AN ANALYTICAL INVESTIGATION OF VOLUNTARY REPORTING: A SECTORAL COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SERVICE AND MANUFACTURING COMPANIES LISTED ON THE DSE

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A B S T R A C T

Voluntary disclosures are presented in the companies' annual reports to increase the transparency, reliability, and decision usefulness of the provided information. It instills confidence in stakeholders, demonstrating the organization's commitment to society, the environment, and its business ecosystem. This paper aims to explore the level of disclosure provided by listed companies on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) and to examine whether there are notable variances in the voluntary disclosure practices of listed manufacturing and service companies. In total, 116 firms have been used as a sample for this particular investigation. This report is based on annual reports of the selected companies, and the content analysis technique has been applied. The study's findings show that the average disclosure level of the sample companies is 68.58% with a standard deviation of 14.05%. The banking industry tops the list of reporting disclosures. The voluntary disclosure practices of the cement, NBFI, food and allied, IT, and jute industries exceed the average value. The Tannery, Food & Allied, and Insurance industries exhibit a greater disparity in practice. When comparing the practices of service companies with those of manufacturing companies, it can be inferred that the average disclosure level of service companies is higher than that of manufacturing companies, with lower variation in practice. The result of the independent t-test shows that Levene's test for equality of variances has a significance value of 0.001, which supports the finding that there are significant differences in the practice of voluntary reporting disclosure between service and manufacturing companies. The study's findings will help policymakers develop more effective policies for voluntary reporting in corporate annual reports.

INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving world of corporate governance, financial reporting, and accounting practices, voluntary disclosure in annual reports has become a vital tool for communicating with stakeholders. Yearly reports were once viewed as straightforward financial statements submitted to fulfill regulatory requirements, but they have since evolved into comprehensive documents that encompass a broader range of information. To improve accountability, transparency, and trustworthiness, and maintain good relations with various groups, firms may voluntarily disclose more information than required by regulatory bodies in their annual reports. This practice is called voluntary disclosure. In recent times, corporate moves and activities have been increasingly scrutinized; therefore, it is a significant resource for firms to manage their reputation and brand image.

Investors, financial markets, and other key stakeholders have demanded that firms voluntarily share comprehensive information about their long-term strategies and performances in recent years, as these stakeholders have shown significant dissatisfaction with mandatory financial reporting (Boesso & Kumar, 2007). Consequently, discontentment with obligatory disclosures and demand for more stakeholder reporting have led to projects almost everywhere around the globe encouraging firms to enhance their stakeholder communication strategies. (Boesso & Kumar, 2007). Companies choose to disclose information voluntarily to accomplish various goals, including reducing information asymmetry between management and investors, mitigating agency conflicts, attracting investment, and enhancing their competitive position. By publishing and presenting non-financial information, such as sustainability practices, corporate social responsibility initiatives, and risk management strategies, companies can align themselves with stakeholder expectations of having more non-financial insights, thereby enabling a holistic understanding of the business's operations.

There may be significant research gaps that have remained unaddressed in Bangladesh's voluntary disclosure settings, and this study aims to fill one such notable gap. Previous studies have explored various contexts for voluntary disclosures, but few have focused on examining the differences between service and manufacturing firms. Several investigations have been conducted regarding the voluntary disclosure of data within corporate annual accounts; most of them have focused on developed countries (Binh, 2012). This study intends to tackle a critical research gap in voluntary disclosure practices in Bangladesh. Although previous studies have investigated voluntary disclosure research from different perspectives, little attention has been paid to examining the practice variations between service and production enterprises.

The primary objectives of this research are to assess the extent of voluntary disclosures in companies listed on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) in their annual reports from 2017 to 2022. To check whether there are any significant differences in voluntary disclosure reporting practices between the manufacturing

LITERATURE REVIEW

Voluntary Disclosure

Voluntary disclosure in annual reports refers to when a company or organization, in a non-mandatory manner, voluntarily discloses to its stakeholders or the public information that is not required by law or regulation. It is characterized by releasing information beyond what is legally required, thereby promoting transparency and confidence in the business among the parties involved. Voluntary disclosures can take various forms, such as financial information, non-financial information, sustainability reports, corporate social responsibility reports, and other types of disclosures. The motives behind voluntary disclosure can include improving corporate reputation, attracting investors, enhancing stakeholder relationships, and demonstrating accountability. Factors influencing voluntary disclosure can include industry norms, corporate governance practices, regulatory environment, and the company's strategic objectives (Sharma & Rastogi, 2023).

