International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

Research on Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure: Review and Prospect

HUANG Ziying

Ginling College, Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing, P.R.China, 210003

DOI: 10.46609/IJSSER.2025.v10i01.018 URL: https://doi.org/10.46609/IJSSER.2025.v10i01.018

Received: 17 Dec. 2024 / Accepted: 20 Jan. 2025 / Published: 30 Jan. 2025

ABSTRACT

The rapid economic development in China has also brought about many social responsibility issues. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) information disclosure has increasingly garnered attention, and related research has continued to deepen, yielding corresponding results. This paper first discusses the motives for CSR information disclosure based on legitimacy theory and stakeholder theory. It then reviews and comments on the influencing factors from three aspects: corporate characteristics, executive characteristics, and institutional environment. Finally, it proposes directions for future in-depth research and outlooks: (1) Continuously exploring the relationship between corporate financial characteristics and CSR information disclosure based on the social context of China's national conditions; (2) Investigating the relationship between executive characteristics and CSR information disclosure from the perspective of psychological traits; (3) Deeply explaining the influence mechanisms of corporate characteristics and executive characteristics on CSR information disclosure, and seeking intermediary variables and moderating variables for research; (4) Exploring the impact of the institutional environment on CSR disclosure by leveraging temporal opportunities and differences among local governments.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility information disclosure, Motives, Influencing factors, Literature review

1. Introduction

With the rapid economic development, technological advancements, and social progress in China in the 21st century, the role of corporate image in the market has become increasingly prominent. As more enterprises pursue profit maximization and rapid development, their ability to acquire natural resources and alter the ecological environment has also grown stronger, leading to an increasing number of socially irresponsible behaviors. These actions disrupt the circulation and balance of ecosystems, making it difficult for the originally fragile ecological environment to

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

self-repair. Consequently, severe ecological damage issues such as energy shortages, sharp declines in forest resources, land desertification, overwhelming amounts of waste, and chemical pollution have emerged. The root cause of these malignant environmental dereliction incidents lies in the inadequate preventive work within enterprises regarding pollution control and the lack of environmental protection investment funds.

In response to this situation, the government has introduced a series of policies to promote ecological environmental protection, using laws and regulations to internalize environmental external costs fundamentally and urge enterprises to fulfill their social responsibilities. As the government, the public, the media, and other parties have increased their attention to these phenomena, enterprises are under increasing pressure. To alleviate this situation, enterprises must not only consider economic benefits but also social benefits. By disclosing corporate social responsibility information, they can make public the impact of their business activities on society and their commitment to social responsibility. Only by coordinating the relationships among various stakeholders and enhancing their reputation can enterprises achieve sustainable and stable development.

However, currently, the overall level of disclosure of social responsibility information by listed companies is low, with incomplete content and poor quality. Therefore, the issue of corporate social responsibility information disclosure has attracted the attention of many scholars both domestically and internationally, who have conducted discussions on this topic. This paper aims to summarize the research conducted by domestic and foreign scholars on the motives and influencing factors of corporate social responsibility information disclosure, propose ideas and directions for future in-depth research, and provide suggestions and countermeasures for improving the research on corporate social responsibility information disclosure in China.

2. Definition of Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure Content

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) information disclosure essentially involves disclosing a company's CSR activities. Therefore, before defining CSR information disclosure, we need to clarify the connotation of CSR itself. There exists some debate regarding the definition of CSR, specifically whether a company's goal is to maximize shareholder interests or stakeholder interests.

Maximizing shareholder interests means making a series of scientific decisions to allocate resources reasonably and bringing more wealth to shareholders under the premise of complying with laws and ethics. This approach only considers how to earn more money for shareholders without undertaking social responsibilities. In contrast, maximizing stakeholder interests views a company as a social organization, aiming at long-term stable development and emphasizing

ISSN: 2455-8834
Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

satisfying the interests of all stakeholders, such as creditors, consumers, employees, and others, in the process of corporate value growth. After debate, maximizing shareholder interests aligns more with the trend of economic globalization and thus prevails, albeit with some modifications. Lu Daifu (2001) believes that CSR refers to a company's responsibility to maintain and enhance social welfare beyond maximizing shareholder interests[1]. Meanwhile, Article 87 of Chapter 8 of the Code of Corporate Governance for Listed Companies states, "Listed companies should actively fulfill their social responsibilities in terms of community welfare, disaster relief, poverty assistance, and public welfare undertakings while maintaining sustainable development, improving business performance, and safeguarding shareholders' interests." In summary, this paper defines CSR as the responsibilities undertaken by a company beyond its economic responsibilities, including those required by law and those voluntarily undertaken by the company.

