

USERS' PERCEPTION ON CORPORATE VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE IN BANGLADESH

Md. Abdur Rouf¹

***Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to examine the users' perception regarding the importance, relevance, timeliness, materiality and comparability of voluntary disclosure in corporate annual reports practiced by the listed companies operating in Bangladesh. Data were collected through planned questionnaire by using direct interview method of data collection. Identifying the perceptions of various user groups i.e., professional accountants, accounting professors, investors and stockbrokers. The Chi-Square tests were carried out to test the nominated null-hypotheses. It is revealed from the analytical results that the respondents' perception is dissatisfactory of Timeliness, comparability and relevance. Such dissatisfaction indicates that the existing corporate voluntary information practices of Bangladesh are not capable of meeting the users' information needs.*

***Keywords:** Perception, professional accountants, accounting professors, investors, and stockbrokers*

***JEL Classification:** M41, M48*

Introduction :

The main trust of the present research is to focus the perception of the users about their apparent significance for different sources of voluntary disclosure in making their decisions, reasons for using corporate voluntary disclosure, and their opinions regarding the primary and improvement qualities of information of annual reports. Published annual reports are required to provide various users viz. shareholders, employees, suppliers, creditors, financial analysts, stockbrokers, management, and government agencies—with timely and reliable information that is useful for making prudent, effective and efficient decisions. The annual report is a significant component on the whole disclosure process, because it is the most commonly distributed source of information on publicly held corporations. The extent and quality of disclosure within these published reports however vary from company to company and also from country to country. Although, the annual report is the main source of information to various user-groups (Rouf, 2016).

Corporate voluntary disclosure refers to information made available at the discretion of the corporation. The extent of voluntary disclosure is influenced by changes in the attitudes in society, economic factors and behavioral factors such as the particulars corporate culture. Voluntary disclosure items may be classified into historical, current and predictive items, depending on the past, present or envisaged performance of the company. In Bangladesh, both Company Act of 1994 and Securities and Exchange Rules of 1987 are two important legislations for corporate disclosure. The Companies Act 1994

¹ Assistant Professor of Accounting, Department of Business Administration, Daffodil International University, E-mail: roufnakua@gmail.com,

provides the basic requirements for disclosure and reporting applicable to all companies incorporated in Bangladesh (Government of Bangladesh, 1993). The Act requires companies to prepare financial statements in order to reflect a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company. Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), another regulatory body, requires all listed companies to comply with accounting standards promulgated by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB), in addition to its own disclosure provision (Government of Bangladesh, 1993). Disclosure provisions of the Security Exchange Rules are, in fact, restricted only to companies listed on the stock exchanges. It is often alleged, however, that company annual reports do not comply with the disclosure requirements stipulated by the regulatory agencies, resulting in poor disclosure compliance by the listed company (Akhtaruddin, 2005).

According to Habibulah et al. (2012), that perception is a main part of human intelligence and a key component to understand human behavior. It is “the mechanism with which a person evaluates inputs from the external environment, which, in turn, determines his/her behavioral response” (Cooper, 2003). Corporate voluntary information is a vital component of a market-based monitoring of companies (Akhtaruddin and Rouf, 2012). Disclosure and transparency induce corporations to better shelter investors, and thereby increase investors' confidence in capital markets. Timely, relevant, reliable and comparable information about marketable securities are significant for both pricing efficiency and market confidence (Rouf, 2011).

Timely disclosure of accurate information on important firm-related matters is essential for the protection of shareholders' rights for two main reasons. First, shareholders need to have access to information about important matters to make decisions that are in their interest. Second, information disclosure is crucial in preventing managers and dominant shareholders from charming in activities that are illegal or are harmful to minority shareholders. Perception on corporate voluntary disclosure has been collected from four different user groups-teachers (teachers of Accounting and Finance who have analyzed annual reports), professional accountants (chartered accountants who have audited annual reports), investors (persons who have invested money in the capital market but do not fall under the category of teachers, professional accountants and stockbrokers) and stockbrokers (chief executive officers of broker house).

Objectives of the Study :

Objectives of this study cover the followings:

- i. To measure the users' perception regarding the voluntary disclosure system practiced by the listed companies operating in Bangladesh
- ii. To have an idea about the users' perception regarding the importance of various items of disclosure in decision-making
- iii. To examine the users' perception regarding the voluntary disclosure relevance, timeliness, materiality and comparability of corporate annual reports.