Over time, corporate financial reporting has undergone a significant evolution, driven by voluntary disclosure, which has enabled annual financial statements to become more comprehensive reports, providing a clear perspective on company activities. To highlight compliance measures, companies operating in heavily regulated sectors may provide more voluntary information than necessary, while prominent businessmen frequently share crucial news to satisfy public interest, as well as have the means to report it.

As stated by Boesso and Kumar (2007), in terms of corporate governance structure, social accounting, and stakeholder reporting, some European research institutions have developed frameworks for voluntary disclosure. These include the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2001), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA, 1999), and the Institute for Social and Ethical Accountability (ISEA, 1999). The relationship between corporate voluntary disclosure and the sustainable development of a company's business activities has also been examined by other institutions, such as CSEAR, GRI, or ISEA, which focus on environmental or social issues. Integrated reporting is suggested by the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) reporting framework (ISEA, 1999), which encompasses three measures of value addition: economic, environmental, and social.

Due to the importance of voluntary disclosure issues to international society, one must be cautious and mindful of various voluntary disclosure practices that may be influenced by state actions, regulatory actions, and other agents, resulting from variations in the context of different countries (Boesso & Kumar, 2007).

Voluntary disclosure practices in Bangladesh

Voluntary disclosure practices have garnered substantial attention in the field of corporate communication and governance internationally, yet a paucity of research exists within the specific context of Bangladesh. Bangladesh is currently undergoing a period of transformation in its business environment, characterized by increased economic growth, evolving regulations, and rising stakeholder expectations and engagement. Therefore, it is evident that significant voluntary disclosure serves to support various business choices.

Different businesses in Bangladesh face unique challenges in adopting voluntary disclosure practices. The limited awareness of the advantages of transparency, combined with a lack of resources, may hinder complete reporting. Furthermore, the absence of uniform non-financial reporting frameworks may lead to varying disclosures, which make it difficult to compare firms. Additionally, the low internet penetration rate and financial illiteracy among stakeholders may hinder the proper dissemination and understanding of the revealed information.

A study on voluntary disclosure in Bangladesh by Sufian (2016) found that 87% of the sample organizations reported significant irregularities in the disclosure scores of their annual reports. The average score recorded was 59.28%, within the allowed range of 45.34% to 71.85%. This shows that there are considerable differences in disclosures among the sample firms.

According to Rakiv's (2019) study, among 120 sample observations, the highest voluntary disclosure reporting score was 96%, while the lowest was 37%. The average voluntary disclosure value was 62%, with a variation of 16.65%, indicating higher discrepancies in the practices among sampled companies.

Theories explaining voluntary disclosure practices

Agency Theory

The agency theory model underlies the relationship between the owner (principal) and the agent (manager), which is based on the contractual design of the company (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). The study of voluntary information as a means of reducing agency costs by providing information that helps the owner understand the company's overall business activities without requiring direct involvement.

Barako (2007), Lundholm and Van Winkle (2006), and Healy and Palepu (2001) have stated that managers (agents) act on behalf of shareholders within an organization, representing the principal whom the agent serves. An example of this type of situation is when some administrators have inside information about a company's promising future and opt for measures that will primarily benefit them, but at the expense of the principal.