Different scholars define different scopes of CSR information disclosure. Li Zheng (2007) summarized the views of Chinese and foreign scholars such as Ge Jiashu and Gray on the definition of CSR information disclosure and concluded that CSR information mainly includes six categories: environment, energy, employees, community, products and services, and others[2].

3. Motivations for Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure

3.1. Legitimacy Theory

Lindblom (1994) defines legitimacy as a state or condition that exists when an organization's value system aligns with the value system of the larger social system to which it belongs[3]. When there is an actual or potential gap between these two value systems, the legitimacy of the entity is threatened. Legitimization, on the other hand, is the process through which an organization can adopt (possibly through specific disclosure strategies) to bring itself into such a state. Lindblom further describes four strategies an organization can employ in seeking legitimization: the organization can seek to educate and inform the relevant public about actual changes in organizational performance and activities; it can seek to change the perceptions of the relevant public without altering its actual behavior; it may attempt to manipulate perceptions, such as using emotional symbols, to divert people's attention from issues of concern to other related issues; or it may seek to change external expectations of its performance.

Corporations disclose CSR information externally to demonstrate their legitimacy. This is not only a PR and remedial measure during a crisis but also a preventive measure to establish a good image and maintain daily operations. Since the public's attention varies across different industries and companies, the legitimacy required by different industries and companies also differs, leading to variations in CSR information disclosure among various sectors.

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

3.2. Stakeholder Theory

The concept of stakeholders was first proposed by the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) in 1963, stating, "For a corporation, without the support of interest groups, the organization will cease to exist." Although the ownership of a company belongs to its shareholders, the company also needs to consider the interests of various stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, creditors, and others who have a vested interest in the company.

Corporations enter into principal-agent contracts with stakeholders, who entrust resources to the corporation for agency. These stakeholders expect certain benefits in return. Therefore, CSR information disclosure is seen as part of the dialogue between the corporation and its stakeholders. Roberts, R.W. (1992) observed that CSR is a relatively successful medium for negotiating these relationships[4]. By disclosing this information, corporations convey relevant information to stakeholders who lack it, addressing information asymmetry and satisfying stakeholders' demand for CSR information, thereby enabling the corporation to survive.

4. Factors Influencing Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) information disclosure is mostly voluntarily decided by companies, with only specific aspects being mandatory. Therefore, in the context of voluntary disclosure, the factors influencing CSR information disclosure are particularly important. This section discusses these factors mainly from three aspects: corporate characteristics, executive characteristics, and institutional environment.

4.1. Corporate Characteristics

Literature on corporate characteristics and CSR information disclosure primarily focuses on industry attributes, company size, corporate financial characteristics, and corporate governance characteristics. Most foreign scholars conducted research on corporate characteristics in the last century, while domestic research is relatively scarce.

(1) Industry Attributes

Due to the different industries in which companies operate, their public responsibilities and media attention vary, leading to different legitimacy levels. It is easy to conclude that companies in different industries will disclose different levels of CSR information. For instance, industries such as mining that cause severe ecological damage have greater contradictions between their social impact and the public's expectations of corporate social responsibility, making it imperative for them to disclose CSR information.

Cowen (1987) conducted a comprehensive sample survey of 134 American companies from 10

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

different industries based on a survey of CSR disclosure in the annual reports of Fortune 500 companies[5]. Using annual reports, Cowen considered the impact of four independent variables on the disclosure quantity of seven categories (environment, energy, fair business practices, human resources, community involvement, product safety, and other disclosures). The study found that industry categories affected certain types of CSR disclosure (i.e., energy and community involvement).

Some empirical studies have found a significant positive correlation between industry factors and CSR information disclosure. Patten (1991) suggested that whether industry factors affect CSR information disclosure is also influenced by political factors[6]. By disclosing CSR information, companies can avoid increased pressure and criticism from socially responsible activist organizations such as environmental protection and labor organizations. Li Zheng (2006), by examining the annual reports of listed companies on the Shanghai Stock Exchange in 2003 and using the index method to measure CSR information disclosure, applied the OLS regression method to conclude that heavily polluting industries are more likely to disclose CSR information[7]. Ma Lianfu (2007), through research on companies in the extractive industry, found that these companies are more inclined to disclose CSR information compared to companies in other industries, indicating that CSR information disclosure is related to the industry in which a company operates[8].

(2) Company Size

Scholars have reached a consensus on the positive correlation between company size and corporate social responsibility (CSR) information disclosure. According to the political cost theory, larger companies attract more attention from government agencies, media, environmental organizations, and other social groups. Therefore, larger companies are more likely to disclose CSR information to demonstrate their responsibility to the public and avoid punishment from society and the government.

