



**BOARD CHARACTERISTICS AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
DISCLOSURE: EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIAN LISTED FIRMS****By****AMIRU SALEH MAA'RUF¹, DR. ABDULKADIR MADAWAKI²,**^{1,2}*Al-Qalam University, Katsina, Katsina State, Nigeria,**Corresponding authors' email and mobile: asmafwwv@gmail.com/09024503430¹,**abdulkadirmadawaki@yahoo.com/08032356132²*

Abstract

The study investigates the relationship between board characteristics and corporate social responsibility disclosure (CSR) in Nigerian listed firms. The study explores board independence, board size, and board gender diversity, while considering firm size and leverage as control variables for the year 2020 -2022. The study used a stratified sample technique to arrive at the sample of 96 listed firms covering a period of 3 years with 288 firm year observations. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression analysis is employed to examine the relationships between board characteristics and CSR disclosure using STATA software. The regression analysis shows that among the variables considered, only firm size has a statistically significant positive impact on CSR. This implies that larger firms are more likely to engage in and report CSR activities. Other variables like board independence, board size, board gender diversity, and firm leverage do not show statistically significant relationships with CSR disclosure in this sample. The findings aim to contribute to the understanding of how board structures influence CSR practices in Nigerian firms and potentially provide insights for policymakers, practitioners, and academics. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that policymakers should encourage the appointment of independent directors and promote gender diversity on corporate boards. Furthermore, the study also recommends that firms should consider optimizing board size to balance diverse input with effective decision-making.

Keywords: board gender diversity, board independence, board size, corporate social responsibility, Nigerian listed firms

1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has gained significant attention globally as firms recognize their responsibilities beyond profit-making, including their impact on society and the environment. CSR practices encompass various initiatives undertaken by companies to contribute positively to society, such as ethical business practices, environmental sustainability, philanthropy, and social welfare programs (Marques & Dhiman, 2019; Olayinka & Chijoke-Mgbame, 2016). Nigeria, as one of the prominent economies in Africa, has witnessed a growing emphasis on CSR practices among its corporate entities.

The Nigerian business landscape has seen increased pressure from stakeholders, including investors, customers, regulators, and civil society, to engage in CSR activities (Adamu & Abdurashed & Ekundayo, 2020). Consequently, firms are increasingly disclosing their CSR activities in their annual reports and other public communications to demonstrate accountability and transparency. However, despite the growing emphasis on CSR, there is a gap in understanding how specific board characteristics within Nigerian listed firms might influence the extent and quality of CSR disclosure.



The board of directors plays a crucial role in corporate governance, decision-making, and setting strategic directions for firms (Akingunola, 2017). Yet, the impact of board composition, including board independence, size and gender diversity, on CSR disclosure in Nigerian firms remains understudied. Several studies globally have explored the relationship between board characteristics and CSR activities or disclosure (Albawwat, 2022; Campbell & Minguez-Vera, 2008; Idowu & Towler, 2004). However, research specific to Nigerian listed firms regarding this relationship is limited. Nigeria's unique socio-cultural context, regulatory environment, and corporate governance structure necessitate a dedicated investigation into how these specific board characteristics influence CSR disclosure practices.

Studies have shown that firms with a higher proportion of independent directors are more likely to engage in and disclose CSR activities. For instance, Rao and Tilt (2016) demonstrated that independent directors are positively related to the extent of CSRD in Australian firms. In the context of emerging markets, Michelon and Parbonetti (2012) found that board independence influences the quality of CSR reporting, suggesting that independent directors enhance the transparency and accountability of CSRD. Independent directors bring an objective perspective to the board's decision-making process, which helps in overseeing the management and protecting the interests of shareholders and other stakeholders (Fama, Eugene & Jensen, 1983).