Voluntary disclosure refers to reporting that exceeds what is required to be mandatory. It implies that firm managers can decide for themselves what financial or non-financial performance characteristics they want to share with people who use their yearly financial reports (Meek et al., 1995). Lundholm & Van Winkle (2006) have found that voluntary disclosure can help resolve the discrepancies in knowledge levels among different people. Managers often face a dilemma about whether to disclose certain data. Typically, the leading cause of this dilemma is the irregularity of information. Barako (2007) argues that managers can overlook maximizing shareholders' wealth and focus on their interests. Hence, shareholders need to develop measures to mitigate agency problems by aligning the interests between principals and agents or by monitoring the agents' opportunistic tendencies. According to Healy and Palepu (2001), outside investors have less information about a firm's performance compared to managers. They believed that in actual business markets, which are not perfectly efficient, managers employ financial disclosure policies to balance their decisions and communicate them to external shareholders. This shows clearly that issues of asymmetric information affect companies' voluntary disclosure policies.

Signaling theory

Since its inception to examine the challenge of information asymmetry experienced by employers and workers (Spence, 1973) this theory has also been used to explain cases of voluntary disclosure in corporate reporting (Ross, 1977) Because there is an asymmetry of information between investors and firms, companies may choose to send specific signals to potential investors to win their favor and build a good name for themselves. For instance, it may disclose more than what is legally required as part of its efforts to demonstrate superiority over other firms (Campbell et al., 2001).

Legitimacy theory

The basis for legitimacy theory is that a company can only exist if it aligns with the values of the society in which it operates (Lindblom, 1994; Magness, 2006). Therefore, it can be said that the concept of legitimacy theory is akin to a social contract between the enterprise and its community (Magness, 2006). The accounting profession has integrated this theory into its practices as a way of explaining why some things are covered in corporate messages sent to the public, what these things are when they occur, and how they are conveyed (Magness, 2006) because one of the primary purposes of accounting is to provide decision-makers with information satisfying social interests.

Because the legitimacy theory is based solely on how society perceives it, managers have no choice but to reveal secrets that may modify outsiders' impressions of their corporations (Cormier & Gordon, 2001). This is why O'Donovan (2002) identified the annual report as one of the key instruments for legitimizing companies. Legitimizing may occur through required disclosures, as mandated by law, and optional ones found elsewhere in an annual report (Magness, 2006). The annual report has been recognized as a crucial source of legitimation. Legitimization can occur through both mandatory disclosures, as outlined in financial statements mandated by legislation, and voluntary disclosures in other sections of annual reports (Magness, 2006; Lightstone & Driscoll, 2008).

Financial reporting and disclosure environment: Bangladesh context

Public limited companies listed on stock exchanges are required to provide information guided by the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC). Although there is still a lack of evident requirements for voluntary reporting of the listed firms, constant efforts have been made to improve the overall reporting environment. In addition, BSEC sends out reminders and recommendations on several matters to enhance the level of exposure of firms that trade their shares in stock markets. Furthermore, to ensure greater clarity and the unveiling of crucial accounting regulations for financial institutions and banks, the Bangladesh Bank distributes circulars for both compulsory and voluntary disclosure of data. The principal laws that govern the financial reporting and disclosure practices for all listed banks involve the Companies Act 1994, Banking Companies Act 1991, Securities and Exchange Ordinance 1969, IASs (International Accounting Standards)/BASs (Bangladesh Accounting Standards) as well as IFRSs (International Financial Reporting Standards)/BFRSs (Bangladesh Financial Reporting Standards), DSE's Listing Regulations and CSE Listing Regulations among others.

Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which is a regulatory institution established under the Securities and Exchange Commission Act in 1993, is a statutory body affiliated with the Ministry of Finance. The Securities and Exchange Commission is tasked with preparing and enforcing rules related to securities. Every listed corporation must comply with regulations issued by the Securities and Exchange Commission. Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) was incorporated in 1954 but started formal trading in 1956. The main functions of DSE are listing companies and also monitoring the activities of the listed company. DSE may impose some disclosure requirements as a part of the listing requirement.

Bangladesh Bank was founded in 1972 under Bangladesh Bank Order, 1972 to serve as the country's central bank and regulatory body for the financial system. Bangladesh Bank's core aim is to develop and carry out monetary policy. Additionally, scheduled banks, as well as non-bank financial institutions, are under supervision and monitoring to ensure the better security, soundness, and stability of the banking system, thereby maintaining discipline in this matter. Moreover, Bangladesh Bank also monitors compliance with the Banking Companies Act 1991.

