the enterprise by determining whether the enterprise's strategy and objectives are compatible with social priorities on the one hand and the enterprise's ambition for individuals to achieve a reasonable percentage of profits on the other. The relationship between the performance of economic business organizations and social welfare is the basis for this objective of social accounting and is also linked to the accounting function [3].
- C. The disclosure of the activities of the Foundation, which have social effects that can be represented by decisions of the Foundation on the education and health of workers, environmental pollution, and consumption of resources, requires the provision of appropriate data on the social performance of the Foundation and the extent to which it contributes to the achievement of social objectives, as well as to the provision of such data to both internal and external beneficiaries, to rationalize private and public decisions on the direction and optimal space for social activities, both from the user's point of view and from the community's point of view. This objective is linked to the accounting communication function [4].

4.2.1 Criteria for distinguishing between social and economic activities

Accounting literature indicates that there are no activities that are considered to be within the scope of social accounting and others that do not fall within that scope, but there are two criteria for distinguishing between social and economic activities: **The first criterion** relates to the legal obligation of activity. Social activities are those carried out voluntarily by the enterprise as part of its obligations to society, and it is therefore the status of choice or obligation that determines the nature of the activity as to whether it is social or not; **The second criterion** is the activity itself, i.e. that social activities cover all activities of a social nature and not only those carried out voluntarily by the organization [5].

4.2.2 Areas of Social Accounting

The Social Performance Accounting Committee has been designated by the National Society of Accountants of America (NAAA). Four areas of social performance are:

- The interaction of organizations with the community;
- Contribution to human resources development;
- To contribute to the development of natural and environmental resources;
- upgrading the quality of goods and services;

The American Institute of Chartered Accountants (AICPA) has also designated a range of areas for social performance:

- Environment;
- Non-renewable resources;
- Human resources;
- Suppliers;
- Clients;
- Society.

The American Accounting Association (AAA), has conducted a field study of a group of companies adopting social lists and reports to identify the basis of measurement and disclosure. It has produced a report on five areas of social performance:

- Environmental control;
- Employment of minorities;
- Workers;
- Improving the product;
- Community service.

5. Criteria for Measuring Social Performance

Many accountants, both professional and academic, almost agree that the General Accounting Standards developed by the American Society of Accountants in 1963 and published in 1966 are the best method. On this basis, the proposed social standards are [6]:

- A. Validity criterion: By this standard, accounting data and information on social activity must be closely linked to the objective of its use, and social reports should reflect the social impact of activities to be measured transparently and reliably by all stakeholders and social beneficiaries within appropriate time frames and in a manner that meets the desired targets of the numbers of social lists.
- B. The non-discrimination standard: The content of this standard includes a reference to the need for clear and transparent fact-finding and reporting, so as not to involve any bias in inclusion or the use of measurement methods by which excellence is manifest and to rely on an objective method of accounting for both costs and social returns.
- C. The criterion of proportionality: this criterion emphasizes the need to indicate the reasons why social objectives are being achieved within the framework of reaching the degree of public persuasion and satisfying the need of social information seekers, as well as the right of society to know the social consequences of the organization's activity.
- D. Historical social cost criterion: This standard (historic cost principle) is comparable to that of accounting for economic activity. Despite criticism of this standard, however, in the context of social performance accounting, there is a potential for increasing the relevance of this standard to its objectivity and comparability.
- E. social return standard: In the area of social accounting, this standard is the appropriate alternative to (the principle of revenue realization) financial accounting, where it is expanded to include social returns that are not directly monetized and do not have a market price.
- F. The criterion for matching social returns with the costs caused by them: this criterion corresponds to it (the principle of matching revenues with costs) in financial accounting, meaning that the social returns of each social activity in each area of social responsibility are offset by the cost resulting from this return and extended to modern methods of social measurement or social costs

6. Measuring the Social Performance of the Organization

6.1 Social Responsibility Costs

6.1.1 Concept of social costs

Researchers' views differ in defining the concept of social costs, which, in their opinion [7] represent the (benefit) sacrifice of society in the form of depleted (additional) resources by the economic unit as a result of its socially influential transactions.