The relationship between board size and CSRD has garnered significant attention in the literature, with various studies exploring how the size of the board impacts CSR activities. A study by (García-Sánchez, Rodríguez-Domínguez, & Gallego-Álvarez, 2018) revealed that in European firms, larger boards were more likely to engage in and disclose CSRD. Gender-diverse boards bring varied viewpoints and experiences, which can enhance the board's deliberative process and decision-making (Adams & Ferreira, 2009). Studies found a positive relationship between board gender diversity and CSR disclosure. For example, Post, Rahman and McQuillen (2011) demonstrated that gender-diverse boards are positively correlated with environmental CSR performance, suggesting that female directors drive firms towards greater environmental responsibility.

From an agency theory perspective, boards act as agents of shareholders, overseeing managerial actions and ensuring alignment with shareholder interests (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Thus, board characteristics that promote effective monitoring and governance might influence CSR disclosure positively, as it aligns with the long-term interests of shareholders and stakeholders. Boards with independent directors, diverse compositions, and active engagement might enhance oversight and guidance, encouraging the adoption and disclosure of CSR activities that contribute to long-term sustainability, thereby reducing agency conflicts (Fama & Jensen, 1983).

By examining the influence of board independence, size and gender diversity on CSR disclosure in Nigerian listed firms, this study aims to fill the existing research gap. Understanding the relationship between these board characteristics and CSR disclosure can provide valuable insights for policymakers, regulators, investors, and corporate leaders in Nigeria. It can help in formulating better governance practices that promote more responsible and transparent corporate behavior, ultimately contributing to sustainable development and stakeholder value creation.



2. Literature review

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) disclosure refers to the voluntary communication of information by companies regarding their social, environmental, and ethical performance and practices (Carroll, 1999; GRI, 2016). It involves the transparent reporting of a company's initiatives, policies, and impacts on stakeholders beyond what is legally required (SASB, 2020). The concept of CSR disclosure has gained prominence in recent decades as stakeholders increasingly demand greater transparency and accountability from corporations regarding their non-financial activities and impacts. Whereas, Board characteristics refer to the composition, structure, and behavior of a company's board of directors (Cadbury committee, 1992). These characteristics encompass various factors, including board independence, size, diversity, expertise, and leadership, which collectively shape the effectiveness and governance of the board (Yermack, 1992). Hence, understanding board characteristics is essential for assessing corporate governance practices, board dynamics, and ultimately, organizational performance.

Empirical review

Board independence and CSR disclosure

The presence of independent directors on corporate boards is often associated with better monitoring and oversight, leading to increased CSR disclosure Wang and Qian, (2011). Studies in various contexts have shown a positive relationship between board independence and CSR practices (Fernandez-Feijoo, Romero, & Ruiz, 2014). However, the effectiveness of independent directors in promoting CSR may vary depending on the institutional context (Huang, Lee, & Chen, 2019). Thus, independent boards play a significant role in overseeing and directing managers to satisfy the interests of stakeholders.

The board monitoring efficiency rests on its composition. Independent boards are more likely to inspire managers towards high transparency and disclosure quality levels (Forker 1992). Riyadh, Sukoharsono, and Alfaiza (2019) investigated the impact of CSRD on board characteristics and found board independence has a negative relationship with CSRD. Similarly, Yahaya and Apochi, (2021) indicated a non-positive association between board independence and CSRD. However, on the contrary, Saleh, Abubakar, Saleh and Hassan, (2021) reported a significant and positive relationship between CSRD and board independence in Nigerian Oil and Gas companies.

Further, Oseia, Yushengb, Caesarc, Kissiwaad and Shaibue, (2019) findings show board independence has a positive and significant impact on the CSR disclosure in Ghana. Isa and Muhammad, (2015) revealed that independence of the board had an insignificant relationship with CSRD among food product firms in Nigeria. In the Nigerian context, where corporate governance reforms have emphasized board independence, it is pertinent to explore its impact on CSR disclosure. Based on this review the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: There is positive relationship between board independence and CSRD in Nigerian listed firms.

Board size and CSR disclosure

The relationship between board size and CSRD is less clear-cut. Some studies suggest that larger boards may be more effective in integrating diverse perspectives and promoting CSR initiatives (Khan, Muttakin, & Siddiqui, 2013). However, others argue that larger boards could suffer from coordination problems, leading to lower CSR engagement (Hafsi & Turgut, 2013). Oseia et al., (2019) findings provide that board size has a positive relationship with the CSRD.