Trotman (1981) selected the largest 600 companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange and used the total assets on their 1978 balance sheets as a measure of company size[9]. The study found that companies that provided CSR information were larger than those that did not, and among companies that provided partial CSR information, the quantity of CSR information disclosure was positively correlated with company size. Kelly (1981) quantified selected CSR disclosure items in the annual reports of 50 Australian companies from 1969 to 1978 and found that disclosure of selected CSR items increased during this period, with larger companies disclosing more information on the environment, energy, and products than smaller ones[10]. Brammer and Pavelin (2004) studied patterns of voluntary social information disclosure among 134 of the largest 150 UK listed companies in 2001 (ranked by total asset value) and found that

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

larger companies were more likely to make multiple disclosures, with corporate reputation playing a significant role[11].

(3) Corporate Financial Characteristics

Current literature primarily focuses on profitability as a financial characteristic. Previous scholars have found diverse relationships between financial performance and CSR information disclosure, including no correlation, positive correlation, negative correlation, and U-shaped correlation, with no consensus reached. Financial performance is measured by profitability.

Some scholars have found no correlation between corporate financial performance and CSR disclosure. Hooghiemstra (2000) selected annual reports of the largest 50 companies listed on the New Zealand Stock Exchange as of December 31, 1992, after controlling for factors such as industry and size, found no relationship between profitability and CSR disclosure[12].

Some scholars have found a positive correlation between the two. Bowman (1978) used a five-year return on equity (ROE) as a measure of success, allowing for a comparison of behaviors and attitudes between less successful and more successful companies[13]. The study found a positive correlation between the average ROE from 1972 to 1974 and CSR disclosure. Abbott, W.F., and Monsen, R.J. (1979), relying on a sample of 450 companies from the 1974 Fortune 500 list, scored their disclosure indexes and found, through non-parametric testing, a positive correlation between ROE from 1964 to 1974 and CSR disclosure among the largest companies[14]. The scholar took the annual report as the most basic problem of social participation data source, and selected the Fortune 500 enterprises from 1966 to 1975 to study and found that financial performance indicators had a positive correlation with corporate social responsibility information disclosure. Li Zheng (2006) established a multiple regression model for a sample of 521 companies and found a positive correlation between corporate financial status and the quantity of CSR information disclosed[15]. He Yu (2017) empirically tested and found that companies disclosing more carbon-related information tend to have better financial performance, indicating that disclosing carbon-related information and performance has a positive effect on corporate financial performance[16].

Conversely, some scholars have found a negative correlation between the two. Ingram (1983) used a computerized analysis technique called WORD to evaluate content without relying on pre-assigned semantic labels or similar restrictive devices[17]. The WORD system was used to examine specific types of narrative disclosure in a sample of annual reports and assess the correlation between content and potential economic obstacles. They selected 79 companies from three industries: metal manufacturing, oil, and chemicals. Controlling for size and ownership distribution, they found a negative correlation between accounting performance and CSR

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

disclosure.

Uniquely, Bowman et al. (1976) found a U-shaped correlation between corporate financial performance and CSR disclosure[18]. They solicited annual reports from approximately 100 companies in the food processing industry listed in Moody's Industrial Manual (1973), received and processed reports from 82 companies, and found a U-shaped relationship between the average ROE from 1969 to 1973 and CSR disclosure.

(4) Characteristics of Corporate Governance

Corporate governance refers to a supervisory and check-and-balance mechanism that owners, primarily shareholders, exercise over operators. It involves the rational allocation of rights and responsibilities between owners and operators through institutional arrangements. In recent years, scholars have primarily explored the relationship between corporate governance and the disclosure of corporate social responsibility (CSR) information from the perspectives of shareholder governance, board governance, and executive governance. Lai Yan (2021) pointed out that scholars have reached a consensus that the higher the overall level of corporate governance, the higher the level of CSR information disclosure[19].

The nature of property rights constitutes a significant internal control environment for enterprises. The role of internal control differs under different property rights backgrounds. Most scholars currently agree that compared to non-state-owned enterprises, government-owned or state-controlled enterprises tend to disclose more CSR information and have a higher level of CSR information disclosure. Compared to private enterprises or foreign-invested enterprises, state-owned enterprises bear greater social responsibilities. By disclosing CSR information, state-owned enterprises can demonstrate their compliance with relevant national rules and regulations. Joyce van der Laan Smith et al. (2005) argue that government-owned and state-owned enterprises face more pressure to report on CSR activities[20]. However, Li Zhibin et al. (2017) believe that internal control plays a stronger role in the disclosure of CSR information for non-state-owned enterprises compared to state-owned enterprises[21]. This suggests that to some extent, the level of CSR information disclosure by non-state-owned enterprises is primarily constrained by internal institutional norms. Good internal control helps standardize CSR information disclosure behaviors and improve the level of CSR information disclosure.