Literature Review :

Kamala(2016) investigates the users' perception of decision-usefulness of environmental reports produced by listed South African companies. The results further indicate that

users generally perceive environmental reports to be useful for the purpose which they were used, as most users perceive them to be understandable and relevant, and to a lesser extent reliable, timely, verifiable and comparable. The results also reveal that most users are not satisfied with the decision-usefulness of the environmental reports. Kribat (2015) examine the perceptions and attitudes of users about content and usefulness of Libyan banks' annual reports. findings of this study suggest that the annual reports of Libyan banks are frequently used for making financial decisions and are in fact considered to be the most important source of information for making economic and financial decisions about such firms. Moreover, users believe the quality of current financial disclosure in Libyan banks' annual reports to be satisfactory. Alfraih and Almutawa(2014) explore users' perceptions of the proposed items for improving the quality of voluntary disclosure in annual reports. The study findings show most participants strongly agree that annual reports of Kuwaiti listed companies are an important primary source of information in their decision making; however, the timeliness in publishing annual reports is becoming a matter of great concern. Al-Razeen and Karbhari (2004) examine the perceptions of the users of eight different sources of corporate information available in Saudi Arabia. The sample companies of five major user groups, namely individual investors, institutional investors, creditors, governmental officials and financial analysts. The study reveals that the corporate annual report was the most important source of corporate information to all of the participating user groups. Individual investors were found to attach lower importance to obtaining information directly from companies than the other groups in their sample. The fact that creditors valued direct information from companies more importantly than the lower other groups is perhaps because creditors in Saudi Arabia are in a much stronger position to demand formal information from companies. Islami and Chandler (2005) seek to identify the perceptions of professional investors regarding the use and usefulness of corporate quarterly reports of companies in Malaysia. The findings show that quarterly reports are used and are useful, although the reports are not the most sought-after source of information. This paper provides evidence that the purpose of quarterly financial reports goes beyond forecasting the forthcoming annual results. The reports are also utilized, among other things, to predict results beyond the current period and to provide feedback information concerning financial performance for comparison with earlier expectations. This paper suggests that the relative usefulness of quarterly financial reporting would depend on the type of investors. Ahmed and Day (2009) focus the perception of the Bank Loan Officer as users about their perceived importance for various sources of information in making their decisions, and their opinions regarding the adequacy and reliability of information of annual reports. This study focuses on the practices of some selected disclosure practicing through annual reports by banks operating in Bangladesh. For this paper, an empirical study as well as a questionnaire survey has been conducted. The survey is cover a sample of 20 bank loan officers. The principal findings include, firstly, most of the banks discloses the name of default directors with amount due, the name of borrower directors, prepares aging schedule, fixes the rate of provisions for bad debts, do not take qualified opinion or disclaimer, creates secret reserves in the balance-sheet and uses cost principle in valuing assets and secondly the respondents are in favor of such disclosures. Karim et al. (2009) investigate the perception of users regarding the availability, adequacy and usefulness of information disclosed in the financial reports of companies listed on the

Palestine Securities Exchange. A survey methodology was utilized involving a selected sample of information users, i.e., individual and institutional investors, analysts, academics and intermediaries. A questionnaire survey was designed where respondents were asked to determine the degree of importance of each information item using Likert-type five scales. Results of the study demonstrated that users perceive reported information as neither adequate nor relevant to investment decisions. In particular, reported information was insufficient, as listed companies did not comply with the minimum disclosure requirements of international standards. This unfavorable perception, along with poor credibility and bad timeliness of the disclosures, has prevented information from being impounded into stock prices. Ali et al. (2008) provide a useful survey of the attitudes of individual respondents on the various aspects of Bangladeshi annual corporate reports. They analyzed the responses of 25 individual investors and found firstly, British American Tobacco (BAT) Bangladesh Co. Ltd makes very few disclosures on corporate governance on a voluntary basis and secondly, the user groups of the annual reports are in favor of such disclosure. The researchers further found that the current disclosures are not ample in evaluating the goal of corporate governance. Nasser et al. (2003) investigate the perception of users of annual reports in Kuwait. They found that users of financial reports consider annual reports as the vital source for decision making with income statements and balance sheet as the most important source of information. Abu-Nassar and Rutherford (1996) investigate the opinion annual reports users as a source of information for effective decision making in Jordan. They concluded that users consider annual reports as an important tool for decision making and also found that users read some of the important information from annual reports and don't go for a thorough review of these reports due to information need and lack of understandability.

