

## Evaluating the Relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility Incentives and Financial Outcomes of Corporations Operating in the GCC Region

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### Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a concept that has gained traction in strategic management over the years, and it is continuously being cited as important for both the business and the business shareholders. Although there is much research examining the general CSR-CFP relationship, there is very little, if any, research that investigates the firms operating in GCC countries, which is the main objective of this study. One of the new methods used to measure Corporate Social Responsibility engagement in any organisation is the ESG rating. The ESG rating measures the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) dimensions of Corporate Social Responsibility engagement. This research uses the stakeholder theory framework, together with the agency theory framework to find the impact that CSR has on the financial performance of organisations. In the research, we used annual data of ESG and financial ratios of 98 publicly listed firms operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council, from 2008 to 2018. Regression analysis was used to test the impact of ESG scores on the financial performance of organisations. According to the results, the Environmental, Social, and Governance dimensions have a significant impact on the financial performance of organisations operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council. This study contributes to the body of knowledge on the relationship between CSR performance and Financial Performance.

**Keywords:** Corporate social responsibility CSR, Financial performance, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) score, Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCC).

## 1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility is the commitment of organisations to ensure that they contribute to sustainable economic development by ensuring that their activities do not affect the environment negatively and that the community in which they live can benefit from the activities of the organisations (Duong, 2024). Firms engage in different ways to ensure corporate social responsibility. Some of these ways include offering education scholarship training and developing employees, engaging in social activities such as sponsoring sports events, donating money for research and development, and even reducing wastage to ensure that the environment is not polluted (Lu et al., 2021). A firm engages in these activities, not as part of its legal responsibilities, or to follow laid down procedures, such as oil companies ensuring that their methods of oil extraction are sustainable as dictated by the government, but as a result of goodwill, such as sponsoring children from poor backgrounds and giving them scholarships to reputable universities. Since engaging in these activities requires the use of the company's finances, there is a lot of debate on why or why companies should not involve themselves in corporate social responsibilities (Zhang et al., 2020).

A study conducted by Lin et al. (2020), seeking to investigate the extent of the corporate social responsibility practices in the Gulf Cooperation Council, found that most top managers were willing to involve their organisations in Corporate Social Responsibility. The empirical result supported the use of Carroll's Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility constructs and the Lawrence et al. charity and stewardship principles. This is further strengthened by the fact that Gulf countries are known for their charity and stewardship principles. As such, the applicability of corporate social responsibility in those countries is further strengthened by these facts (Issa et al., 2022).

However, very few empirical studies have been conducted to determine the benefits that the application of corporate social responsibility in the Gulf Cooperation Council has to corporations despite there being a general assumption by the academia on the benefits that the application of corporate social responsibility will have on a company that practices it. Most of these benefits of corporate social responsibility to corporations in the Gulf Cooperation Council stem from the findings of other studies that have been conducted on different markets, different economies, and different value systems from the Gulf Cooperation Council (Ajina et al., 2020). This is a major limitation since what is true for other regions, economies, markets, and value systems might not apply to the context of the GCC's value systems, market, and economy.

Corporate Social Responsibility as a source of improved corporate financial performance has gained a lot of popularity within academic society. Different studies have shown that corporate social responsibility can have a positive impact on a firm's financial performance by ensuring that the firm remains competitive in the marketplace, improving the image of the organisation, and creating the organisation's brand awareness (Koleva et al., 2021). All these will help the company to improve their market size, win the customer's loyalty, motivate the firm's employees to be part of the organisation's dream, etc. Accordingly, through such actions, the firm will create value and improve its financial performance (TSOU et al., 2021).

Despite the studies supporting Corporate Social Responsibility as a source of competitive advantage for an organisation, some argue that engaging in CSR activities ~~reduces~~ the profit registered by a company which leaves a negative impact on the financial performance of the organisation and thus denies the company capital that it could have invested elsewhere to improve shareholder value (Pons et al, 2021). More so, those against the application of corporate social responsibility claim that the core purpose of any organisation is to create value for its owners, and the use of a company's finances to fund CSR activities goes against this objective. The argument is that the money used in funding the CSR activities could have been paid to the investors in terms of dividends. Furthermore, this money will eat into a company's capital base, thus reducing profitability and ultimately financial performance (Newman et al., 2020).

Given the conflicting views on the impact of CSR on the financial performance of organisations, it is therefore prudent to conduct an empirical study to determine if there is any relationship between corporate social responsibility and the financial performance of firms operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council (Le et al., 2023). No empirical investigation has been conducted in the GCC countries by using the ESG score model to determine if there is a relationship between the CSR activities through the three dimensions of the ESG score. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between CSR activities and corporate financial performance in the case of the GCC countries. Therefore, it intends to answer the following research question:

**RQ1:** What is the relationship between the environmental aspects of corporate social responsibility and the financial performance of organisations operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries?

**RQ2:** What is the relationship between social aspects of corporate social responsibility and firm financial performance of organisations operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries?