In Bangladesh, there are two recognized accountancy professional bodies which are the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) and the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB) along with the supreme accounting body named Financial Reporting Council (FRC). The National Professional Accounting Body of Bangladesh was created by ICAB and established under the Bangladesh Chartered Accountants Order 1973. Its primary role is to administer the Accounting Profession and related issues within the nation. ICAB members endorse the accuracy of the accounts and inform shareholders if a company's financial statements comply with required legal rules. Alternatively, ICMAB provides professional qualifications in cost and management accountancy mainly dealing with business-related accounting.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study population consisted of all companies listed on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE). A convenient purposive sampling technique was used to select the companies as a sample. For this purpose, a total of 116 companies have been selected. The objectives of the study determined how samples were selected, while the availability of annual reports served as a limitation. To evaluate the amount and type of voluntary disclosures contained within a sample of annual reports, quantitative analysis is applied. This paper relies entirely on secondary data. The data source for the report is the annual reports of the sampled company for the years 2017-2022.

The research methods included a first review of annual reports through content analysis, aimed at observing the occurrences of voluntary disclosure reporting practices. Thus, all parts of the annual report were meticulously reviewed to identify any voluntary disclosures present in them.

The hypothesis of the research

Since one of the objectives of the report was to check whether there is any significant difference between manufacturing companies and service companies, the hypothesis of the study is as follows:

H1: There is a significant difference in practice in the voluntary disclosure practices of manufacturing and service companies.

Voluntary Disclosure Reporting Index (VDRI)

A Voluntary Disclosure Reporting Index (VDRI), was developed from reviewing the existing literature on voluntary reporting and a thoughtful scrutiny of the available reporting guidelines and the relevant literature. The range for the VDRI lies between 0 and 1; this criterion assigns a value of 1 if an analyzed entity has embraced VDRI and zero if it has not been reported. Therefore, the computation of individual entity values for the Voluntary Disclosure Reporting Index (VDRI) takes the ratio of the computed total score (from 0 to 28) to possible maximum points that are achievable (which correspond to the total expected number of practices that can be developed by those entities and in this case, it implies having reference to 28 practices shown in the checklist) as expressed below:

$VDRI_i = \Sigma v_j / V$

Where,

$VDRI_i$ =Voluntary Disclosure Reporting Index of Entity i

v_j = Voluntary Disclosure practice j. Dummy variable, whose value is 1 if the entity develops

that practice and 0 if the entity does not develop it

V = Maximum number of Voluntary Disclosure Reporting practices (28)

This index cannot be considered representative of all the voluntary disclosure reporting and accounting procedures that an entity can develop to elaborate and disclose voluntary information. However, it constitutes a good indicator of the extent to which the sample's entities have developed voluntary disclosure reporting practices.

Table 1: Percentage os Sampled Companies per Industry Sectors

Sl. No.	Sector	No. of Companies Listed	Number of Companies Selected as Sample	% of Population	% of Sample
1	Bank	35	10	28.57%	8.62%
2	Cement	7	2	28.57%	1.72%
3	Ceramics Sector	5	3	60.00%	2.50%
4	Engineering	42	10	23.81%	8.33%
5	Financial Institutions	23	13	56.52%	10.83%
6	Food & Allied	21	6	28.57%	5.00%
7	Fuel & Power	23	6	26.09%	5.00%

8	Insurance	57	17	29.82%	14.17%
9	IT Sector	11	4	36.36%	3.33%
10	Jute	3	2	66.67%	1.67%
11	Paper & Printing	6	1	16.67%	0.83%
12	Pharmaceuticals & Chemicals	34	15	44.12%	12.50%
13	Services & Real Estate	4	3	75.00%	2.50%
14	Tannery Industries	6	2	33.33%	1.67%
15	Telecommunication	3	2	66.67%	1.67%
16	Textile	58	18	31.03%	15.00%
17	Travel & Leisure	4	2	50.00%	1.67%
Total		**342**	**116**	**33.92%**	**100.00%**

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS:

The analysis of the paper involves testing hypotheses and drawing conclusions from the findings. Intriguing trends in the voluntary disclosure policies of Bangladeshi corporations are shown through the analysis of quantitative data taken from annual reports. However, there is considerable variance over time and among industries regarding voluntary disclosures that extend beyond financial data.