Regarding the impact of ownership concentration on CSR information disclosure, Porta's (1998) research results show a correlation between ownership concentration and CSR information disclosure[22]. The "substitution hypothesis" theory suggests that in regions with lower investor protection, investors will increase their shareholdings to obtain control rights and supervise managerial behavior by increasing their voting power. This self-protection behavior by

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

shareholders leads to relatively concentrated ownership, while small and medium-sized investors, facing greater risks, are only willing to buy stocks at lower prices, leading to difficulties in external financing for companies. To reduce capital costs, major shareholders incentivize managers to voluntarily disclose more information, meaning companies with high ownership concentration are more inclined to disclose more CSR information.

In terms of board governance, the theoretical community pays more attention to the mechanism by which board governance characteristics influence CSR disclosure. Some scholars believe that a larger board size can make decision-making more effective and improve information processing capabilities. However, Halme and Huse (1997) argue that a larger board size may cover a broader range of stakeholders, potentially including members who are highly concerned about environmental and community issues[23]. With these individuals communicating between the board and society, the company may more actively face and respond to social pressures and disclose more CSR information. Ho and Williams (2003) believe that an excessively large board size can lead to decreased member participation, thereby increasing opportunities for management manipulation[24]. Ma Lianfu (2007) simultaneously studied two corporate governance structure factors: the proportion of independent directors on the board and whether the chairman and general manager are the same person[8]. However, empirical tests showed that these two factors are not related to the disclosure of CSR information, possibly influenced by special equity structure factors such as the ineffectiveness of the independent director system in the current Chinese environment and an excessively high proportion of state-owned shares. Hashim and Rahmand (2011) believe that if the chairman of the board serves as a director in other companies, it indicates stronger information advantages and reputation, directly affecting the company's information disclosure decisions[25]. They further point out that a higher proportion of interlocking directors leads to a higher level of CSR information disclosure.

Executive compensation is a crucial contract between corporate shareholders and executives and a key means to coordinate the interests between shareholders and management, making it a focus of executive governance research. The compensation structure, including salaries, bonuses, and stock options, has a significant impact on corporations' active fulfillment of social responsibilities. Zheng Guanqun et al. (2015) took listed companies in China that published CSR reports from 2009 to 2011 as samples[26]. The empirical analysis showed that executive equity incentives and compensation levels have a significant positive impact on the quality of CSR information disclosure. Li Qiang and Zhu Yanghui (2014) further refined their research to corporate environmental information disclosure, concluding that executive compensation incentives negatively affect the quality of corporate environmental information disclosure, while executive equity incentives positively affect it[27].

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

4.2. Characteristics of Executives

In listed companies, shareholders own the enterprises, while managers are entrusted to operate them on their behalf. Executives constitute crucial human capital in companies, responsible for formulating long-term strategies and overall operations. Hambrick's Upper Echelons Theory (1984) points out that differences in personal characteristics of corporate executives, such as gender, age, educational attainment, and psychological frameworks, can influence their psychological structures related to risk-taking, innovation, and strategic vision, further impacting corporate decision-making[28].

(1) Demographic Characteristics

Chinese scholars have conducted extensive research on demographic characteristics, primarily focusing on age, education, and gender, forming various perspectives. Zhang Zhengyong and Ji Li (2013) found that increases in executive age, education, and reputation significantly enhance the disclosure of corporate social responsibility (CSR) information[29]. Older executives tend to adopt more conservative and rational strategies, and undertaking social responsibility can reduce risks. They also consider issues and handle matters more comprehensively, taking into account multiple stakeholders. Therefore, older executives are more inclined to disclose CSR information. Executives with higher education tend to have higher moral standards, stronger senses of responsibility, better risk tolerance, and comprehensive long-term strategic vision. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, executives with higher education are more likely to aspire to self-actualization and are more aware of the importance of taking on more social responsibilities, thus increasing CSR information disclosure. However, conversely, Wang Shihong (2016) found no significant relationship between executive age and education in an empirical study[30].

Globally, female executives are widespread. The 2010 annual report of the Chinese Entrepreneur magazine showed that 67.17% of listed companies employ female executives or directors. In studies on factors influencing CSR information disclosure, gender characteristics of executives, as a key factor in the company's diversified governance system, have been researched by many scholars in recent years. Zhang Zhengyong and Ji Li (2013) aimed to establish a CSR disclosure index (CSRDI) to study the relationship between gender and CSR information disclosure through modeling[29]. However, the results showed no significant relationship between gender characteristics and CSR information disclosure levels in either state-owned or non-state-owned holding enterprises.