**RQ3:** What is the relationship between the governance aspects of corporate social responsibility on the financial performance of organisations operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council?

To investigate these research questions the research will test the following hypotheses:

**H1:** The environmental aspect of corporate social responsibility has a significant impact on the financial performance of organisations operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

**H2:** The social aspect of corporate social responsibility has a significant impact on the financial performance of organisations operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

**H3:** The governance aspect of corporate social responsibility has a significant impact on the financial performance of organisations operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

## 2. Literature Review

The search for relevant literature studies led to the discovery of similar and opposing views related to CSR, financial performance, firm size, and leverage.

### 2.1. Stakeholder Theory

The most notable stakeholders in any organisation are the political activism groups, regulatory agencies, competitors, government, customers, and shareholders. These have been recognized as stakeholders who influence the feasibility of the organisation (Long et al., 2020). The perceptions, values and norms that the stakeholders can influence the actions of the organisation even though the organisation's actions do not directly influence their lives. A good example is the case of Nike utilizing child labour in Pakistan even though the company sells its products across the world (Naz and Bögenhold, 2020). The company's utilization of child labour caused an uproar in the United States since its actions and activities were against the norms and values of the American people (O'Sullivan, 2020). In this case, the marketing and operations of organisations have excelled from narrow customer orientation to managing the benefits and relationships with a variety of stakeholders (Nicolaidis, 2021).

For a long time, it has been assumed that the only objective of any organization is to maximise shareholders' value and make profit as much as possible in the confines of law. The organisation was seen as having no other purpose but to meet the needs of the shareholders (Mayer, 2021). However, with time, this view has changed and many people appreciate the fact that there is more to an organization than meeting the demands of the shareholders. The objectives of the organization are increasingly becoming to ensure are creation of a good relationship with

stakeholders and to include a wide range of interests, the most notable one being the protection of the environment, and being socially responsible (Tetteh et al., 2024). Therefore, Corporate Social Responsibility is a way of satisfying the requirements of the stakeholder theory in an organisation. In the stakeholder theory, the success of the organisation and satisfying the needs of the shareholder are tied to the organisation and stakeholders' relationships and the needs of the shareholders cannot be met without sustaining the needs of other stakeholders (De Tommaso and Borini, 2024; Marcon Nora et al., 2023). According to this theory, organisations need to be engaged in corporate social responsibility to meet the needs of all stakeholders (Aguilera et al., 2024).

## 2.2. Agency Theory

Agency theory is concerned with the relationship that exists between the managers of an organisation and the shareholders (owners). In this case, an agency is where one party (the principal) engages another party, (the agent), to perform certain activities on their behalf and also delegates decision-making to the agents (Góes et al., 2023). The agent on the other hand acts on behalf of the principal and makes decisions and actions that will be of benefit to the principal. In the case of organisations, the managers of the organisation act as the agents of the shareholders and whatever actions they take should benefit the shareholders (Tiwari et al., 2023). The manager's main duty is to ensure the maximisation of profits and improvement of firm value on behalf of the shareholders. If the managers make decisions that do not satisfy the objective of the shareholder which is wealth maximization, then the agency problem occurs (Chen et al., 2023). One of the main agency problems is the conflicting objectives of the shareholders and the managers. In the case where there is a conflict of interests, then the agent can perform activities that are not in line with the shareholders' desires. In the case of the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility, the agency problem might occur (Namyanya et al., 2023).

## 2.3. Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility is the commitment of organisations to contribute to sustainable economic development by ensuring that their activities do not affect the environment negatively and that the community in which they live can benefit from those activities (Douglas, 2023). Corporate social responsibility actions can go further than what is required by the government and other legal entities. Corporate social responsibility can take three forms. It has a social aspect, an environmental aspect, and a governance aspect. These aspects determine how the CSR activities in the organisation are done, and they also affect the organisation differently (Jensen and Meckling,

2019; Sahasranamam et al., 2020; Hussain et al., 2020). The following is an explanation of each of these aspects of corporate social responsibility.

### **2.3.1. Environment**

Corporations are viewed as some of the sources of the negative impacts on the environment, and there has been increasing discussion on the impact of corporations on the environment. The main discussion revolves around how the actions of corporations and the consumption of natural resources have resulted in the steady decline of the environment's well-being (Tamvada, 2020). Due to the increasing public concern about the actions of organisations and their impacts on the environment, organisations are becoming more aware of their actions and the consequences these actions have on the environment. This has made the organisations not only concentrate on the societal dimension of CSR but also their responsibility to the environment, thus giving rise to this dimension (Zaid et al., 2020). Since the stakeholders are increasingly becoming aware of the need for organisations to take care of the environment and to ensure that they engage in sustainable activities, organisations have to handle the environment with care to ensure that they do not receive criticism (Velte, 2022). If the organisation shows its stakeholders that it is conscious of its actions and is doing everything possible to ensure that it reduces its negative impacts on the environment, then it will be able to maintain and improve its image. Caring for the environment is now used by firms as a strategy to attract positive publicity and thus gain reputational value and attract customers (Li et al., 2020).