Apart from these studies, no further study on users' perceptions regarding the voluntary disclosure practices is available. Furthermore, none of the prior studies so far, to the best of our knowledge, collected a wide range of users' views regarding the voluntary disclosure practices in Bangladesh.

Methodology :

Selection of respondent group

The survey covers a sample of 25 professional accountants, 25 accounting professors, 25 investors and 25 stockbrokers in Dhaka region, which have been selected using the judgmental sampling under non-probability sampling techniques. Judgmental sampling is a form of convenience sampling in which the population elements are selected based on the judgment of the researcher. Finally, we have got responses from respondents of 20 professional accountants, 22 accounting professors, 24 investors and 23 stockbrokers.

Preparation of questionnaire

A questionnaire has been prepared to collect opinion of the respondents about the voluntary of information disclosed in financial statements. The questionnaire used was divided into two parts, PART-A and PART-B. PART-A included questions representing the name, occupation, age, educational and professional qualifications of the respondent and PART-B consisted of questions concerning voluntary disclosure information.

Questions numbered from 1 to 7 have been included in PART-A and questions numbered from 8 to 26 have been included in PART-B in the questionnaire.

Data collection

Responses of the respondents have been collected through planned questionnaire by using direct interview method of data collection. Identifying the perceptions of various groups of users about the importance of the selected items of voluntary information of the non-financial company annual reports through a questionnaire survey constitutes an important part of the study.

Analysis of data

To measure the user’s perception regarding the existing voluntary disclosure system that is followed by the concerned companies, various statistical tools- χ^2 test, mode, standard deviation have been used to analyze and interpret data by using a software named statistical packages for social science (SPSS) 17.0 and statistical tables have been used for data presentation.

Analysis Result and Discussion :

Users’ academic qualifications and experiences

Table-1: Users’ academic qualifications

Particulars	n and %	Respondent Groups				Total	χ^2	df
		Teac.	P. Act.	Inv.	SB			
Diploma or Lower	n	0	0	1	0	1	22.549	9
	%	.0	.0	4.2	.0	1.1		
Bachelor or Equivalent	n	0	0	7	5	12		
	%	.0	.0	29.2	21.7	13.5		
Master or Equivalent	n	18	15	15	18	66		
	%	81.8	75.0	62.5	78.3	74.2		
PhD or Equivalent	n	4	5	1	0	10		
	%	18.2	25.0	4.2	.0	11.2		
Total	n	22	20	24	23	89		
	%	100	100	100	100	100		

Note: Teac. = Teachers; P. Act.= Professional Accountant; Inv.= Investors; SB = Stockbrokers; n = No. of respondents, df = degree of freedom

Table-1 presents academic qualifications of the different user groups. Survey in our study suggests four categories of academic qualification for user groups. User groups are teachers (Tea), professional accountants (P. Act.), investors (Inv.) and stockbrokers (SB). Table-1 shows that 13.5% of respondents obtained bachelor or equivalent degree; 74.2% of respondents obtained master or equivalent degree; 11.2% of respondents obtained Ph.D. or equivalent degree from universities and only 1.1% of respondents obtained diploma or lower academic degree.

Table-2: Users' length of work experiences

Particulars	n and %	Respondent Groups				Total	χ^2	df
		Teac.	P. Act.	Inv.	SB			
Below-2 Years	n	1	0	2	1	4	27.287	12
	%	4.5	.0	8.3	4.3	4.5		
2-5 Years	n	13	1	8	10	32		
	%	59.1	5.0	33.3	43.5	36.0		
5-7 Years	n	5	4	8	6	23		
	%	22.7	20.0	33.3	26.1	25.8		
7-10 Years	n	0	8	4	4	16		
	%	.0	40.0	16.7	17.4	18.0		
10 and more	n	3	7	2	2	14		
	%	13.6	35.0	8.3	8.7	15.7		
Total	n	22	20	24	23	89		
	%	100	100	100	100	100		