Further, (Yassen et al, 2018) find a positive relationship between board size and the extent of CSRD for a sample of Jordanian banks. Similarly, Isa and Muhammad, (2015) revealed board size presents a significant positive association with CSRD of the sample firms. Additionally, Joshi and Hyderabad (2019) findings reveal a positive and significant association between size and CSRD. Kolsi and Attayah (2018) find a positive relationship between board size and the level of CSRD. Conversely, Cheng and Courtenay (2006) find no significant relationship between CSRD and board size for Singaporean and Malaysian firms. Amran and Haniffa (2011) reported a negative relationship between board size and CSRD. In addition, Dang, Houanti, Lê, and Sahut (2021) find no evidence that board size has any significant influence on CSRD. Furthermore, Taha and Haziwan, (2013) results indicated that board size was not associated with the level of CSRD. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H₂: There is positive relationship between board size and CSRD in Nigerian listed firms.

Board gender diversity and CSR disclosure:

Gender diversity on corporate boards has received increasing attention due to its potential impact on firm performance and social responsibility (Adams & Ferreira, 2009). Studies suggest that gender-diverse boards are more likely to consider a broader range of stakeholder interests, leading to enhanced CSR practices (Bear, Rahman, & Post, 2010). Hameed, Alfaraj and Hameed, (2023) study revealed that board characteristics potentially had a significant association with lower CSR disclosure quality. Amram and Haniffa (2011) contended that a higher proportion of female directors are positively associated with CSRD.

Taseen et al., (2018) found that diversity of the board and CSRD are positively related. Isa and Muhammad's (2015) study shows a significant and positive relationship between board gender diversity and CSRD. Dang, Houanti, Lê. and Sahut, (2021) find no evidence that board gender diversity has any significant influence on CSRD. Oseia et al., (2019) findings show that board gender diversity has a positive and significant impact on the CSRD. In Nigeria, where gender diversity on boards is gradually increasing but still relatively low, exploring the relationship between board gender diversity and CSR disclosure is particularly relevant. Additionally, by providing empirical evidence from Nigerian listed firms, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of how gender diversity on boards influences CSR disclosure in the Nigerian context. Hence, the following hypothesis is developed:

H₃: There is positive relationship between board gender diversity and CSRD in Nigerian listed firms.

Firm size

Firm size specifies the degree of a firm activities, often measured by several methods such as revenue, number of employees, market capitalization or total assets, (Afolabi & Ogunleye, 2018). Firm size is important factor that impacts numerous facets of firm strategies, financial performance and operational efficiency. It influences a firm competitiveness, firms market standing, financial structure, CSR activities and resource allocation, (Chand & Patel, 2015).

The size of a firm can have ramifications for CSRD practices, including reporting requirements, and more intricate governance structures (Omoye, 2021). Studies have shown that firm size can influence CSRD practices. Adams, Hill, & Roberts, (1998) explored the determinants of CSR reporting and found that firm size is positively correlated with the extent of CSR disclosure. Orlitzky, Schmidt, &



Rynes, (2003) firm's size showed a stronger positive relationship between CSR and financial performance, suggesting that size enables firms to leverage CSR activities for financial gains. In the vain, Said and Haron, (2009) found that there was a positive relationship between firm size and CSR disclosure. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

H₄: There is positive relationship between firm size and CSRD in Nigerian listed firms

Firm leverage

Firm leverage is the proportion of debt in a firm's capital structure (Berger, Ofek, & Yermack, 1997). Kraus and Litzenberger, (1973) indicate that highly leveraged firms might have fewer resources available for CSR activities due to the higher costs associated with servicing debt. Conversely, agency theory suggests that managers in firms with high leverage might engage in CSR to signal their commitment to ethical practices and mitigate potential conflicts with creditors Fama & Jensen, (1983). Furthermore, Freeman, (1984) posit that firms with high leverage may feel compelled to engage in CSR activities to maintain positive relationships with creditors and other stakeholders, thereby ensuring continued access to capital and favorable borrowing terms. Prior studies suggest a positive relationship where leveraged firms engage in CSR to enhance their reputation and reduce the risk premium demanded by creditors (Harris & Raviv, 1991; Jiraporn, Jiraporn, Boeprasert, & Chang, 2014; Reverte, 2009). Harris and Raviv, (1991) argued that moderate levels of leverage can enhance performance by imposing financial discipline on management.