### **2.3.2. Social Dimension of CSR**

According to García-Sánchez et al. (2021), companies are receiving increasing pressure to manage their social responsibilities and are therefore taking more time and resources and dedicating them to CSR activities so that they can meet the expectations of their stakeholders. Since stakeholders are more aware of the CSR activities of organisations, and their assumed benefits, the firms are more willing to ensure that they engage in sustainable activities. Examples are the donation of food, donation of healthcare equipment, sponsoring vaccination programs, and even ensuring that they have internal control mechanisms to ensure as little as possible impact on the environment.

According to Luger et al. (2022), consumer purchasing behaviour can be partly influenced by the social responsibilities that a company decides to engage itself in. During the social dimension of CSR, the company also indirectly creates awareness for its brand and also helps to achieve societal marketing.

Research shows that consumers are more willing to work with companies that engage in CSR activities such as donations, philanthropy and charitable giving. Ensuring that the company ensures that it meets the expectations of society about its CSR activities helps the company to generate positive long-term results (Zhang et al., 2020).

Ajina et al. (2020), conducted a study to determine how corporative social responsibility affects Chinese consumer behaviour. According to the results of this study, organisations that had a robust social responsibility had the ability to attract customers better through raising their brand awareness. These studies are consistent with those studies carried out by Tiep Le et al. (2023), Al-Swidi et al. (2021) and Prabhu and Aithal, (2023). These studies concluded that corporate social responsibility impacted on the consumption behaviour of a significant number of customers through increased brand awareness.

### **2.3.3. Governance**

Governance entails how the organisation treats its employees, the code of conduct of its leadership, and the values, culture and norms shared by the organisation. The public and other stakeholders are increasingly becoming aware of the need for organisations to treat their employees better, to ensure that there is no discrimination of employees, to create diversity in the staff, and to also ensure that all employees are treated equally, and the compensation given is good (Le et al., 2023). Research shows that employees are more willing to go to organisations that treat the employees better and have better governance. If a company uses the governance aspect of CSR, it will be able to attract and retain the best skills and talents in the industry (Barauskaite and Streimikiene, 2021).

## **2.4. Financial Performance**

In this study, the measures of financial performance that have been utilized are the Earnings before Interest Rates and Taxes (EBIT), Returns on Investments (ROI), Returns on Assets (ROA), and Earnings per share (EPS). These measures have been used in the majority of literature that aims to study the relationship between corporate social responsibility and financial performance as shown by Crossley et al. (2021), an extensive literature review on this topic.

### **2.4.1. Returns on Assets**

Returns on Assets is a financial ratio used to determine the net profit that a company gets for using a unit of assets for financial gain. It shows how profitable the activities of the organisation are relative to the total assets in the organisation.

The formula for determining the Returns on Assets is Choiriyah et al. (2021) and Nugraha et al. (2020) are examples of literature that have used this as a measure of financial performance while determining the relationship between CSR and financial performance.

#### **2.4.2. Returns on Investments**

Returns on Investment are used to measure the financial gains that a company gets for every unit of investment. It shows how efficient the organisation is in maximizing the returns it receives from its different investments in the market. If an activity is seen as good for generating returns from the investments, then it becomes easier for the organisation to engage in the activity and to make strategic decisions regarding the activity. The formula for determining Returns on Investments is by dividing the net income by the total investments made in the organisation (the original capital costs of the investment). Awaysheh et al. (2020) and Shabbir and Wisdom, (2020), are examples of literature that have used this as a measure of financial performance while determining the relationship between CSR and financial performance.

#### **2.4.3. Earnings before Interest Rates and Tax**

Earnings before Interest Rates and Tax is a measure of financial performance used to measure the gross income that a company gets before subtracting amortization, interest rates, taxes and depreciation. This helps to determine if the company is receiving any gross returns from its activities. Tripathi and Kaur, (2020) are examples of literature that have used this as a measure of financial performance while determining the relationship between CSR and financial performance.

#### **2.4.4. Earnings per Share**

Earnings per share are used to determine how well an organisation is maximising its shareholders' value. The formula for determining the earnings per share in an organisation is subtracting preferred dividends from the net income and dividing the weighted average common shares outstanding. The more the company allocates per share of the outstanding stock, the more the company is said to be performing better financially. Atz et al. (2021) and Awaysheh et al. (2020), are examples of literature that have used this as a measure of financial performance while determining the relationship between CSR and financial performance.

### **2.5. Link between Corporate Social Responsibility and Financial Performance**

The relationship between corporate social responsibility and the financial performance of organisations has been an area of constant research (Barauskaite and Streimikiene, 2021).



Many researchers have studied the impact that corporate social responsibility has on corporate financial performance in different contexts, and these studies have had differing views on the relationship between these two variables. Some researchers such as (Barauskaite and Streimikiene, 2021), and Bustani et al. (2021), have conducted the research and concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between the implementation and disclosure of corporate social responsibility and organisation financial performance. The following are some of the ways that the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility may lead to improved financial performance of the organisation.