Note: **Teac.** = Teachers; **P. Act.** = Professional Accountant; **Inv.**= Investors; **SB** = Stockbrokers; **n** = No. of respondents, **df** = degree of freedom

The length of respondents' working experiences is shown in Table-2. It varies and spreads from less than two years to more than ten (10) years. The highest rate (36%) is for the category of within 2-5 years work experiences, and the lowest rate (4.5%) is for the level of less than two (2) years experience. 25.8% of respondents work experience is within 5-7 years; 18% of respondents work experience is within 7-10 years, and 15.7% of respondents work experience is more than 10 years.

Users' dependence on voluntary information

Several types of users use corporate voluntary information in accordance to their own requirement. But all of them are not equally dependent on the financial statement for collecting their expected information. Again, all users did not use all voluntary information in making their economic decision. Rather a degree of emphasis was given by the users on voluntary information for making their economic decision might vary from user to user. It is possible to get an idea about the users' dependence on voluntary information from the following Table-3:

Table-3: Users' dependence on voluntary information

Particulars	n and %	Respondent Groups				Total	Mode	SD	χ^2	df
		Teac.	P. Act.	Inv.	SB					
Highly Dependent	n	2	3	6	4	15	2	.72	5.23	9
	%	9.1	15.0	25.0	17.4	16.9				
Dependent	n	13	10	14	13	50				
	%	59.1	50.0	58.3	56.5	56.2				
Less Dependent	n	7	6	3	5	21				
	%	31.8	30.0	12.5	21.7	23.6				
Not Dependent	n	0	1	1	1	3				
	%	.0	5.0	4.2	4.3	3.4				
Total	n	22	20	24	23	89				
	%	100	100	100	100	100				

Note: **Teac.** = Teachers; **P. Act.**= Professional Accountant; **Inv.**= Investors; **SB** = Stockbrokers; **n** = No. of respondents, **SD** = Standard Deviation, **df** = degree of freedom

Table-3 reveals the users' perception about their dependence on voluntary information that incorporates in the corporate annual report in Bangladesh. Table shows that 16.9% respondents are highly dependent; 56.2% respondents are dependent; 23.6% respondents are less dependent and only 3.4% respondents are not dependent on corporate voluntary information. Group wise consideration shows that among the respondents teachers are dependable on the level of corporate information in their decision making by the highest percentage 59.1 and investors by 58.3%, stockbrokers by 56.5% and professional accountants by 50% gradually. The following null-hypothesis was drawn to ascertain whether there is any difference among user groups in this regard.

H₁ = *There are no significant differences in perceptions of the respondent groups about their dependence on corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual reports in their decision making.*

The significance of the differences in perceptions of the respondent groups about their dependence on corporate voluntary information has been tested by undertaking a Pearson Chi-square test (χ^2) to find any relationship between respondents' groups and the perceptions about their dependence on the corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in their decision making.

The results of the Pearson χ^2 test showed that users' dependence on corporate voluntary information is not statistically significant among the respondent groups at the level of 1%, 5% and 10% (Chi-Square = 5.239, df = 9, P = 0.813, mode = 2) which indicate that there is homogeneity among the perceptions of respondents groups about their dependence on corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in their decision making. So the null hypothesis is accepted.

Users' perception on importance level of voluntary information

All corporate voluntary information does not get equal importance to all users. Because of the users need, purposes, category, competence, profession, time of use, according to knowledge, etc. They expect to get different types of information. So according to the information need, different users want to know a different aspect(s) of the company. Users' expectation and its level are shown in the Table-4:

Table-4: Importance level of voluntary information

Particulars	n and %	Respondent Groups				Total	Mode	SD	χ^2	df
		Teac.	P. Act.	Inv.	SB					
General Information	n	4	4	6	1	15	2	1.0	9.62	9
	%	18.2	20.0	25.0	4.3	16.9				
Financial Information	n	11	9	8	11	39				
	%	50.0	45.0	33.3	47.8	43.8				
Director Information	n	4	1	4	7	16				
	%	18.2	5.0	16.7	30.4	18.0				
Share price Information	n	3	6	6	4	19				
	%	13.6	30.0	25.0	17.4	21.3				
Total	n	22	20	24	23	89				
	%	100	100	100	100	100				