Some scholars have found a positive relationship between female executives and CSR information disclosure levels. Fernandez-Feijoo (2012) found that females have a higher

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

commitment to CSR, mitigating the influence of masculinity and individualism on CSR strategic disclosure[31]. Therefore, boards with three or more female members are determinants of CSR disclosure, producing fewer integrated reports, providing more information on CSR strategies, and including warranty statements. Huang Heshu and Zhou Zejiang (2015) believed that due to differences in gender-based thinking, females tend to approach moral issues from the perspective of "relationships and responsibilities," demonstrating "empathetic care" in helping people in distress[32]. "Empathy" refers to sympathy and care for people in distress, while "care" represents a connection and interdependence between people. This "empathetic care" makes females more concerned about corporate social performance. From the perspective of corporate accounting conservatism, Zhou Xinjun and Zhang Lanlan (2022) believed that due to differences in social division of labor, companies with a higher proportion of female executives tend to have more conservative governance behaviors, resulting in higher accounting stability[33]. To meet the demands of stakeholders for accounting information, companies often need to disclose CSR information, which also enhances corporate accounting stability. Therefore, CSR information disclosure and accounting stability motives are consistent in direction. Research found that a higher proportion of female executives tends to increase CSR information disclosure.

(2) Background and Experience Characteristics

Apart from the demographic and psychological characteristics of executives mentioned above, their background and experience characteristics also influence decision-making and CSR information disclosure. Scholars' research primarily focuses on executives' overseas experience, political backgrounds, and political connections.

Song Jianbo and Wen Wen (2017) pointed out that overseas education received by returnee executives equips them with better risk tolerance, comprehensive long-term strategic vision, and advanced company management experience[34]. Therefore, executives with overseas experience are more capable of promoting companies to take on social risks. Jiang Yangming and Lai Yan (2019) mentioned that strict overseas institutional constraints, cultural education, and social responsibility practices prompt executives to form a high sense of social responsibility[35]. Meanwhile, Lai Yan (2022) noted that the mediator of attention allocation plays a role between executives' overseas experience and CSR information disclosure[36]. During their tenure in the company, overseas executives convey values emphasizing social responsibility fulfillment and disclosure when communicating with local executives. Over time, local executives increase their attention to CSR, undertake social responsibilities, and enhance corporate disclosure.

Executives with different political backgrounds have varying senses of social responsibility. Wu Yaqin and Liu Lu (2020) found a correlation between executive political backgrounds and CSR information disclosure[37]. According to reputation protection theory and the signaling effect of

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

social responsibility undertaking, executives with central political backgrounds have higher social status. To protect their reputations, they actively undertake social responsibilities and disclose information, sending a favorable signal to the public that they have a strong sense of social responsibility and high moral standards. This not only benefits their reputation protection but also aids their career development. In contrast, executives with local political backgrounds often engage in local protectionism, safeguarding local interests, neglecting social responsibilities, and thus disclosing less CSR information.

Several scholars have offered new perspectives on political connections. Luo Shuangfa et al. (2015) divided political connections into government officials and people's congress representatives, both positively correlated with CSR information disclosure[38]. Due to national regulation, the former's promotion effect is significantly stronger than the latter's. Qin Xuzhong (2018) found that chairmen's political connections promote disclosure[39]. He Yunlong (2020)'s empirical research showed an inverse relationship between political connections and CSR information disclosure. After introducing the mediator of media, it was found to inhibit this relationship[40].

4.3. Institutional Environment

The institutional environment specifically refers to the legal institutional environment. Shen Hongtao (2006) proposed that enterprises located in regions with a better institutional environment are more likely to proactively fulfill their social responsibilities, publicly disclose social responsibility information, and provide higher quality disclosed information[41]. Chinese enterprises typically choose to list in two places: mainland China (Shanghai and Shenzhen) and Hong Kong. Generally, the mainland is considered to have a weak institutional environment, while Hong Kong has a strong institutional environment. Tang Xiaojian (2016) stated that most current research on the disclosure of corporate social responsibility information by Chinese enterprises is based on the institutional environment of the mainland, while research on the disclosure of social responsibility information by enterprises listed in Hong Kong is relatively scarce[42].

Hillman (2001) found in his research that in search of a strong institutional environment, many enterprises prefer to cross-list in countries with a good legal environment and well-established systems. China has two institutional environments of different strengths[43]. As one of the international financial centers, Hong Kong has a developed capital market, attracting many mainland enterprises to list there. Tian Lihui (2006) found in his research that the improvement in the management level of mainland enterprises listed solely or cross-listed in Hong Kong is closely related to Hong Kong's sound institutional environment[44]. It can be inferred that a strong institutional environment is conducive to encouraging listed enterprises to actively assume social

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

responsibilities and disclose related information. Luo Yuanda (2021) took 218 mining enterprises listed in Shenzhen and Shanghai from 2010 to 2018 as research samples, excluding companies with missing key values and ABH for simultaneous listing, and selected annual data from 218 companies across industries such as mining, industrial metals, oil, natural gas, and water[45]. Compared to a strong institutional environment, enterprises in a weak institutional environment disclose social responsibility information of poorer quality. The institutional environment and strategy type have an interactive impact on the quality of corporate social responsibility information disclosure: compared to a strong institutional environment, in a weak institutional environment, an exploratory strategy has a stronger impact on the quality of corporate social responsibility information disclosure.