### **2.5.1. Increased Ability to Attract and Retain Customers**

The larger the customer base that an organisation enjoys, the better the financial performance of the organisation might be. If the customer base is large, the company will enjoy economies of scale, will have more sales, and in the process reduce costs per unit of production, and improve revenue (Hernawati et al., 2021). Corporate Social Responsibility helps to attract customers since it improves the image of the organisation, improves the reputation of the organisation, and at the same time acts as a positive public relation (Mate et al., 2021). This ability to attract new customers will improve the size of the organisation's customer base. Corporate Social Responsibility helps to retain customers by cultivating a positive image for the organisation, and also adhering to the norms and values of the customers. If the organisations go against the value systems of the customers, then the customers are likely to boycott the organisation and look for substitutes (Lin et al., 2020). The case of Nike and Apple losing customers due to the involvement of child labour in their sweatshops in East Asia is an example of how organisations can lose customers if they do not adhere to the values and norms of the customers (Al-Mamary et al., 2020).

### **2.5.2. Better chance of attracting and retaining skilled and talented labour**

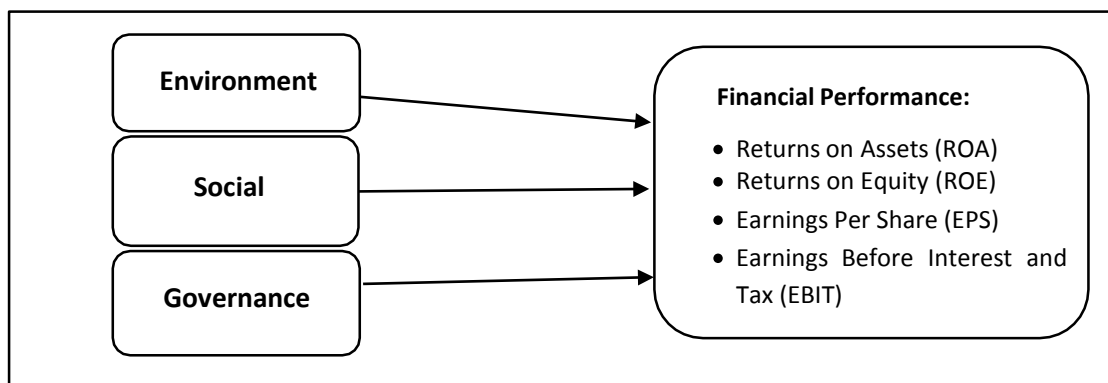
According to research, the corporate social responsibility activities of an organisation are one of the factors that employees consider before working for an organisation. Employees are more willing to work for an organisation that engages in sustainable and socially responsible activities (Hazée et al., 2020). This means that a company that has corporate social responsibility has a better chance of attracting talented and skilled employees in comparison to those organisations that do not. A company that has better and more skilled employees will have a competitive advantage over its competitors, and thus be in a position to compete better in the marketplace. This will improve productivity, and at the same time, the market share of the organisation (Pawlicki, 2022).

Corporate social responsibility actions such as offering scholarships to employees, training and educating employees, and proper working conditions are important for retaining employees (Raza et al., 2021). Retaining employees will reduce the turnover rate and thus reduce the costs associated with a high turnover rate in organisations such as the cost of recruiting, the cost of training and development, and the cost of lost productivity as the organisation searches for new employees to replace those employees that left the organisation. Reducing these costs will give the organisation a larger revenue margin and thus consequently improve the financial performance of the organisation (Simpson et al., 2020).

Other researchers such as Malik et al. (2021) have conducted the same study and concluded that the relationship between corporate social responsibility implementation and disclosure and the financial performance of organisations is a negative relationship. Furthermore, other researchers such as Lee (2021), and Nguyen et al. (2021), have established that there is no relationship that exists between the application and disclosure of corporate social responsibility and the financial performance of organisations. The main reason for this is that engaging in CSR requires resources, and this causes the company to increase its costs, which cuts the funds available for reinvestment. Using profits for CSR also means that the company will reduce the profit margin and consequently affect the financial health of the organisation (Partalidou et al., 2020).

### 2.6. Conceptual Framework

To test the hypothesis, the influence of environmental, Social, and Governance aspects of corporate social responsibility on a firm’s financial performance will be examined individually.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework.

### 3. Methodology

The research adopted a quantitative approach (Awwad et al., 2023) to determine the relationship between corporate social responsibility and corporate financial performance in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. ESG score was used to estimate the performance of the corporate social responsibility and the financial ratios (ROA, ROE, EPS, and EBIT) were used to estimate the financial performance. We used the Bloomberg Environmental, Social and Governance Database, which offers both the financial data and ESG information of 98 listed companies in GCC countries. Table 1 below shows the number of firms that were chosen from different sectors according to the availability of Data:

**Table 1:** Number of included firms by country.

Country	Number of Firm
BAHRAIN	6
EMIRATES	25
KUWAIT	10
OMAN	9
QATAR	19
SAUDI ARABIA	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>

We gathered financial data and ESG information, including the overall ESG disclosure score, components of environmental, social and governance disclosure scores and ESG activity-related data of global companies. The study examined the relationship between corporate financial performance and ESG scores. The variables for measuring corporate social responsibility are categorized into social corporate responsibility, governance cooperate social responsibility, and environment corporate social responsibility.