Note: **Teac.** = Teachers; **P. Act.**= Professional Accountant; **Inv.**= Investors; **SB** = Stock Brokers; **n** = No. of respondents, **SD** = Standard Deviation, **df** = degree of freedom

Table-4 shows the users' perception about the importance level of voluntary information that incorporates in the corporate annual report of Bangladesh. Table shows that 16.9% respondents want to know about the general information; 43.8% respondents want to know about the financial information; 18% respondents want to know about the director information and 21.3% respondents want to know about the share price information. Group wise consideration shows that among the respondents teachers want to know about the share price information in their decision making by the highest percentage 50 and investors by 33.3%, stockbrokers by 45% and professional accountants by 47.8% gradually.

The following null-hypothesis was drawn to ascertain whether there is any difference among user groups in this regard.

H₂ = *There are no significant differences in perceptions of the respondent groups about the importance level of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual reports in Bangladesh.*

The significance of the differences in perceptions among the respondent groups about the importance level of corporate voluntary information has been tested by undertaking a

Pearson Chi-square test (χ^2) to find any relationship between respondents' groups and the perceptions about the importance level of the corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh.

The results of the Pearson χ^2 test showed that the importance level of corporate voluntary information is not statistically significant among the respondent groups at the level of 1%, 5% and 10% (Chi-Square = 5.239, df = 9, P = 0.813, mode =2) which indicate that there is homogeneity among the perceptions of respondents groups about the importance level and the mode value 2 indicate financial information is given importance for the respondent groups of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh.. So the null hypothesis is accepted. So the null hypothesis is accepted.

Users' perception on relevance of voluntary information

Information must be relevant to the decision-making needs of users. Information has the quality of relevance when it influences the economic decisions of users by helping them evaluate past, present or future event or confirming or correcting, their past evaluations. The following table reflects the position of relevance of corporate voluntary information in viewpoint of users' opinion:

Table-5: Relevance level of voluntary information

Particulars	n and %	Respondent Groups				Total	Mode	SD	χ^2	df
		Teac.	P Act.	Inv.	SB					
Relevant	n	9	11	17	13	50	1	.54	6.26	6
	%	40.9	55.0	70.8	56.5	56.2				
Partly Relevant	n	12	9	6	10	37				
	%	54.5	45.0	25.0	43.5	41.6				
Not Relevant	n	1	0	1	0	2				
	%	4.5	.0	4.2	.0	2.2				
Total	n	22	20	24	23	89				
	%	100	100	100	100	100				

Note: **Teac.** = Teachers; **P. Act.**= Professional Accountant; **Inv.**= Investors; **SB** = Stockbrokers; **n** = No. of respondents, **SD** = Standard Deviation, **df** = degree of freedom

Table-5 shows the users' perception about the relevance of voluntary information that incorporates in the corporate annual report of Bangladesh. Table shows that 56.2% respondents' opinion information is relevant; 41.6% respondents' opinion information is partly relevant and only 2.2% respondents opinion information is not relevant that incorporates in the corporate annual report of Bangladesh. The following null-hypothesis was drawn to ascertain whether there is any difference among user groups in this regard.

H₃ = *There are no significant differences in perceptions of the respondent groups about the relevance of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual reports in Bangladesh.*

The significance of the differences in perceptions among the respondent groups about the relevance of corporate voluntary information has been tested by undertaking a Pearson Chi-square test (χ^2) to find any relationship between respondents' groups and the perceptions about the relevance of the corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh.

The results of the Pearson χ^2 test showed that the relevance of corporate voluntary information is not statistically significant among the respondent groups at the level of 1%, 5% and 10% (Chi-Square = 9.620, df = 9, P = 0.382, mode =1) which indicate that there is homogeneity among the perceptions of respondents groups about the relevance of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh. So the null hypothesis is accepted.