5. Commentary

Firstly, through systematic review and analysis of existing literature, it is found that domestic and foreign scholars have primarily focused on rigid factors such as industry attributes, enterprise size, financial characteristics, and internal governance characteristics when studying the impact of enterprise characteristics on corporate social responsibility (CSR) information disclosure. However, they have paid little attention to soft factors within enterprise characteristics, such as corporate strategy, unique corporate culture, and company history. Scholars tend to emphasize verifying the correlation between various factors of enterprise characteristics and CSR information disclosure through models, reaching speculative conclusions that either conform or do not conform to model fitting. They have not explored or explained the underlying social logical relationships and deep-level mechanisms involved. Further investigation is needed into the interrelationships among various factors influencing enterprises, the positive or negative relationships observed in studies conducted in different contexts, and the potential mediation and moderation effects that may exist when studying the influencing factors of certain corporate characteristics. Additionally, while both internal factors and the external environment of enterprises affect corporate behavior, few researchers have focused on the impact of their interactions on the quality of CSR information disclosure.

Secondly, summarizing the research literature on the influencing factors of CSR information disclosure reveals that scholars have tended to emphasize demographic and background characteristics of senior executives in empirical studies, investigating factors such as age, gender, education, overseas background, and political connections. They emphasize the role of different executive factors in corporate decision-making, aiming to explain the causes of CSR information disclosure. However, according to Upper Echelons Theory, the demographic characteristics of senior management teams are objective factors, and directly analyzing their impact on corporate decisions such as CSR disclosure behavior based on these objective factors overlooks the individual psychological and behavioral habits of the executive team. Furthermore, few scholars

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

have studied the potential moderating variables that may exist between corporate behavioral characteristics and executive characteristics. The behavior of executives in corporate decision-making depends on various complex factors. Executives come from diverse geographical locations and have different personalities and interests. China's culture is extensive and profound, and there are differences in natural climate and cultural customs across regions. This makes it difficult to conduct simple linear research on executive behavior using simple demographic characteristics. This is also a factor that scholars need to consider when disclosing corporate social responsibility.

Thirdly, it is noted that in domestic and foreign research, there is rarely a distinction between the quality and quantity of CSR information disclosure. This has significant implications for the assessment of CSR disclosure. Low-quality information is prevalent in CSR disclosure, and enterprises only focus on increasing the quantity of CSR information disclosure without paying attention to its quality. When scholars conduct research, focusing solely on the quantity of CSR disclosure information fails to reflect the overall true level of a company's CSR information disclosure.

Fourthly, in the study of institutional environments, researching CSR information disclosure solely in weak institutional environments cannot improve the deficiencies of these environments, and the policy value effectiveness of the conclusions drawn from such research is minimal. Additionally, much of the literature on the influencing factors of CSR disclosure focuses on foreign scholars from the 20th century. As China enters the 21st century and undergoes tremendous economic changes, it remains to be seen whether these theories are still applicable in today's China.

6. Future Research Prospects

As demonstrated above, there are numerous and diverse research findings on the factors influencing the disclosure of corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports both domestically and internationally, with varying conclusions. Unlike previous foreign scholars who focused more on the impact of corporate characteristics and external environmental and institutional features on CSR disclosure, domestic scholars in recent years have paid greater attention to empirical research based on individual characteristics of senior executives. Several valuable topics remain for future research.

Firstly, a review of recent papers reveals that domestic and foreign scholars have not reached a consensus on the relationship between corporate financial characteristics and CSR information disclosure. Considering the numerous factors influencing empirical research, the influence of sociocultural factors, geographical factors, and social institutional factors on senior executives'

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

decisions cannot be ignored. Therefore, empirical research results may differ across countries. Domestic scholars can continue to explore the factors influencing CSR disclosure in the context of China's national conditions.

Secondly, research on the characteristics of corporate senior executives has shown that scholars have focused on basic demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and education. As mentioned above, these basic demographic characteristics are objective factors, and whether they influence senior executives' decision-making behavior remains uncertain, especially considering the role of psychological characteristics, which has not been explored in relation to CSR information disclosure. Future scholars can conduct research from the perspective of psychological characteristics, while considering the influences of personality, culture, and geography.

