

## Article

# Corporate legal responsibility in the context of environmental sustainability and corporate governance

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**Abstract:** The research underscores the pivotal role of corporate governance in analyzing corporate legal responsibility within the context of corporate governance and environmental sustainability. The increasing societal awareness about climate change and social equity has compelled companies to scrutinize their operations' environmental and social impacts. These corporate legal responsibilities encompass adherence to environmental regulations, human rights, and labor practices. The research methodology is a comprehensive literature study, aligning with the research context. The findings underscore that compliance with legal responsibilities forms the bedrock of sustainable business practices. The analysis culminates in the assertion that robust corporate governance plays a pivotal role in guiding companies to not only meet existing environmental and social regulations but also integrate sustainability considerations into their corporate culture. The potential consequences of non-compliance are severe, including reputational damage, legal penalties, and environmental and social harm. This triumph is evident in the enhanced transparency, accountability, and environmental and social performance.

**Keywords:** environmental sustainability; corporate governance; corporate legal responsibility; corporate social responsibility

## 1. Introduction

In an era of globalization and rapid economic growth, companies' role in promoting environmental sustainability is crucial. The demand for socially and environmentally responsible business practices is greater than ever, accompanied by increased public awareness and stricter government regulations. Environmental sustainability is not only limited to natural resource management but also includes emissions reduction, waste management, and energy efficiency.

Environmental sustainability stands as a critical pillar in the preservation of human existence and the assurance of future human life quality. The contemporary environmental landscape is fraught with global warming, climate change, air and water quality deterioration, and natural resource exhaustion [1]. The repercussions of not taking concrete steps to enhance and sustain environmental sustainability are dire, including ecosystem destruction, biodiversity loss, and the escalation of increasingly severe and frequent natural calamities. These consequences not only jeopardize the survival of other species but also the health, safety, and economy of human communities worldwide [2]. The issue of environmental sustainability becomes vital for companies. The duties and tasks of corporate governance shall embody the importance of corporate social responsibility, not just for its philanthropy. Corporate social responsibility shall be able to be used to maintain the sustainability issue of the environment for the company and its stakeholders.

With this, the move to implement sustainability principles becomes not only urgent but also essential for corporations. Environmental sustainability ensures that natural resources are used efficiently and wisely, minimizes waste and pollution, and promotes the use of renewable energy [3]. This helps to limit human impact on the environment, ensuring that future generations can enjoy and benefit from it as much as current generations. By prioritizing sustainability, humanity can establish a firmer foundation for inclusive and responsible economic growth, innovation, and global prosperity for all life on earth [4].

Corporations play a key role in addressing environmental issues, given that they are a significant party to the consumption of natural resources and the production of waste and emissions. As agents of economic development, corporations have the responsibility and opportunity to steer their practices toward sustainability [5]. Key issues include reducing carbon footprints, effective waste management, efficient use of resources, and transitioning to renewable energy. In addressing these challenges, companies are not only faced with demands to meet stringent environmental standards and regulations, but they will also face increasing pressure from consumers, investors, and society at large for corporate social responsibility (CSR) [6]. In this context, measures such as innovations in green technologies, collaboration with government and non-government organizations, and the application of circular economy principles are fundamental for corporations to contribute significantly to reducing negative environmental impacts and safeguarding the sustainability of resources for the future [7].

Companies are legally obligated to meet environmental standards set by various national and international regulations. Failure to comply with these standards can result in significant legal sanctions, reputational damage, and long-term financial impacts. Therefore, the role of corporate governance in integrating environmental sustainability principles into business strategy and operations is critical [8]. Every company shall implement the principles of good corporate governance or, in short, good governance to comply with the standards.

In many jurisdictions worldwide, companies face a range of legal responsibilities relating to environmental sustainability. These regulations range from requirements to comply with set emission standards and appropriate waste management to mandates to disclose corporate environmental impacts in their annual reports [9]. Environmental laws, such as the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act in the United States or the European Union Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) regulations in Europe, set the legal framework that corporations must comply with [10]. The realization that environmental damage can have serious legal consequences, including fines, litigation actions, and reputational damage, encourages companies to implement environmental compliance as part of ethical and responsible business practices, which increases the money that the company must bear. In view of the cost of environmental sustainability compliance, the economics of law can be used to calculate the cost of legal and compliance risk to reduce unnecessary costs. However, the research will only focus on the legal responsibilities of a corporation.