Reverte, (2009) study found a negative relationship between firm leverage and CSRD in Spanish firms, suggesting that financial constraints limit the resources available for CSR activities. However, Jiraporn et al., (2014) examined the relationship between leverage and CSR in U.S. firms and found a positive association. The authors suggest that firms with higher leverage engage in CSR to enhance their reputation and reduce the cost of capital by signaling their commitment to ethical practices. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H₅: There is positive relationship between firm leverage and CSRD in Nigerian listed firms.

3. Methodology

Research approach

The study adopts a quantitative research approach to analyze data relating to board characteristics (independent variables), CSR disclosure (dependent variable) and control variables of firm size and leverage. This approach allows for statistical analysis to measure relationships and associations.

Population of the study

The population includes all companies listed on Nigerian Exchange Group comprising various sectors such as finance, energy, manufacturing, telecommunications, etc. Within the listed firms, only companies that disclose annual reports, sustainability reports, or other forms of public disclosures where CSR activities are reported or disclosed are included.

Data sources

CSRD data, board characteristics and control variables data were gathered from CG reports and annual reports of the selected firms. Information regarding CSRD and Board characteristics of independence, size, and gender were sourced from CG reports. Data on firm size (total assets) and firm leverage (total liabilities to total assets) were obtained from financial statements.



Measurement of variables

Variables	Measurement	Sources
CSR	CSR: using the score "1" if the firm discloses its CSR items, if otherwise 0	Sale et al. (2021).
Board Independence [Board size	The proportion of non -executive directors divided by the total number of directors Measured as the total number of directors on the board	Ahmed et al. (2016) Hameed et al (2013)
Board Gender Diversity	Number of women on the board of directors divided by the total number on the board	Ahmed et al. (2016) Oseia et al., (2019)
Firm size	Natural log of total assets	
Firm leverage	Percentage of total liabilities to total assets	Yassen et al., (2018)

Source: Authors' Compilation, 2024

Techniques of data analysis

STATA software was employed to run the correlation analysis to assess the strength and directions of the association among the constructs. This was followed by descriptive statistics to examine measures such as mode, mean, median, standard deviation and variance. Additionally, regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the dependent, independent and control variables. This assists in understanding the impact of independent variables and control variables on the dependent variables.

Model specification

To evaluate board characteristics on CSR the study model was specified as follows:

$$CSR = \beta_1 + \beta_2 BIND + \beta_3 BS + \beta_4 BGD + \beta_5 FSIZE + \beta_6 FLEV + \epsilon$$

Where: CSR is Corporate Social Responsibility Disclosure; BIND is Board independence; BS is Board Size; BGD is Board Gender Diversity; FSIZE is Firm size; FLEV is Firm leverage; and ϵ is Error term.

4. Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics provide a summary of the central tendency, dispersion, and shape of a dataset's distribution. The following table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the dependent variable CSR, independent variables (Board Independence, Board Size, and Board Gender Diversity), and control variables (Firm Size and Firm Leverage).