Thirdly, current research by scholars still focuses on the factors influencing CSR disclosure, exploring whether these factors have an impact on CSR disclosure, without delving into the underlying mechanisms. To further investigate these mechanisms and identify the fundamental logic behind them, scholars can explore mediator variables and moderator variables, enriching research on CSR disclosure.

Fourthly, in research on the institutional environment, to enhance the effectiveness of studies on the institutional environment, scholars should investigate the relationship between different strengths of institutional environments within the same country and the quality of CSR information disclosure, aiming to draw conclusions and insights with higher reliability and validity. Scholars need to seize the opportunities presented by time and regional government differences to explore the impact of the institutional environment on CSR disclosure before and after these differences emerge.

References

[1] Lu Daifu. 2001. Review of Definitions of Corporate Social Responsibility in Foreign Countries. Modern Law Science, 3: 137-144. (In Chinese)

[2] Li Zheng, Xiang Rui. 2007. Research on the Content Definition, Measurement Method, and Current Status of Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure in Chinese Enterprises. Accounting Research, 7: 3-11+95. (In Chinese)

[3] Lindblom C K. 1994. The implications of organizational legitimacy for corporate social performance and disclosure[C]//Critical Perspectives on Accounting Conference, New York.

[4] Roberts, R.W. 1992. Determinants of corporate social responsibility disclosure: an

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

application of stakeholder theory, Accounting, Organisations and Society, 6:595-612.

[5] Cowen S S, Ferreri L B, Parker L D. 1987. The impact of corporate characteristics on social responsibility disclosure: A typology and frequency-based analysis. Accounting, Organizations and society, 2:111-122.

[6] Patten D M. 1991. Exposure, legitimacy, and social disclosure. Journal of Accounting and public policy, 4:297-308.

[7] Li Zheng. 2006. An Empirical Study on the Factors Influencing Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure. Special Economic Zone Economy, 8: 324-325. (In Chinese)

[8] Ma Lianfu, Zhao Ying. 2007. Research on Factors Influencing Social Responsibility Information Disclosure of Listed Companies [J]. Securities Market Herald, 3: 4-9. (In Chinese)

[9] Trotman K T, Bradley G W. 1981. Associations between social responsibility disclosure and characteristics of companies. Accounting, organizations and society, 4:355-362.

[10] Kelly G J. 1981. Australian social responsibility disclosure: some insights into contemporary measurement. Accounting & Finance, 2:97-107.

[11] Brammer S, Pavelin S. 2004. Voluntary social disclosures by large UK companies. Business Ethics: A European Review, 2-3:86-99.

[12] Hooghiemstra R. 2000. Corporate communication and impression management–new perspectives why companies engage in corporate social reporting. Journal of business ethics, 1:55-68.

[13] Bowman E H. 1978. Strategy, annual reports, and alchemy. California management review, 3:64-71.

[14] Abbott W F, Monsen R J. 1979. On the measurement of corporate social responsibility: Self-reported disclosures as a method of measuring corporate social involvement. Academy of management journal, 3:501-515.

[15] Li Zheng. 2006. An Empirical Study on the Factors Influencing Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure. Special Economic Zone Economy, 8: 324-325. (In Chinese)

[16] He Yu, Tang Qingliang, Wang Kaitian. 2017. Carbon Performance and Financial

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

Performance. Accounting Research, 2: 76-82+97. (In Chinese)

[17] Ingram R W, Frazier K B. 1983. Narrative disclosures in annual reports. Journal of Business Research, 1:49-60.

[18] Bowman E H, Haire M. 1976. Social impact disclosure and corporate annual reports. Accounting, Organizations and Society, 1:11-21.

[19] Lai Yan, Zhang Fan, Liu Jun. 2021. A Review and Prospect of Factors Influencing Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure. Friends of Accounting, 15: 60-64. (In Chinese)

[20] Joyce van der Laan Smith, Ajay Adhikari, Rasoul H. Tondkar. 2005. Exploring differences in social disclosures internationally: A stakeholder perspective, Journal of Accounting and public policy. 123-151.

[21] Li Zhibin, Zhang Tiesheng. 2017. Internal Control, Nature of Property Rights, and Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure: Empirical Evidence from Listed Companies in China. Accounting Research, 10: 86-92+97. (In Chinese)

[22] Porta R L, Lopez-de-Silanes F, Shleifer A, et al. 1998. Law and finance. Journal of political economy, 6:1113-1155.

[23] Halme M, Huse M. 1997. The influence of corporate governance, industry and country factors on environmental reporting. Scandinavian journal of Management, 2:137-157.

[24] Ho C A, Williams S M. 2003. International comparative analysis of the association between board structure and the efficiency of value added by a firm from its physical capital and intellectual capital resources. The International Journal of Accounting, 4:465-491.