In addition, companies also face legal responsibilities relating to transparency and reporting. Markets and regulators demand greater disclosure of how companies manage environmental and social risks. Initiatives such as the Global Reporting

Initiative (GRI) and the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) are introducing standards for disclosure that help stakeholders assess how companies are responding to environmental challenges [11]. Companies that fail to implement good environmental governance risk stumbling into complex lawsuits, including class action lawsuits from shareholders or third parties affected by their business practices. Preventive action, proactive compliance, and transparent reporting are critical issues in navigating the realm of environmental sustainability, which not only protects companies from legal risks but also strengthens their position in the market and increases public trust [12].

However, major challenges remain in effectively implementing these legal responsibilities. The question of how effective corporate governance is in fostering compliance with environmental regulations and promoting sustainability continues to be debated. This research is expected to delve deeper into how corporate legal responsibility can be enhanced through effective corporate governance mechanisms and explore the effectiveness of current policies in achieving environmental sustainability goals.

Against this background, this research aims to deeply analyze companies' legal responsibilities in the context of environmental sustainability and examine the role and effectiveness of corporate governance in dealing with and addressing existing environmental problems in general. It will mainly focus on the legal responsibilities of the corporation to comply with corporate governance to maintain environmental sustainability. This research will provide more comprehensive perspectives and recommendations for companies and regulators to improve compliance and sustainability practices.

## **2. Materials and methods**

In this study, the authors used the literature research method. The literature research method relies on collecting data from literature sources relevant to the research topic [13,14]. This process involves keyword searching, analyzing, and synthesizing information from various literature sources such as books, journal articles, research reports, and online and offline documents. Literature research identifies existing studies' gaps, builds a theoretical framework, and formulates hypotheses or research questions based on available knowledge [15]. Therefore, the data used in this study are secondary data, which are data available to the public and can be used freely by making explicit references. There were stages in conducting the literature review. From hundreds in a preliminary search, it was finally reached that not more than twenty-seven manuscripts were reviewed.

In addition to identification and analysis, the literature research method also involves evaluating the sources' quality to ensure that the information used in the research is valid and reliable. The management of research materials involves reading, recording, and organizing data from the selected literature to support the findings and conclusions of the research. Therefore, literature research methods not only prioritize the number of sources found and reviewed but also emphasize the importance of their quality and relevance to the research problem [16].

The data will be analyzed using qualitative methods instead of quantitative methods because the object of the analysis is related to the use, interpretation, implementation, and application of norms in practice. To obtain and maintain the validity and reliability of the analysis, it was conducted in-depth by collecting as much data as possible related to the issues and then discussing them thoroughly.

### **3. Results and discussion**

#### **3.1. Environmental sustainability in business**

Environmental sustainability in business has become one of the key pillars of corporate strategy worldwide as awareness of the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation increases [1]. Efforts to make business practices more sustainable are motivated not only by legal obligations or regulatory pressure but also by recognizing that sustainability can be a source of innovation, operational efficiency, and competitive advantage [2]. By integrating environmental considerations into strategic decisions, such as more efficient resource use, investment in renewable energy, and waste reduction, companies can reduce operational costs, minimize risks, and build a positive reputation in the eyes of consumers, investors, and other stakeholders [3].

In addition, environmental sustainability strengthens a company's relationship with its surrounding community and environment, encouraging collaboration and partnership initiatives that benefit both parties. For example, by adopting a circular economy model, companies contribute to reducing environmental impacts and creating new business opportunities through product returns and recycling [4]. Engaging in sustainability also enables companies to respond more to changing regulations and dynamic market requirements, ensuring long-term business viability. Thus, integrating environmental sustainability into the psyche and practices of businesses is key not only to maintaining the planet's health but also to underpinning future business growth and resilience [5].

However, transitioning to more sustainable business practices is difficult and often requires a holistic approach. This involves changes in leadership and organizational culture, capacity building, and innovation in products and processes [6]. Leading companies with sustainability as part of their DNA often use frameworks such as the Triple Bottom Line (People, Planet, Profit) that consider social and environmental impacts integral to financial success [7]. This requires companies to report not only on their financial returns but also on their contribution to society. Environmental sustainability challenges have encouraged innovative cross-sector collaboration, including partnerships with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and local communities to achieve common goals [8].