The researcher collected data for the dependent variables from secondary sources, from the individual organisation's financial reports for the years between 2008 and 2018. The use of longitudinal data in the research was essential since it helped the researcher to determine any perceived changes in the financial performance of the organisations that there researcher included in the research. The research also collected secondary data to measure the Corporate Social Responsibility of the organisations that were included in the study.

The secondary data was collected from the ESG scorecard, which is published every year, from the same period as the financial performance data. Data analysis was performed by conducting descriptive statistics to determine the spread, frequency, and distribution of the data. The inferential statistics techniques include Regression Analysis and the Analysis of Covariance.

Most literature proposes the following model for corporate social responsibility- corporate financial performance:

$$CFP_{it} = f(CSR_{it}, CFP_{it-1}, X_{it}) + \epsilon_{it}$$

Where  $I$  represent firm,  $t$  represents period, CFP, corporate financial performance as a function of CSR, the previous year's financial performance is the lagged  $CFP_{it-1}$ , the  $X$  are the control variables, and  $\epsilon_{it}$  the term error. The following is the general model derived from this:

$$FP = f(CSR, FirmsSize, Leverage)$$

So,

$$\begin{aligned} ROA &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 Env. + \beta_2 Soci. + \beta_3 Gov. + \beta_4 FirmSize + \beta_5 Leverage + error \\ ROE &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 Env. + \beta_2 Soci. + \beta_3 Gov. + \beta_4 FirmSize + \beta_5 Leverage + error \\ EPS &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 Env. + \beta_2 Soci. + \beta_3 Gov. + \beta_4 FirmSize + \beta_5 Leverage + error \\ EBIT &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 Env. + \beta_2 Soci. + \beta_3 Gov. + \beta_4 FirmSize + \beta_5 Leverage + error \end{aligned}$$

Earnings before interest rates and taxes (EBIT), Earnings per Share (EPS), Returns on Assets (ROA) and Returns on Investments (ROI), represent the financial performance of the organisation in each of these models. Firm Size, which represent total asset of the firm and Leverage ratio are the control variables. This research uses a panel data method as the variables contain data that varies over cross-sections and in the time-series dimension. All the regressions are run using GMM estimation technique. The GMM estimators are known to be consistent, asymptotically normal, and efficient in the class of all estimators that do not use any extra information aside from that contained in the moment conditions. It will take care of any consistency or auto correlations in the variables.

Validity and reliability are essential principles of any scientific research. The sources of data used in the research are valid and reliable, and a systematic scientific approach has been followed when conducting research to ensure reliability and validity of the research findings.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Descriptive analysis

The data collected through the years regards the financial performance as a result of engagement in CSR activities. The data collected was from the year 2014 to the year 2018. According to the mean in the descriptive statistics, the average of Environmental score is 17.8%, the Social Score is 5%, and the Governance is 11% (Table 2). The maximum and minimum show the range of values for each variable. The standard deviation shows how far the observations are from the sample average.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics Table.

	<b>Env.</b>	<b>Soci.</b>	<b>Gov.</b>	<b>ROA</b>	<b>ROE</b>	<b>EPS</b>	<b>LOG_EBIT</b>
Mean	17.86	5.09	11.84	3.28	6.88	0.617	3.67
Median	13.39	5.00	11.00	1.53	4.16	0.013	3.63
Maximum	47.32	58.33	64.28	41.25	384.07	13.95	3.90
Minimum	5.89	5.00	10.00	-39.83	-147.32	-3.50	3.09
Std. Dev.	13.35	12.44	19.22	7.40	19.16	1.73	1.03
Observations	1274	1274	1274	1274	1274	1274	1274

### 4.2. ANOVA Analysis

The significance value at 0.379 is higher than 0.05 for ROE, which means that the data collected is not statistically significant. On the other hand, the F statistic is lower than 2.5, which leads to the conclusion that the data is not statistically significant. The null hypothesis for EPS is that the mean (average value of the dependent variables) is the same for all groups. The alternative hypothesis is that the average is not the same for all groups. The ANOVA analysis results in a significant level of 0.012, which is beyond the set level of 0.05. The significance level falling within 0.05 means that the data is statistically significant. On the other hand, the F statistic is 10.264, which is higher than 2.5 thus one can reject the null hypothesis. The ANOVA test shows (Table 3) that the significance test of the data is 0.031, which is lower than 0.05 for EBIT. Therefore, the data is statistically significant, and one can rely on the results to make conclusions. Additionally, the F-statistic results in 6.473 a number higher than 2.5, which means that one can reject the null hypothesis.