[25] Hashim H A, Rahman M S A. 2011. Multiple board appointments: are directors effective? International Journal of Business and Social Science, 17.

[26] Zheng Guanqun, Song Lin, Hao Yuanxiao. 2015. Top Management Team Characteristics, Strategic Behavior, and the Quality of Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure. Economic Survey, 2:111-116. (In Chinese)

[27] Li Qiang, Zhu Yanghui. 2014. External Pressure, Corporate Governance, and the Quality of Environmental Information Disclosure: An Empirical Test Based on Listed Companies in the Coal Industry. Economics and Management, 3: 68-73. (In Chinese)

[28] Hambrick D.C., Mason P.A. 1984. Upper echelons: the organization as a reflection of its top

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

managers. Academy of Management Review, 2：193-206.

[29] Zhang Zhengyong, Ji Li. 2013. The Demographic Background of Entrepreneurs and Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure. China Population, Resources and Environment, 4: 131-138. (In Chinese)

[30] Wang Shihong. 2016. Ownership Nature, Executive Background Characteristics, and Corporate Social Responsibility Disclosure: Evidence from Listed Companies in China. Accounting Research, 11: 53-60+96. (In Chinese)

[31] Fernandez-Feijoo B, Romero S, Ruiz S. 2012. Does board gender composition affect corporate social responsibility reporting. International Journal of Business and Social Science, 1:31-38.

[32] Huang Heshu, Zhou Zejiang. 2015. Female Executives, Trust Environment, and Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure: Evidence from A-share Listed Companies Voluntarily Disclosing Social Responsibility Reports. Audit & Economics Research, 4: 30-39. (In Chinese)

[33] Zhou Xinjun, Zhang Lanlan. 2022. Does the Proportion of Female Executives Affect Accounting Conservatism? - Based on the Mediating Effect Test of Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure. Journal of Jishou University (Social Sciences Edition), 43: 78-87. (In Chinese)

[34] Song Jianbo, Wen Wen, Wang Dehong. 2017. Can Overseas-Returned Executives Promote Corporate Risk-Taking? - Evidence from A-share Listed Companies in China. Finance & Trade Economics, 38: 111-126. (In Chinese)

[35] Jiang Yangming, Lai Yan. 2019. The Impact of Executives' Overseas Background on Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure: Based on the Moderating Effect of Regulatory Pressure in the Region of Appointment. Journal of Shanxi Finance and Economics University, 1: 70-86. (In Chinese)

[36] Lai Yan, Liu Xiaoli. 2022. Executives' Overseas Background, Attention Allocation, and Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure. Finance and Economics, 2: 86-96. (In Chinese)

[37] Wu Yaqin, Liu Lu. 2020. Characteristics of Top Management Team, Operating Performance, and the Quality of Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure. Accounting Communication, 12: 29-33. (In Chinese)

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:10, Issue:01 "January 2025"

[38] Luo Shuangfa, Ou Xiaoming, Lai Yan. 2015. Political Connections and the Quality of Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure: Evidence from the Top 100 Listed Companies in CSR Information Disclosure Quality. Journal of South China Normal University (Social Sciences Edition), 3: 110-116. (In Chinese)

[39] Qin Xuzhong, Wang Zongshui, Zhao Hong. 2018. Corporate Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility Disclosure: A Study of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises on the ChiNext Board. Management Review, 3: 188-200. (In Chinese)

[40] He Yunlong, Xiao Mingyue. 2020. Political Connections, Media Coverage, and Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure: An Empirical Analysis Based on A-share Data from Shanghai and Shenzhen Stock Exchanges. Journal of Harbin University of Commerce (Social Sciences Edition), 2: 93-102. (In Chinese)

[41] Shen Hongtao. 2006. Corporate Characteristics and Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure: Evidence from Listed Companies in China. Proceedings of the 2006 Academic Annual Meeting of the Chinese Accounting Society (Volume 2), 538-545. (In Chinese)

[42] Tang Xiaojian. 2016. Internal Control, Institutional Environment, and the Quality of Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure. Accounting and Economics Research, 30: 85-104. (In Chinese)

[43] Hillman A J, Keim G D. 2001. Shareholder value, stakeholder management, and social issues: what's the bottom line? Strategic management journal, 2:125-139.

[44] Tian Lihui. 2006. Overseas Listing, Institutional Transition, and Bank Performance: A Case Study of Bank of China (Hong Kong). Management World, 2: 110-122+133+172. (In Chinese)

[45] Luo Yuanda, Xiong Guobao, Zhao Jianbin. 2021. Strategic Types, Institutional Environment, and the Quality of Corporate Social Responsibility Information Disclosure: Evidence from Mining Listed Companies in China. Accounting Communication, 3: 64-67. (In Chinese)