In the future, environmental sustainability is expected to be more integrated into business in response to consumer expectations, stricter regulatory initiatives, and the urgency of the accelerating climate crisis. New technologies, such as big data and artificial intelligence, offer the potential for better analytics in environmental resource monitoring and management [9]. Ultimately, the shift towards sustainability is a wise investment not only for the company's long-term success but also for the well-being of generations to come. These initiatives are part of a new paradigm in business, where

profitability is closely linked to a company's ability to operate in a way that respects and enriches the natural world upon which all life and economic resources are based. Until today, people might not find it necessary to appreciate and enrich the natural world because the result and benefit cannot be obtained, felt, or enjoyed immediately or at least in a short time period. It needs patience.

### **3.2. Legal responsibility and corporate compliance**

In the future, environmental sustainability is expected to be more integrated into business in response to consumer expectations, stricter regulatory initiatives, and the urgency of the accelerating climate crisis. New technologies, such as big data and artificial intelligence, offer the potential for better analytics in environmental resource monitoring and management [9]. The use of big data and artificial intelligence can assist the company to foresee the oriented results in the future much more accurately. Ultimately, the shift towards sustainability is a wise investment not only for the company's long-term success but also for the well-being of generations to come. These initiatives are part of a new paradigm in business, where profitability is closely linked to a company's ability to operate in a way that respects and enriches the natural world upon which all life and economic resources are based.

Legal responsibility and corporate compliance are essential elements of contemporary business management. Every business, especially those that operate on an international scale, must ensure that all of its operations comply with the laws and regulations that apply in each jurisdiction in which it operates [17]. This covers a wide range of aspects, from environmental regulations, anti-corruption laws, labor legislation, and product safety regulations to compliance with international trade standards. Compliance not only reduces the risk of penalties, fines, or sanctions that could potentially hurt the business financially but is also important in building reputation and trust from stakeholders [18]. Therefore, many companies appoint a Chief Compliance Officer or a specialized department responsible for monitoring, reporting, and managing compliance risks.

Accordingly, many companies have developed comprehensive compliance programs that often include employee training, periodic audits, and reporting systems that quickly identify and resolve legal and ethical issues. Adopting good corporate governance and strong business ethics—including ensuring transparency in operations and accurate financial reporting—can help avoid unintentional compliance violations, which may result from employees' lack of awareness or understanding [19]. In a tightly connected global economy, ensuring that all parts of the company, including supply chains and partners, are held to an equal standard of compliance is becoming increasingly important to avoid legal implications that could damage the image and future sustainability of the business [20]. Each corporate compliance requires the same commitment and conduct from all other corporations having business cooperations and relations with the corporation, whether they are the suppliers or the users in the supply chain process. Failure of any of them might fail total compliance.

The development of information technology has also played an important role in strengthening compliance and governance practices in companies. With the help of sophisticated compliance software, companies can more easily identify risk areas and

automate the data collection process to meet regulatory reporting requirements [21]. These technologies enable real-time analytics that facilitate continuous compliance monitoring and provide insights for proactive decision-making. For example, using big data and AI algorithms, companies can detect patterns that indicate potential legal violations or corrupt activities and take immediate corrective action [22].

Furthermore, the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability has brought an additional dimension to corporate compliance. Companies are not only expected to comply with the law but also to be proactive in addressing social and environmental challenges [23]. This requires companies to go beyond minimal compliance and innovate how they do business. Integrating socially responsible and sustainable business practices often involves working with stakeholders, including governments, local communities, and advocacy groups, to create shared value [24]. These efforts not only strengthen the progress of compliance and corporate responsibility but also help build a strong brand and create a competitive advantage in the market [25].

In the face of today's global complexity, businesses that successfully demonstrate a strong commitment to legal compliance and corporate responsibility are more likely to earn the trust of consumers, investors, and society at large. This requires an integrated approach to business strategy, where compliance, ethics, social responsibility, and sustainability become important pillars in realizing the company's vision and mission. At the end of the day, companies that operate with transparency, integrity, and high ethical considerations not only survive amidst uncertainty and increased regulatory pressure but also thrive and achieve long-term success.