Users' perception on materiality of voluntary information

Accounting information is considered to be material if omission or misstatement of the information could influence users' decisions. Materiality is a function of the nature and /or magnitude of the information. The following table reflects the position of materiality of corporate financial statement in viewpoint of users' opinion:

Table-6: Materiality of voluntary information

Particulars	n and %	Respondent Groups				Total	Mode	SD	χ^2	df
		Teac.	P Act.	Inv.	SB					
Material	n	11	10	15	14	50	1	.52	4.34	6
	%	50.0	50.0	62.5	60.9	56.2				
Partly Material	n	11	10	8	9	38				
	%	50.0	50.0	33.3	39.1	42.7				
Not Material	n	0	0	1	0	1				
	%	.0	.0	4.2	.0	1.1				
Total	n	22	20	24	23	89				
	%	100	100	100	100	100				

Note: **Teac.** = Teachers; **P. Act.**= Professional Accountant; **Inv.**= Investors; **SB** = Stockbrokers; **n** = No. of respondents, **SD** = Standard Deviation, **df** = degree of freedom

Table-6 shows the users' perception about the materiality of voluntary information that incorporates in the corporate annual report of Bangladesh. Table shows that 56.2% respondents' opinion information is material; 42.7% respondents' opinion information is partly material and only 1.1% respondents' opinion information is not material that incorporates in the corporate annual report of Bangladesh. The following null-hypothesis was drawn to ascertain whether there is any difference among user groups in this regard.

H₄ = *There are no significant differences in perceptions of the respondent groups about the materiality of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual reports in Bangladesh.*

The significance of the differences in perceptions among the respondent groups about the materiality of corporate voluntary information has been tested by undertaking a Pearson Chi-square test (χ^2) to find any relationship between respondents' groups and the perceptions about the materiality of the corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh.

The results of the Pearson χ^2 test showed that the materiality of corporate voluntary information is not statistically significant among the respondent groups at the level of 1%, 5% and 10% (Chi-Square = 3.801, df = 6, P = 0.704, mode =2) which indicate that there is homogeneity among the perceptions of respondents groups about the materiality of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh. So the null hypothesis is accepted.

Users' perception on comparability of voluntary information

Financial statements of one accounting period must be comparable to another in order for the users to derive meaningful conclusions about the trends in an entity's financial performance and position over time. Comparability of financial statements over different accounting periods can be ensured by the application of similar accountancy policies over a period. Users' perceptions regarding this issue are shown in the following Table-7.

Table-7: Comparability level of voluntary information

Particulars	n and %	Respondent Groups				Total	Mode	SD	χ^2	df
		Teac.	P. Act.	Inv.	SB					
Inter Firm Comparable	n	8	9	13	12	42	2	.54	3.61	6
	%	36.4	45.0	54.2	52.2	47.2				
Inter Period Comparable	n	13	11	10	11	45				
	%	59.1	55.0	41.7	47.8	50.6				
Not Comparable	n	1	0	1	0	2				
	%	4.5	.0	4.2	.0	2.2				
Total	n	22	20	24	23	89				
	%	100	100	100	100	100				

Note: **Teac.** = Teachers; **P. Act.**= Professional Accountant; **Inv.**= Investors; **SB** = Stockbrokers; **n** = No. of respondents, **SD** = Standard Deviation, **df** = degree of freedom

Table-7 shows the users perception about the comparability of voluntary information that incorporates in the corporate annual report of Bangladesh. Table shows that 47.2% respondents' opinion information is inter firm comparable; 50.6% respondents' opinion information is inter period comparable and only 2.2% respondents' opinion information is undecided that incorporates in the corporate annual report of Bangladesh. In the group wise consideration, the respondents who think those are inter firm comparable, is highest (54.2) in investors followed by stock brokers (52.2%), professional accountant (45%) and

Teachers (36.4%) in that order. On the other side, the respondents who think those are inter period comparable, is highest (59.1%) in teachers followed by professional accountant (55%), stock brokers (47.8%) and investors (41.7%) in that order. The following null-hypothesis was drawn to ascertain whether there is any difference among user groups in this regard.

H₅ = *There are no significant differences in perceptions of the respondent groups about the comparability of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual reports in Bangladesh.*

The significance of the differences in perceptions among the respondent groups about the comparability of corporate voluntary information has been tested by undertaking a Pearson Chi-square test (χ^2) to find any relationship between respondents' groups and the perceptions about the comparability of the corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh.