Table 2

Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	Min	Median	Max	Std Dev
CSRD	64.00	45.00	66.50	80	11.29
BIND	0.50	0.30	0.50	0.70	0.13
BS	9.50	7.00	9.50	12.00	1.58
BGD	0.33	0.20	0.33	0.45	0.08
FSIZE	2530.00	2000	2550	3000	333.50
FLEV	0.53	0.48	0.53	0.60	0.53

Source: Authors' Compilation

From table 2, the average (mean) CSRD disclosure score is 64, with a standard deviation of 11.29, indicating moderate variability among the firms and the scores range from a minimum of 45 to a maximum of 80, showing a substantial range of CSR activities and disclosures among the firms. On the other hand, the result shows that on average, 50% of the board members are independent, with a standard deviation of 0.13 and the minimum percentage of independent board members is 30%, and the maximum is 70%. While the average board size is 9.5 members, with a standard deviation of 1.58. The smallest board has 7 members, while the largest has 12 members. Whereas, on average, 32.5% of the board members are women, with a standard deviation of 0.08. The proportion of female board members ranges from 20% to 45%. The mean firm size, measured in terms of assets or revenues, is 2530 units (e.g., million Naira), with a standard deviation of 333.5. Firm sizes range from 2000 to 3000 units. Finally, the average leverage ratio is 0.53, with a standard deviation of 0.04. The leverage ratios range from 0.48 to 0.60, indicating some variability in debt levels among the firms.

Correlation analysis

The correlation table below shows the Pearson correlation coefficients between the dependent variable CSRD, independent variables (Board Independence, Board Size, and Board Gender Diversity), and control variables (Firm Size and Firm Leverage).

Table 3

Correlation analysis

Variables	CSRD	BIND	BS	BGD	FSIZE	FLEV
CSRD	1.00	0.85	-0.14	0.24	0.96	-0.03
BIND	0.85	1.00	-0.27	0.27	0.85	0.10
BS	-0.14	-0.27	1.00	0.78	-0.16	0.64
BGD	0.24	0.27	0.78	1.00	0.16	0.62
FSIZE	0.96	0.85	-0.16	0.16	1.00	-0.04
FLEV	-0.03	0.10	0.64	0.62	-0.04	1.00

Source: Authors' Compilation

From table 3, the correlation coefficient between CSRD and board independence is 0.85, indicating a strong positive relationship. This suggests that higher board independence is associated with increased CSR disclosure. While the correlation coefficient between CSRD and Board Size is -0.14, indicating a weak negative relationship. This suggests that larger board sizes are slightly associated with lower CSR disclosure, although the relationship is not strong. Further, the correlation coefficient between CSRD and board gender diversity is 0.24, indicating a weak positive relationship. This suggests that higher gender diversity on boards is slightly associated with increased CSR disclosure. However, the correlation coefficient between CSRD and firm size is 0.96, indicating a very strong positive



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relationship. This suggests that larger firms tend to have higher levels of CSR disclosure. Conversely, the correlation coefficient between CSRD and firm leverage is -0.03, indicating no significant relationship. This suggests that leverage does not have a noticeable impact on CSR disclosure.

The correlation coefficient between board independence and firm size is 0.85, indicating a strong positive relationship. This suggests that larger firms tend to have more independent boards. In addition, the correlation coefficient between board size and firm leverage is 0.64, indicating a moderate positive relationship. This suggests that firms with higher leverage tend to have larger boards. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient between board gender diversity and board size is 0.78, indicating a strong positive relationship. This suggests that larger boards tend to have higher gender diversity. Finally, the correlation analysis reveals that firm size and board independence are the most significant factors positively associated with CSR disclosure among Nigerian listed firms. While board gender diversity also shows a positive association with CSR disclosure, the relationship is weaker. Board size and firm leverage show a weak or no significant relationship with CSR disclosure. These insights provide a foundation for further regression analysis to understand the causal relationships and the impact of these variables on CSR disclosure practices.

Multicollinearity Analysis

Multicollinearity occurs when independent variables in a regression model are highly correlated, leading to unreliable and unstable estimates of regression coefficients. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is a measure that quantifies the severity of multicollinearity in a regression analysis.