**Table 3.** ANOVA Analysis Table.

Model	Analysis Type	Sum of Squares (Regression)	df (Regression)	Mean Square (Regression)	F-Statistic	Significance (Sig.)
1	ROA	3.261	5	0.652	3.952	0.0079
2	ROE	3115.992	5	623.198	1.337	0.379
3	EPS	114.720	5	22.944	10.264	0.012
4	EBIT	13189.378	5	2637.876	6.473	.031

### 4.3. Regression Analysis

This research uses a panel data method as the variables contain data that varies over cross-sections and in the time-series dimension. All the regressions are run using GMM estimation technique. GMM technique suits the panel data and was used by most of the studies in the literature because it takes care of any correlation and endogeneity between the explanatory variable which is a common issue when dealing with corporate financial data.

#### ROA Model

**Table 4.** ROA Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
<b>C</b>	2.455409	0.597243	4.111238	0.0000
<b>E</b>	0.023091	0.016081	1.435977	*0.0513
<b>S</b>	-0.050397	0.023991	-2.100686	*0.0359
<b>G</b>	0.010936	0.017257	0.633736	*0.0526
<b>LEVERAGE</b>	0.009662	0.008992	1.074512	0.2828
<b>LOG_SIZE</b>	0.119632	0.177644	0.673436	0.5008
<b>R-squared</b>	0.006016	Mean dependent var		3.280293
<b>Adjusted R-squared</b>	0.002096	S.D. dependent var		7.406400
<b>S.E. of regression</b>	7.398634	Sum squared resid		69410.04
<b>Durbin-Watson stat</b>	0.897807	J-statistic		9.12E-27
<b>Instrument rank</b>	6			

\*Significant level at 5%; Dependent Variable: ROA

From the return on asset regression results (Table 4), the equation is as follows:  $ROA = 2.455 + 0.023 \text{ Envi} - 0.050 \text{ Social} - 0.010 \text{ Governance}$ .

Therefore, a unit increase in environmental factors increases ROA by 0.023 units. On the other hand, a unit increase in social activities results in a 0.050 decrease in ROA while a unit increase in governance results in 0.010 unit decrease in ROA. However, other factors represented by the constant affect ROA with a unit increase in the other factors resulting in a 2.455 decrease in ROA.

**Table 5. ROE Regression Analysis**

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
<b>C</b>	-5.387076	1.545284	3.486140	0.0005
<b>E</b>	-0.091392	0.041606	-2.196583	*0.0282
<b>S</b>	0.076055	0.062073	2.225250	*0.0620
<b>G</b>	0.003161	0.044650	2.970787	*0.0543
<b>LEVERAGE</b>	0.007072	0.023265	0.303989	0.7612
<b>LOG_SIZE</b>	0.052062	0.459630	0.113270	0.9098
<b>R-squared</b>	0.005780	Mean dependent var		6.883989
<b>Adjusted R-squared</b>	0.001860	S.D. dependent var		19.16076
<b>S.E. of regression</b>	19.14294	Sum squared resid		464661.2
<b>Durbin-Watson stat</b>	1.328682	J-statistic		7.69E-27
<b>Instrument rank</b>	6			

\*Significant level at 5%; Dependent Variable: ROE

From the returned-on earnings regression results (Table 5), the equation is as follows:  $ROE = -5.387076 - 0.091392 \text{ Envi} + 0.076055 \text{ Social} + 0.003161 \text{ Governance}$

Therefore, a unit increase in environmental factors reduces ROE by 0.091392 units, which means that the company should not engage in many environmental activities to minimise reduction of ROE. On the other hand, a unit increase in social activities results in a + 0.076055 increase in ROE while a unit increase in governance results in a 0.00316 units growth in ROE. However, other factors represented by the constant affect ROE, with a unit increase in the other factors resulting in -5.387076 decrease in ROE. Therefore, the firm should focus on governance and social to increase ROE.

## EPS Model

Table 6. EBIT Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0.207869	0.139323	1.491992	0.1359
E	-0.016271	0.003751	4.337505	*0.0000
S	0.001026	0.005597	0.183382	**0.0854
G	0.004848	0.004026	-1.204182	*0.0287
LEVERAGE	-0.000405	0.002098	-0.192997	0.8470
LOG_SIZE	0.058370	0.041440	1.408521	0.1592
R-squared	0.017780	Mean dependent var		0.612977
Adjusted R-squared	0.013907	S.D. dependent var		1.738062
S.E. of regression	1.725935	Sum squared resid		3777.182
Durbin-Watson stat	0.327616	J-statistic		4.16E-27
Instrument rank	6			

Significant level at \*5% \*\*10%; Dependent Variable: EPS

From the earning per share regression results (Table 6), the equation is as follows:  $EPS = 0.2078 - 0.0162 \text{ Envi} + 0.001 \text{ Social} + 0.0048 \text{ Governance}$

Therefore, a unit increase in environmental factors reduces EPS by 0.0162 units, which means that the company should not engage in many environmental activities to minimise the reduction of EPS. On the other hand, a unit increase in social activities results in a 0.001 increase in EPS while a unit increase in governance results in a 0.0048 unit growth in EPS. However, other factors represented by the constant affect EPS, with a unit increase in the other factors resulting in 0.2078 increase in EPS. Therefore, the firm should focus on governance, social and other factors more since they result in an increase in EPS.