The results of the Pearson χ^2 test showed that the comparability of corporate voluntary information is not statistically significant among the respondent groups at the level of 1%, 5% and 10% (Chi-Square =3.616, df = 6, P = 0.728, mode = 2) which indicate that there is homogeneity among the perceptions of respondents groups about the inter period comparability of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh. So the null hypothesis is accepted

Users' perception on verifiability of the voluntary information

Verifiability helps assure users that information faithfully represents the economic phenomena it purports to represent. Verifiability means that different knowledgeable and independent observers could reach consensus, although not necessarily complete agreement, that a particular depiction is a faithful representation. Qualified information need not be a single point estimate to be verifiable. A range of possible amounts and the related probabilities can also be verified. Information may lose its ability to influence users' decision without verifiability. Users views about verifiability of information incorporated in the corporate annual report are shown in the Table-8.

Table-8: Verifiability level of voluntary information

Particulars	n and %	Respondent Groups				Total	Mode	SD	χ^2	df
		Teac.	P Act.	Inv.	SB					
Verifiable	n	6	5	10	9	30	2	.53	5.77	6
	%	27.3	25.0	41.7	39.1	33.7				
Partly Verifiable	n	14	15	13	14	56				
	%	63.6	75.0	54.2	60.9	62.9				
Not verifiable	n	2	0	1	0	3				
	%	9.1	.0	4.2	.0	3.4				
Total	n	22	20	24	23	89				
	%	100	100	100	100	100				

Note: **Teac.** = Teachers; **P. Act.**= Professional Accountant; **Inv.**= Investors; **SB** = Stock Brokers; **n** = No. of respondents, **SD** = Standard Deviation, **df** = degree of freedom

Table-8 shows the users' perception about the verifiability of voluntary information that incorporates in the corporate annual report of Bangladesh. Table shows that 33.7% respondents' opinion information is verifiable; 62.9% respondents' opinion information is partly verifiable and only 3.4 % respondents' opinion information is not verifiable that incorporates in the corporate annual report of Bangladesh. In the group wise consideration, the respondents who think those are verifiable, is highest (41.7%) in investors followed by stock brokers (39.1%), Teachers (27.3%) and professional accountant(25%) in that order. The following null-hypothesis was drawn to ascertain whether there is any difference among user groups in this regard.

H₆ = *There are no significant differences in perceptions of the respondent groups about the verifiability of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual reports in Bangladesh.*

The significance of the differences in perceptions among the respondent groups about the verifiability of corporate voluntary information has been tested by undertaking a Pearson Chi-square test (χ^2) to find any relationship between respondents' groups and the perceptions about the verifiability of the corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh.

The results of the Pearson χ^2 test showed that the verifiability of corporate voluntary information is not statistically significant among the respondent groups at the level of 1%, 5% and 10% (Chi-Square = 5.775, df = 6, P = 0.449, mode=2) which indicate that there is homogeneity among the perceptions of respondents groups about the partly verifiable of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh. So the null hypothesis is accepted

Users' perception on timeliness of voluntary information

Timeliness means having information available to decision-making in time to be capable of influencing their decisions. Generally, the older the information, the less useful it is. However, some information may continue to be timely long after the end of the reporting period because, for example, some users may need to identify and assess trends. Users' perceptions regarding this issue are shown in the following Table-15.

Table-9: Timeliness level of voluntary information

Particulars	n and %	Respondent Groups				Total	Mode	SD	χ^2	df
		Teac.	P. Act.	Inv.	SB					
Timeliness	n	12	11	12	14	49	1	.54	2.89	6
	%	54.5	55.0	50.0	60.9	55.1				
Partly Timeliness	n	9	9	12	8	38				
	%	40.9	45.0	50.0	34.8	42.7				
Not Timeliness	n	1	0	0	1	2				
	%	4.5	.0	.0	4.3	2.2				
Total	n	22	20	24	23	89				
	%	100	100	100	100	100				

Note: **Teac.** = Teachers; **P. Act.**= Professional Accountant; **Inv.**= Investors; **SB** = Stockbrokers; **n** = No. of respondents, **SD** = Standard Deviation, **df** = degree of freedom

Table-9 reveals the users' perception about the timeliness of voluntary information that incorporates in the corporate annual report of Bangladesh. Table shows that 55.1% respondents' opinion information has timeliness; 42.7% respondents' opinion information has partly timeliness and only 2.2% respondents' opinion information has not timeliness. The following null-hypothesis was drawn to ascertain whether there is any difference among user groups in this regard.