The social costs [8] are considered to represent what is being spent (or should be spent) to remove the damage that may be caused by the economic unit's activity, such as pollution.

PESQUEUX & MARTORY is seen as the social costs resulting from the negative behavior of employees as a result of the failure to provide suitable working conditions and the expenses of the establishment to improve those conditions, and are hidden costs that do not appear as a distinct group alone in the cost or outcome accounts [9].

In the context of research into the concept of social costs, a fundamental problem facing accounting could be the difference between an accounting and an economic point of view in measuring this type of cost as follows: [10]

A. Accounting point:

in its view, the social cost refers only to the amounts spent by the enterprise as a result of the fulfillment of its social responsibilities in an optional or mandatory form and which cannot add any benefit to the economic return. Within this framework, the actual cost of the measure is essentially based on that view.

B. Economic point of view:

The economic point of view is that the social cost is all the damage to society as a result of the enterprise's economic activity.

6.2 Measurement of social returns

Many studies and research have been concerned with social costs, with a formality in determining social returns. This is an obstacle to social accounting and disclosure. For example, how can a monetary value be valued for the benefit of society as a result of an enterprise's afforestation of the surrounding area?

Many social returns are made to parties outside the institution. Social activities give rise to benefits for society rather than for the enterprise, as well as the difficulty of measuring them in cash. For example, how to measure or estimate a monetary value for the benefit of society as a result of the reduction of air pollution caused by the enterprise's operating operations.

On the assumption that the institution will be able to carry out its social activities abroad, which is the social acceptance of the institution by society, it is difficult to assess a monetary value for such admission, on the one hand, and it is incompatible with the policy of caution and caution, on the other hand, such as the realization of a good impression of the enterprise in the community, where it is difficult to assess a monetary value of this good impression

6.3 Accounting for social performance

Accounting for social performance represents the situation in which an enterprise can inform society of its different categories, particularly beneficiaries, about its various activities with social content. Financial lists or reports attached to them are a tool for achieving this. Accounting disclosure must be one of the following forms [11]:

a. Adequate disclosure:

In other words, the financial lists, notes, and additional information annexed thereto should include all available information concerning the Organization to avoid misleading interested parties of the Organization and after adequate disclosure of one of the main principles for the preparation of the financial statements.

b. Full disclosure:

In other words, it includes disclosure of all available accounting information, which means that information is shown in large quantities, resulting in the dumping of information that may not be required by the users of the financial statements.

c. Fair disclosure:

It is the disclosure of information in such a way as to ensure that it reaches all beneficiaries without bias.

7. Disclosure of social responsibility accounting**7.1 Concept and models for accounting disclosure of social responsibility costs**

Burke is exposed to the definition of social disclosure, indicating that it presents data on the social activity of the economic unit in a way that enables the social performance of the unit to be assessed [12].

Input to measure both elements of social costs and benefits (cost and return)

A- Estes model provides a model called the Social Impact List, which discloses both the social costs and benefits of reaching the net deficit or social surplus of the economic unit. Within the framework of this model, the social benefits consist of every social dividend or component of society and are reflected in economic or non-economic impacts internally or externally, whether or not paid for. The social costs under this model are the cost or sacrifice that entails a burden on society or one of its components and the reflections that have an economic or non-economic impact internally or externally, whether or not the economic unit pays for it. It is to be noted that Estes has taken the broad concept (the point of view of economic unity and society together) in its exposure to elements of both social costs and activities, and Estes points out that social benefits can be measured by any social dividend or component of society [13]. The **Estes model** can be evaluated on the basis proposed as follows:

- **Disclosure area:** this model is comprehensive in that it includes the disclosure of elements of social costs and benefits from a society's point of view, but it has not defined a classification of areas for social activities.
- **Disclosure method:** the model takes a monetary measurement of each of the elements of social costs and benefits based on different bases based on historical cost, current cost, and replacement cost in a single list.
- **Disclosure results:** the model followed a financial disclosure method in the form of a list that is separate from the traditional financial lists, presenting the values of both social costs and benefits up to the net contribution - social deficit or surplus from the point of view of society. In assessing this model, the researcher believes that the model proposed by Estes is comprehensive and takes into account the elements of social costs and benefits and that one of the most important things that can be taken into account is the difficulty of applying it in practice and of measuring some of its elements. For example, how pollution is measured financially as a social cost, and how the external benefits of the project are measured in monetary terms.

B-Seadler model Seidler provides two models of social performance disclosure, the first one concerned with non-profit economic units, the second one focused on profit-oriented economic units and called the two models the Social Income Report, the aim of which is to identify the net income of the social deficit. The **Seadler model** can be evaluated on the basis proposed as follows:

- **Disclosure area:** as the model was presented to an American university, the model did not define a classification of areas of social activity and merely expressed them in social costs and benefits.

- **Disclosure method:** the model followed the method of monetary measurement in the form of a comparison of economic and social performance.
- **Disclosure results:** the model followed a method of financial disclosure to compare elements of social costs and benefits, using the concept of both financial accounting to reflect economic performance and social accounting to reflect social performance.

Within the context of the evaluation of this model, the researcher believes that this model can be applied in particular to universities, and educational institutions that are generally not for profit, measure social benefits through the net present value of the added income, and combine the concept of both financial accounting and social accounting (comparable).

C-Clark Abt model Abt offers a social responsibility disclosure model in the form of a social income list and a social finance center list that is independent of traditional financial lists. Abt applied this model to a company headed by an administrative consulting firm from 1971 until 1973. However, the following year, it developed its model by integrating the economic and social system into two consolidated lists (a socio-economic income list and a list of an economic and social financial center) to link economic and social activities [14]. The **Clark Abt model** can be evaluated on the basis proposed as follows:

- **The model provides** four frameworks for social activities (workers/clients/society/shareholders). Thus, the area of measurement revolves around the social actors who benefit from those activities. Given the different nature of the beneficiaries of social activities and their respective objectives in terms of economic unity, the differences between the beneficiaries will lead to different information they wish to obtain.
- **Disclosure method:** this model relies on monetary measurement to measure the elements of both social costs and benefits and to determine the values of social assets and liabilities. The model has also been used to divide elements of social activities with market prices by the present value, or the replacement value of the element in question. The elements of non-market social activities are assessed based on opportunity cost, which in turn will affect the objectivity of measuring those elements.
- **Disclosure results:** the model applies the system of reliance on two lists (a social income list and a social financial center list) drawn up independently of the traditional financial lists in the first three years of application of the model to the company. In the fourth year, economic activities were merged with social activities to become the social income list and the social financial status list.

7.2 Measuring elements of social costs

A- Linowese model Linowese provides a model for the disclosure of social responsibility, which is called the Report on Socio-Economic Activity (Linowese), where the costs of social activities are divided into three groups; first, it is concerned with the costs of working individuals; second, it is concerned with the costs of activities for the environment; third, it is concerned with the costs of activities for production, which distinguish between two types of social costs; first, the costs spent by the economic unit in pursuit of social objectives, in his view, these costs represent improvements (social benefits); and second, they are the costs spent by the economic unit or should have been spent on a particular aspect of the above three groups and represent (social damages). The **Linowese model** can be evaluated on the basis proposed as follows:

- **Disclosure area:** this model focuses only on voluntary social activities in the areas of human resources, the environment, and the product, on the basis that these activities are sacrificed to benefit society without mandatory social activities which, in its view, are legally and compulsorily binding, and are therefore not included in the list of socio-economic activity.
- **Disclosure method:** the model adopts monetary measurement, whether in the expression of social benefits or damages, expressed in monetary terms.
- **Disclosure results:** this model has been listed in a list of income under the name of the socio-economic income list expressed in monetary terms, which is separate from the traditional financial lists. In assessing this model, it is limited to the measurement of voluntary, sub-mandatory social costs, ignoring the nature of the activity, which may be the appropriate criterion for allocating social costs, and how to measure the damage to society, where it is subject to personal assessment, which affects the objectivity, reliability, appropriateness, and impartiality to a great extent.