Table 7. EBIT Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0.653174	0.083893	7.785804	0.0000
E	0.002785	0.002259	2.233017	*0.0217
S	-0.002106	0.003370	-2.624850	*0.0532
G	0.001135	0.002424	2.468173	*0.0639



LEVERAGE	0.000427	0.001263	0.338274	0.7352
LOG_SIZE	-0.011763	0.024953	-0.471393	0.6374
R-squared	0.001675	Mean dependent var		0.678595
Adjusted R-squared	-0.002262	S.D. dependent var		1.038090
S.E. of regression	1.039264	Sum squared resid		1369.528
Durbin-Watson stat	0.350998	J-statistic		3.89E-26
Instrument rank	6			

\*Significant level at 5%; Dependent Variable: LOG\_EBIT

From the earnings before interest rates and taxation regression results (Table 7), the equation is as follows:

$$EBIT = 0.6531 + 0.0027 \text{ Envi} - 0.0021 \text{ Social} + 0.0011 \text{ Governance}$$

Therefore, a unit increase in environmental factors increases EBIT by 0.0027 units, which means that the company should engage in many environmental activities to minimize the reduction of EBIT. On the other hand, a unit increase in social activities results in a 0.0021 decrease in EBIT while a unit increase in governance results in a 0.0011 units growth in EBIT. However, other factors represented by the constant affect EBIT, with a unit increase in the other factors resulting in 0.6531 increase in EBIT.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Objective One: The Impact of the Social Dimension of CSR on CFP

One of the objectives of this research was to determine the impacts of the social dimension of CSR on the financial performance of the organisation. According to the results of this analysis, the social dimension of corporate social responsibility has an impact on the Returns on Assets, Returns on Equity, Earnings per Share and the Earnings before Interest Rates and Taxes of an organisation. The following table shows the results of the analysis on how the social dimension of corporate social responsibility impacts on the four measures of financial performance as used in this study.

The regression analysis shows the unit increase or decrease in either, Returns on Assets, Returns on Equity, Earnings per Share, and Earnings before Interest Rates and Taxes. According to the regression analysis above, a unit increase in social activities in corporate social responsibility leads to an increase in Earnings per Share by 0.0162 units, increase in Returns on Equity by 0.07605 units, a decrease in Earnings before Interest Rates and Taxes by 0.0021 units, and a decrease in Returns

on Assets by 0.050 units. Therefore, it can be said that the social dimension has a moderate positive impact on the financial performance of an organisation. On the one hand, it negatively affects the Returns on Assets and Earnings before Interest Rates and taxes, but on the other hand, it helps maximise shareholder value by improving the Returns on Equity and the Earnings per Shares that the shareholders receive. In this regard, the following conclusions can be made.

These results are consistent with those of studies such as Hernández et al. (2020). Hernández et al. (2020) used cross sectional data from Australia in order to determine the impacts of Environmental, Social and Governance dimensions of corporate social responsibility on the economic performance of organisations. The results showed that there was a moderately positive relationship between the social dimension of corporate social responsibility and the financial performance of organisations.

## **5.2. Objective 2: The Impact of Environmental Dimension of CSR on CFP**

The second objective of this research proposal was to determine the impact that the increase in Environmental dimension of corporate social responsibility has on the financial performance of organisations that operate in the Gulf Cooperation Council. According to the results of the regression analysis, the environmental activities have an impact on the Earnings before Interest Rates, Returns on Equity, Returns on Assets, and Earnings per Share of companies that operate in the Gulf Cooperation Council. The following table shows the beta and error coefficients of the Regression analysis of each of these measures of the Environmental dimension of corporate social responsibility against the measures of financial performance as adopted from the different regression analyses tables above. The Beta coefficients show the decrease or increase in the Returns on Assets, the Returns on Equity, the Earnings per share, and the earnings before interest rates and taxes due to a unit increase in the environmental dimension of corporate social responsibilities for the organisations that operate in the Gulf Cooperation Council. According to the analysis results, a unit increase in the Environmental dimension score has a positive impact on the returns on assets, and results in an increase by 0.023 units. A unit increase in Environmental activities has a negative impact on the returns on equity, and results in a decrease of return on equity by 0.091392 units. A unit increase in the environmental dimension of corporate social responsibility results in a positive increase of earnings before interest and taxes, which is an increase of 0.0027 units. A unit increase in the environmental dimension of corporate social responsibility results in a decrease of earnings per share, which is a decrease of 0.0162 units.