$H_7 =$ *There are no significant differences in perceptions of the respondent groups about the timeliness of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual reports in Bangladesh.*

The significance of the differences in perceptions among the respondent groups about the timeliness of corporate voluntary information has been tested by undertaking a Pearson Chi-square test (χ^2) to find any relationship between respondents' groups and the perceptions about the timeliness of the corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh.

The results of the Pearson χ^2 test showed that the timeliness of corporate voluntary information is not statistically significant among the respondent groups at the level of 1%, 5% and 10% (Chi-Square = 2.890, df = 6, P = 0.823, mode =1) which indicate that there is homogeneity among the perceptions of respondents groups about the timeliness of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh. So the null hypothesis is accepted.

Users' perception on understandability of voluntary information

The essential quality of the information provided in financial statements is that it is readily understandable by the users. For this purpose, users are assumed to have a reasonable knowledge of business and economic activities and accounting and a willingness to study the information with reasonable diligence. However, information about complex matters that should be included in the financial statements because of its relevance to the economic decision-making needs of users should not be excluded merely on the grounds that it may be too difficult for certain users to understand. Users view about understandability of information incorporated in the corporate annual report is shown in the following table-10:

Table-10: Understandability level of voluntary information

Particulars	n and %	Respondent Groups				Total	Mode	SD	χ^2	df
		Teac.	P Act.	Inv.	SB					
Easily understandable	n	7	4	3	3	17	2	.43	5.64	6
	%	31.8	20	12.5	13	19.1				
Understandable	n	14	16	20	20	70				
	%	63.6	80	83.3	87	78.7				
Not understandable	n	1	0	1	0	2				
	%	4.5	.0	4.2	.0	2.2				
Total	n	22	20	24	23	89				
	%	100	100	100	100	100				

Note: **Teac.** = Teachers; **P. Act.**= Professional Accountant; **Inv.**= Investors; **SB** = Stockbrokers; **n** = No. of respondents, **SD** = Standard Deviation, **df** = degree of freedom P=0.465

Table-10 reveals the users' perception about the understandability of voluntary information that incorporates in the corporate annual report of Bangladesh. Table shows that 19.1% respondents' opinion information is easily understandable; 78.7% respondents' opinion information is understandable and only 2.2% respondents' opinion information is not understandable. The following null-hypothesis was drawn to ascertain whether there is any difference among user groups in this regard.

H₀ = *There are no significant differences in perceptions of the respondent groups about the understandability of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual reports in Bangladesh.*

The significance of the differences in perceptions among the respondent groups about the understandability of corporate voluntary information has been tested by undertaking a Pearson Chi-square test (χ^2) to find any relationship between respondents' groups and the perceptions about the understandability of the corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh.

The results of the Pearson χ^2 test showed that the understandability of corporate voluntary information is not statistically significant among the respondent groups at the level of 1%, 5% and 10% (Chi-Square = 5.641, df = 6, P = 0.465, mode =2) which indicate that there is homogeneity among the perceptions of respondents groups about the understandability of corporate voluntary information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh. So the null hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion :

Comprehensive analysis has been made about the users' perception of corporate voluntary disclosure that prevalent in the corporate sectors of Bangladesh. Respondents were categorized on the basis of their occupation as like professional accountant, teacher, investor and stock broker. The Chi-Square tests were carried out to test the nominated null-hypotheses. Result indicates that users perception is adverse of reliable information comprised in corporate annual report in Bangladesh. The presented corporate voluntary information practices of Bangladesh are not competent of gathering the users' information requirements. It demands appropriate remedial measures for improving the quality of corporate voluntary disclosure as early as possible.

The findings of this study have important implications for regulatory authority. enforcement agencies such as ICMAB, ICAB, SEC, DSE, policy makers, shareholders and others who have interest in corporate voluntary disclosure.

The major limitation of the study is that the opinion has been taken only 89 professional accountants, investors, stockbrokers and teachers. Future research can consider increasing the scope to include creditors, financial analysts and other related parties. This will provide additional evidence on corporate voluntary disclosure practices in Bangladesh.

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