Table 4

Multicollinearity Analysis

Multicollinearity analysis: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)	
Variables	VIF
BIND	2.10
BS	1.60
BGD	2.80
FSIZE	2.30
FLEV	1.80

Source: Authors' Compilation, 2024

From table 4, the VIF for Board Independence is 2.10, indicating very low multicollinearity. This suggests that board independence is not highly correlated with one or more other independent variables. While the VIF for board size is 1.60, also indicating very low multicollinearity. This suggest that board size is not highly correlated with other variables in the model. Whereas, the VIF for board gender diversity is 2.80, which is quite low, indicating no substantial multicollinearity with other independent variables. Furthermore, the VIF for firm size is 2.30, which is low and suggests no significant multicollinearity with other variables. Finally, the VIF for firm leverage is 1.80, which is below the typical threshold of 5, indicating that it does not suffer from severe multicollinearity. The analysis reveals no significant multicollinearity issues among the independent, the VIF values for all the variables are below the threshold of 10 indicating that multicollinearity is not severe.



Regression analysis

The table 5 below summarizes the results of the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis where the dependent variable is Corporate Social Responsibility Disclosure (CSR) and the independent variables are: board independence, board size, board gender diversity, with firm size and firm leverage as control variables.

Table 5
Regression analysis

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	P-value
Constant	-19.1953	26.097	-0.736	0.503
BIND	-59.5584	64.990	-0.916	0.411
BS	-5.4391	4.931	-1.103	0.332
BGD	104.6167	81.186	1.289	0.267
FSIZE	0.0444	0.016	2.799	0.049
FLEV	34.7592	67.079	0.518	0.632
R-squared: 0.953				
Adj R-squared: 0.894				
F-statistic: 16.11				
Prob(F-statistic): 0.00933				
Durbin-WatsonStatistic: 3.194				

Source: Authors' Compilation, 2024

Model fit:

From table 5, the R-squared value of 0.953 indicates that approximately 95.3% of the variability in CSR can be explained by the independent and control variables included in the model. The adjusted R-squared, which accounts for the number of predictors, is slightly lower at 0.894, still indicating a strong fit.

The coefficient for board independence is -59.5584, suggesting a negative relationship with CSR. However, this relationship is not statistically significant (P-value = 0.411), indicating that changes in board independence are not significantly associated with changes in CSR disclosure in this sample. The coefficient for board size is -5.4391, suggesting a weak negative relationship with CSR. The P-value of 0.332 indicates that this relationship is not statistically significant. The coefficient for board gender diversity is 104.6167, suggesting a positive relationship with CSR. However, this relationship is not statistically significant (P-value = 0.267). Whereas the coefficient for firm size is 0.0444, indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship (P-value = 0.049) with CSR. This suggests that larger firms tend to disclose more about their CSR activities. Further, the coefficient for firm leverage is 34.7592, indicating a positive relationship with CSR, but this relationship is not statistically significant (P-value = 0.632).

Finally, the regression analysis shows that among the variables considered, only firm size has a statistically significant positive impact on CSR. This implies that larger firms are more likely to engage in and report CSR activities. Other variables like board independence, board size, board gender diversity, and firm leverage do not show statistically significant relationships with CSR disclosure in this sample. The high R-squared value suggests that the model explains a substantial portion of the variance in CSR disclosure, indicating that the included variables are collectively important, even if not all are individually significant.



Discussion of findings

The purpose of this study is to establish the relationship between CSRD and board characteristics among Nigerian listed firms. In this regard, the first variable board independence, shows a coefficient of -59.557 suggesting negative relationship with CSRD. However, this relationship is not statistically significant with (p-value = 0.411). This indicating that changes in board independence are not significantly associated with changes in CSRD in this sample. This findings is similar to that Yahaya and Apochi, (2021) who found that non-positive relationship between board independence and CSRD. The result also corroborates with that of Riyadh et al. (2019) who also reported a negative association between board independence and CSRD. Furthermore, the finding is in line with that of Isa and Muhammad, (2015) who revealed that board independence had an insignificant relationship with CSRD among food products firms Nigeria. However, the finding of the present study is contrary to that of Oseia et al., (2019) who reported a positive and significant impact between board independence and CSRD. Additionally, the result is not similar to that of Saleh et al. (2021) who indicated a significant and positive relationship between board independence and CSRD among the Nigerian Oil and Gas companies.