From these results, it can be concluded that the environmental dimension of corporate social responsibility has a moderate impact on the financial performance of an organisation. On the one hand it has a positive impact on some measures of financial performance such as returns on assets, and earnings before interest rates and taxes, while it has a negative impact on earnings per share, and returns on equity. These results are consistent with those of studies such as Liu et al. (2021). Liu et al. (2021) used lagged data to determine the relationship that exists between ESG, and financial performance and the results showed a positive correlation between the independent and the dependent variables.

### **5.3. Objective three: The Impact of Governance Dimension of CSR on CFP**

The third objective of this research was to determine the impacts that the governance dimension of corporate social responsibility has on the financial performance of organisations that operate in the Gulf Cooperation Council. According to the results of the regression analysis, the governance dimension of corporate social responsibility has more impact on the financial performance of organisations operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council, compared to the social and environmental dimensions. The following tables show the beta coefficients for the environmental dimension in the case of earnings per share, earnings before interest rates and taxes, returns on assets, and returns on equity. The table has been adopted from the four regression tables above.

The Beta coefficients show the decrease or increase in the Returns on Assets, the Returns on Equity, the Earnings per share, and the earnings before interest rates and taxes due to a unit increase in the governance dimension of corporate social responsibilities for the organisations that operate in the Gulf Cooperation Council. According to the analysis results, a unit increase in the governance dimension score has a small negative impact on the returns on assets, and results in a decrease by 0.010 units. A unit increase in governance activities has a positive impact on the returns on equity, and results in an increase of return on equity by 0.00316 units. A unit increase in the governance dimension of corporate social responsibility results in a positive increase of earnings before interest rates and taxes, which is an increase by 0.0011 unit. A unit increase in the governance dimension of corporate social responsibility results in an increase of earnings per share, which is an increase of 0.0048 units. From these results, it can be concluded that the environmental dimension of corporate social responsibility has a moderate impact on the financial performance of an organisation. On the one hand it has a positive impact on some measures of financial performance such as returns on assets, while it has a negative impact on earnings per

share, and earnings before interest rates and taxes and returns on equity. These results are consistent with those of studies such as that carried out by Tibiletti et al. (2021), which showed that the governance aspect had a higher positive impact compared to the social and environment dimensions of corporate social responsibility. Tibiletti et al. (2021), used cross sectional data in his research. The research showed a positive relationship between ESG and the financial performance of an organisation.

## 6. Conclusion

The results showed that Corporate Social Responsibility activities have an impact on the financial performance of organisations. It is therefore important that organisations in the Gulf consider implementing Corporate Social Responsibilities in their organisations, as strategies of improving financial performance as indicated by the results of this data. The regression model for earnings per shares shows that social, governance, and other factors in the environment result in an increase in EPS, while environmental dimension of corporate social responsibility leads to a decrease in the earnings per shares. Therefore, the firms should consider investing in activities geared towards the mentioned factors to achieve a gain in EPS. The constant factors resulting in an increase in EPS means that the company should engage in research to identify the unknown factors that increase EPS. Engaging further in these activities will help improve the EPS of the companies.

Companies, policy makers and other interested parties can also learn from the Returns on Assets Regression Model. The regression model shows that the environmental dimension of corporate social responsibility results in an increase in ROA, while the social dimension, governance dimensions and other factors lead to a reduction in ROA. Therefore, the firm should consider more investments in environmental activities. On the other hand, the company should invest in research to identify the other unknown factors represented by the constant that reduces Returns on Assets. Earnings before Interest Rates and taxes also have some implications for companies operating in the Gulf Council region. The regression model leads to the conclusion that environment, governance and other unconsidered factors result in an increase in EBIT, while social aspects of corporate social responsibility led to a decrease in Earnings before interest rates and taxes. Therefore, the firms should invest in their activities, especially environmental and governance actions due to the high rate of influencing EBIT increments. The company should also perform more research to determine the other factors that influence the gain in Earnings before interest rates and taxes.

The model that represents Returns on Equity is also important when it comes to making decisions regarding CSR, and the Environmental, Social and Governance aspects of CSR. According to the model, social and governance aspects of Corporate social responsibility has a positive impact on the Returns on Equity, while the Environmental dimension of Corporate social responsibility has a negative impact on the returns on equity. Therefore, if a firm wishes to improve its returns on equities, it should involve itself more with the social and governance dimensions of corporate social responsibility. In addition, the company should conduct more research to determine the negative factors that influence returns on assets. Acting on these factors would help to improve the returns on assets even further.

A limitation of the research was finding comprehensive data for all companies that have been listed and operating in the gulf cooperation council. Some of the companies lacked data and have not been included in this research. Nonetheless, the sampling design was randomly stratified and therefore, the data collected was representative of the entire region under study. Further research should be conducted to determine the barriers that the organisations in the Gulf Cooperation Council region suffer as they try to implement Corporate Social Responsibility. Furthermore, it is important to determine the critical success factors for the engagement of corporate social responsibility in the gulf cooperation council.

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