Table 2: Voluntary Reporting Disclosure Index Result (Industry & Year) (in %)

Industry Name	Sample	Measure	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average
Bank	10	Mean	87.78	88.52	89.63	90.74	91.48	91.85	90.00
		Std. Deviation	6.31	5.64	4.55	4.36	3.51	2.92	4.55
Cement	2	Mean	55.56	83.34	85.19	87.04	87.04	87.04	80.87
		Std. Deviation	10.47	7.86	5.24	2.62	2.62	2.62	5.24

Ceramic	3	Mean	60.49	53.09	58.03	62.96	65.43	70.37	61.73
		Std. Deviation	21.71	11.91	11.31	11.11	9.32	11.11	12.74
Engineering	10	Mean	59.26	59.26	62.59	62.96	65.93	70.74	63.46
		Std. Deviation	12.95	13.41	11.51	11.04	9.69	9.95	11.43
NBFI	13	Mean	76.35	74.64	77.49	78.63	81.20	83.76	78.68
		Std. Deviation	10.86	10.57	11.06	10.81	11.36	10.32	10.83
Food & Allied	6	Mean	60.49	73.46	74.69	75.93	77.16	80.87	73.77
		Std. Deviation	19.41	15.96	14.14	13.41	11.57	8.89	13.90
Fuel & Power	6	Mean	66.05	63.58	66.67	68.52	70.99	73.46	68.21
		Std. Deviation	10.84	15.79	13.25	11.89	9.49	8.26	11.59
IT	4	Mean	49.08	71.30	74.08	79.63	79.63	79.63	72.22
		Std. Deviation	7.64	7.64	4.28	2.14	2.14	2.14	4.33
Insurance	17	Mean	59.48	56.86	59.04	60.13	63.62	66.45	60.93
		Std. Deviation	17.35	12.21	11.38	10.84	10.33	10.68	12.13
Jute	2	Mean	42.59	87.04	87.04	88.89	88.89	88.89	80.56
		Std. Deviation	2.62	7.86	7.86	5.23	5.23	5.23	5.67

Paper	1	Mean	44.44	66.67	70.37	70.37	74.07	74.07	66.67
		Std. Deviation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Service & Real estate	3	Mean	56.79	49.38	53.09	55.56	59.26	61.73	55.97
		Std. Deviation	21.39	5.66	5.66	3.71	3.70	2.14	7.04
Tannery	2	Mean	59.26	64.82	68.52	68.52	72.23	74.08	67.90
		Std. Deviation	10.48	23.57	18.33	18.33	18.34	20.95	18.33
Telecommu nication	2	Mean	66.67	48.15	55.56	57.41	61.11	64.82	58.95
		Std. Deviation	10.47	0.00	0.00	2.62	2.62	2.62	3.05
Travel & Leisure	2	Mean	50.00	62.97	64.82	64.82	72.22	72.22	64.51
		Std. Deviation	13.10	10.47	7.86	7.86	13.10	13.10	10.91
Pharmaceuti cals	15	Mean	65.19	64.94	66.42	67.16	70.12	72.10	67.65
		Std. Deviation	12.27	10.92	10.52	9.79	10.24	9.58	10.55
Textile	18	Mean	47.74	58.03	59.88	62.55	65.23	67.08	60.08
		Std. Deviation	6.21	11.08	9.86	8.88	10.79	10.07	9.48
Total	**116**	**Mean**	**62.16**	**65.58**	**67.91**	**69.48**	**72.03**	**74.33**	**68.58**
		Std. Deviation	**16.56**	**15.10**	**14.03**	**13.55**	**12.91**	**12.16**	**14.05**

From the table above, it can be inferred that the Banking industry tops the list in terms of providing voluntary disclosure. The voluntary disclosure practices of the cement, NBFI, food and allied, IT, and jute industries exceed the average value of the sample mean for the study. The remaining 11 industries have a lower mean value than the sample mean value. A greater disparity in voluntary disclosure reporting practices is observed in the Tannery, food, and Allied industries, as well as the insurance industry. In contrast, the Banking, Cement, and Telecommunication industries exhibit less instability in the practice of voluntary disclosure reporting.