B- Abdul Majid model Abdul Majeed proposes a model for the social performance report, which he calls the Social Profit and Loss Account, whereby according to this model, social activities are divided into four areas (worker/environment interaction/consumer protection/pollution control), and Abdul Majeed considers that the disclosure of these four areas is limited to social costs without the benefits derived from them, which is justified by the difficulty of measuring these social benefits. The **Abdul Majid model** can be evaluated on the basis proposed as follows:

- **Disclosure area:** the model includes four areas of social activity (worker/environment interaction/consumer protection/pollution control area). In this case, disclosure is limited to costs without social benefits.
- **Disclosure method:** The model focuses on the monetary measurement of the social activities that the economic unit spends, whether optional or mandatory, in addition to the amount of damage that the economic unit may cause.
- **Disclosure results:** the model follows the method of financial disclosure (cash) in the form of a list called a model (profit calculation and financial-social losses) and combines economic and social costs so that the model reflects the overall performance of the economic unit. In assessing this model, it focuses on the overall functioning of the economic unit, both economic and social, its attention and measurement of social costs without benefits, and its interest in large, but not small, companies, and Abdul Majid did not address the parties involved in the model's preparation process.

8. Conclusions

- Accounting for social responsibility refers to the accounting system, which is concerned with measuring the processes that occur between economic units and the social environment around them and thus disclosing the effects they have provided to society the main objective of this system is to measure and disclose social costs and benefits.
- The measurement of social benefits is divided into two pillars: internal benefits, which are not quantitative and cannot be measured in cash, such as the measurement of the cultural level or the assessment of the monetary value of the benefit of society as a result of the enterprise's afforestation of the surrounding area. The second is the measurement of external benefits, which are beneficial to the outside and whose social benefits have been measured most easily and objectively by the studies, which consist of measuring social performance and comparing them with some quantitative and valuable indicators, such as measuring the extent to which the enterprise contributes to the professional aspects of workers.

- According to this study, the costs of social performance and social responsibility are important priorities among the various groups living with them, and these costs are linked to gross revenues. The outputs of the current accounting systems still fall short of disclosing the costs of social responsibility and the extent of the social benefits they generate in the society in which they operate. With the recent trend of viewing the institution as part of a society that influences and is affected by accounting for social responsibility due to the evolution and complexity of different economic activities and their increasing impact on the environment, some enterprises are beginning to pay attention to this trend.
- The measurement of social costs and benefits is complex and difficult because there are several variables, some quantifiable and others not, and there are still some difficulties in measuring the benefits of social activities because of the difficulty of expressing these benefits in monetary terms.

9. Recommendations

- The need for social attention to be paid to clients by institutions and for social responsibility to be highlighted by raising the contribution of sectors to this aspect.
- Promulgation of special legal legislation and enabling standards for the application of the social liability accounting system.
- Promote the development of curricula at relevant universities, particularly management and economic colleges, to contribute to the development of social costs and benefits measurement.
- Work to provide the necessary accounting information linked to the social responsibility aspect that must be classified in the context of the social activities provided by companies to the various categories and the expenses that they have sacrificed within this framework.
- Recommend further studies that link social responsibility with other elements, as well as studies that link transparency and performance.
- The need to ensure that companies in society are obliged to determine their position of social responsibility according to certain criteria and indicators when preparing economic and technical feasibility studies.

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