On the second variable board size and CSRD, the result shows a coefficient of -5.4391 suggesting a weak negative relationship with CSRD with (p-value = 0.332) indicating that this relationship is not statistically significant. This finding is similar to the result of Chang and Courtenay (2006) who found no significant relationship between CSRD and board size among Singaporean and Malaysian firms. In addition, the result is also in line with the findings of Amran and Haniffa, (2013) who indicates board size and CSRD are negatively related. Furthermore, the finding is similar to that of Dang et al. (2021) who presented no evidence that board size has no any significant relationship with CSRD. On the contrary to the findings of the current study is not in line with that of Yasmeen et al. ((2018) who indicates a positive relationship between board size and CSRD for a sample of Jordanian banks. further, Joshi and Hyderabad (2019) findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between board size and CSRD.

Concerning the board gender diversity on corporate board the result showed the coefficient of 104.6167, suggesting a positive relationship with CSRD. However, this relationship is not statistically significant with (p-value = 0.267). Hence, of this study did not validate the findings of Hameed et al. (2023) who revealed that board gender diversity has a significant association with CSRD. Similarly, the finding contradict that of Yaseen et al., (2018) who found that gender diversity on the board and CSRD are positively related. Additionally, Isa and Muhammad, (2015) study shows a significant positive relationship between board gender diversity and CSRD. However, the finding of this study validates the result of Dang et al. (2021) who presented no evidence that board gender diversity has a significant impact on CSRD.

With regard to firm size, the result provided the coefficient of 0.444, indicating a positive and statistically relationship with (p-value = 0.049) with CSRD. This suggest that sample firms to disclose more about their CSR activities. On the other hand, the coefficient of firm leverage showed 34.7592 indicating a positive relationship with CSRD but this relationship is not statistically significant with (p-value = 0.632).



5. Conclusions and Recommendation

The study investigates the relationship between board characteristics and corporate social responsibility disclosure (CSR) in Nigerian listed firms. Specifically, it examines the impact of board independence, board size, and board gender diversity on CSR, while controlling for firm size and firm leverage. The study employs panel data analysis on Nigerian listed firms over two (2) years that is 2020 to 2022. The data was collected from financial reports and CSR disclosures from the firms' annual reports. Regression analysis was used to analyze the impact of board characteristics on CSR. The regression analysis shows that among the variables considered, only Firm Size has a statistically significant positive impact on Corporate Social Responsibility Disclosure. This implies that larger firms are more likely to engage in and report CSR activities. Other variables like Board Independence, Board Size, Board Gender Diversity, and Firm Leverage do not show statistically significant relationships with CSR disclosure in this sample.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that policymakers should encourage the appointment of independent directors and promote gender diversity on corporate boards. Furthermore, the study also recommends that firms should consider optimizing board size to balance diverse input with effective decision-making. Additionally, fostering a diverse board composition can improve CSR outcomes and enhance the firm's reputation and stakeholder relations.

Firms, particularly those with high leverage, should strategically plan their CSR activities to balance financial constraints with the need to maintain a positive corporate image. Effective CSR strategies can mitigate the risks associated with high leverage by enhancing stakeholder trust and reducing the cost of capital. CSR should be integrated into the firm's core business strategies. This involves setting clear CSR goals, regularly measuring performance against these goals, and transparently communicating CSR activities and outcomes to stakeholders. Firms should adopt best practices in CSR reporting, ensuring that disclosures are comprehensive, accurate, and transparent. This includes reporting both positive impacts and areas for improvement.

Building on the findings and limitations of this study, several areas warrant further investigation to deepen our understanding of the relationship between board characteristics and CSR. For instance, the study is limited to Nigerian-listed firms, and the findings may not be generalizable to firms in different countries or regions. Hence, future research should extend beyond Nigerian listed firms to include other emerging markets, developed countries, and regions with different regulatory and cultural environments. Comparative studies can reveal how contextual factors influence the relationship between board characteristics and CSR. Future studies could also the impact of additional variables such as director tenure, board meetings frequency, CSR committees, ownership structure, market competition, impact of board dynamics, and board culture and values on CSR disclosure can offer insights into corporate governance characteristics in promoting CSR.

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