It is fascinating to note that companies in sectors such as manufacturing and telecom are often more forthcoming with voluntary disclosure, notably concerning corporate social responsibility and environmental sustainability. These sectors' annual reports tend to include more non-financial indicators, such as employee welfare schemes, community partnership initiatives, and conservation projects. It implies that organizations operating in potentially harmful sectors should disclose important non-financial information to build a positive impression among their stakeholders.

Table 3: Voluntary Disclosure by Industry Type

Industry Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Service Company	64.89%	67.07%	70.10%	71.89%	74.88%	76.45%
Manufacturing Company	56.17%	65.78%	68.41%	70.04%	72.40%	74.58%

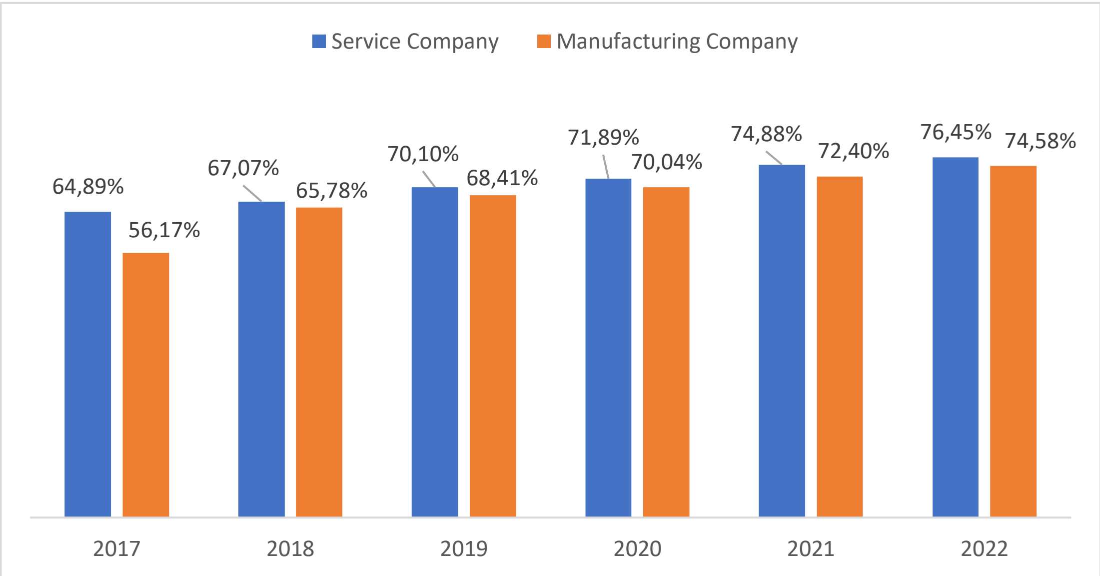

Figure 1: Voluntary Disclosure % by Industry Type

From the above diagram, it can be seen that service companies listed on the DSE always provide more voluntary disclosure than manufacturing companies. On the contrary, it can also be observed that manufacturing companies are now providing more voluntary disclosures than in previous years, due to their environmental impact resulting from their production.

To check the robustness of the findings, an independent t-test will be conducted.

Table 4: Group Statistics

	Industry Type	N	Mean (%)	Std. Deviation (%)	Std. Error Mean
Voluntary Disclosure Reporting Index (VDRI)	Service Company	51	68.6930	17.96357	2.46749
	Manufacturing Company	65	56.9373	13.55286	1.65575

The sample company consists of 53 service companies and 67 manufacturing companies. The mean of VDRI is higher for the service companies (68.69%) than that of manufacturing companies (56.94%), with a higher standard deviation.

Table 5: Result of the Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	Std. Error Diff	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Upper	Lower
Voluntary Disclosure Reporting Index (VDRI)	Equal var. assumed	11.87	.001	4.08	114	.000	11.75	2.87	6.05	17.45
	Equal var. not assumed			3.95	94.31	.000	11.75	2.97	5.85	17.65

The result of the independent t-test shows that Levene's test for equality of variances has a significance value of .001, which is lower than 0.05 (acceptance level), so the assumption of equal variance has not been met. The p-value of equal variance not assumed is 0.000, which is also lower than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis that there are no differences between Service Companies and Manufacturing Companies regarding practices of VDRI cannot be accepted.

The findings of this study are significant for policymakers and practitioners of voluntary reporting, as they reveal the level of voluntary disclosure provided in their annual reports. Policymakers may use these insights to enhance regulations on non-financial reporting standards, ensuring that disclosures across companies and sectors are standardized and comparable. The information can be helpful for companies to pursue voluntary disclosure strategies that align with what stakeholders expect and with specific trends within their industries.

CONCLUSIONS

The voluntary disclosures demonstrate a firm's commitment to transparency and accountability, establishing relationships with stakeholders by fostering trust and creating value. As the business landscape continues to advance, the tactical use of voluntary disclosure will remain pivotal in shaping the perception of companies and their contributions to society. The scope of voluntary disclosure will be unceasingly shaped by regulations, stakeholders' expectations and demands, and technological advancements. 'Industry

4.0' requires the integration of technology in producing voluntary disclosures to make them more tailored for the stakeholders. Many international reporting regulatory organizations consistently put forward their best efforts to develop consistent and comparable reporting of voluntary disclosures in annual reports, as many organizations are heading towards global sustainability reporting initiatives.

The conclusions of this analysis indicate that despite the numerous benefits of voluntary disclosure, there are also disadvantages. In the marketplace, organizations must thoughtfully weigh out the disclosure of sensitive information against maintaining their competitive edge. Additionally, uncharacteristic communications can occur since there is no standardized system for reporting non-financial information, which makes it difficult for companies to be compared. Apart from this, "greenwashing" refers to a tactic used by firms when they exaggerate or misrepresent their efforts toward environmental care.

Numerous areas for further research could examine the relationship between voluntary disclosure practices and financial performance, as well as alternative modes of communication, such as online platforms, in enhancing stakeholder involvement. Additionally, it would be beneficial to examine how cultural and institutional factors influence voluntary disclosures, which would contribute to a deeper understanding of corporate reporting dynamics in Bangladesh more generally. A longitudinal analysis of voluntary disclosure practices over time would reveal trends and patterns in disclosure behavior. Such a study would enable researchers to investigate how these practices are modified in response to changing regulatory environments, stakeholder needs, and technological developments. A significant area of interest would be analyzing whether improved voluntary disclosure positively influences investment decision-making, making a difference in the bottom line of firms. Research needs to examine the role of technology alongside various communication platforms in enabling free will to disclose, as more and more people rely on online platforms for everything these days. Examining the effect of regulatory transformations brought about by statutory non-financial reporting frameworks may provide insights into their efficiency in promoting transparency, particularly to voluntary disclosure. Additionally, it may be beneficial to examine the impact of aligning with global reporting standards on cross-border investment decisions.

To sum it up, studying voluntary disclosure in the Bangladeshi context has opened up numerous research pathways that can provide insights into corporate transparency, stakeholder engagement, and the communication dynamics changing in business practices. Involvement in these areas of investigation may aid in learning more about different disciplines as well as offering practical use for businesses, policymakers, or investors. In short, the practice of voluntarily disclosing information in annual reports is more than just a financial reporting approach. It provides companies with the opportunity to offer a comprehensive understanding of their performance, values, and activities. This trend has gained momentum due to increased calls for transparency and accountability from stakeholders. Despite the inherent challenges, the adoption of new technologies, coupled with the global acceptance of uniform non-financial reporting structures, augurs well for improved future outcomes.

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