### **3.3. Corporate governance and its principles**

Corporate governance is the system by which companies are managed and controlled. Key principles of corporate governance include transparency, accountability, fairness, and responsibility [26]. The principle of transparency requires companies to provide relevant and accurate information about their activities and finances to stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, customers, and the general public. Accountability implies that management should be accountable to the board of directors, who, in turn, should be accountable to shareholders. Fairness refers to fair and equal treatment for all shareholders, including minority shareholders. Meanwhile, responsibility implies that companies should properly consider all stakeholders, including the environment and society [27].

Effective corporate governance requires a strong and independent board of directors capable of making objective decisions and exercising oversight over executive management. Applying high ethical standards and strong enforcement of codes of conduct are also crucial in managing companies and preventing conflicts of interest [28]. In addition, good internal control systems and independent audits are important instruments to ensure the reliability of financial reporting and compliance with laws and industry standards. By applying these principles, corporate governance seeks to optimize long-term corporate value, strengthen the integrity and stability of the financial sector, and enhance investor confidence and market credibility [29].

Effective corporate governance not only increases investor confidence but also strengthens a company's reputation in the eyes of the public. Companies that are known to have high standards of corporate governance generally have easier access to market capital and obtain more favorable conditions. This is because good corporate governance signals effective risk management, greater transparency, and sustainable growth potential. As such, corporate governance is becoming an important aspect of companies' business strategies for long-term growth and sustainable development [30].

However, given the increasing complexity of the global business environment and fast-changing regulatory dynamics, the challenges for effective corporate governance implementation continue to grow. Therefore, companies must continuously update their corporate governance practices to balance stakeholder needs and regulatory requirements. This requires the active involvement of the board of directors, executive management, and other stakeholders in reviewing and improving corporate governance standards [31].

In conclusion, strong corporate governance and its underlying principles are essential foundations for business success and sustainability in today's globalized era. Through a strong commitment to transparency, accountability, fairness, and responsibility, companies can build a solid foundation for growth, overcome challenges, and create long-term value for their stakeholders. Amidst increasing global competition and complexity, companies with effective corporate governance will continue to stand out as the top choice for investors, customers, and talent.

### **3.4. The relationship between corporate governance, legal liability, corporate social responsibility strategy and implementation**

A corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy involves integrating responsible business practices toward the environment, community, employees, shareholders, and other stakeholders in a company's day-to-day operations. An effective CSR strategy is usually designed to create long-term value and demonstrate the company's commitment to sustainable development [32]. It begins with an in-depth understanding of the social and environmental issues most relevant to the company's operations and its stakeholders. Then, planning involves developing specific initiatives that directly address these issues, such as emissions reduction programs, community education initiatives, or employee welfare programs. An impactful CSR strategy also requires setting clear and measurable goals, ensuring that there is a framework to evaluate the effectiveness of CSR activities [32].

Implementing corporate social responsibility requires an organized approach and strong commitment from all levels of the organization. Companies often establish dedicated CSR teams or departments responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring related programs to ensure effectiveness. Engagement and support from company leadership are crucial to fostering a culture of social responsibility throughout the organization [33]. Implementation can range from internal initiatives, such as improving energy efficiency, to external projects, such as building community facilities or collaborative programs with NGOs. Effective communication with

stakeholders, including regular reports on CSR progress, is also important to demonstrate transparency and strengthen public trust and stakeholder support [34].

Furthermore, measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of CSR programs is an important step in the implementation cycle of corporate social responsibility. Clear and consistent assessment metrics help companies determine whether CSR objectives have been achieved and how initiatives can be improved for the future [35]. The use of technology and big data can play a vital role in analyzing results and identifying areas for improvement. This continuous evaluation not only assists companies in improving their social and environmental impacts but also optimizes resource allocation to initiatives that deliver the most value [36].

Finally, companies must ensure that their CSR practices evolve in line with changing social, environmental, and policy conditions. A dynamic and adaptive approach to CSR allows organizations to remain relevant and responsive to new challenges that arise. Embedding social responsibility into the corporate DNA and building strong collaborations with external stakeholders—including communities, governments, and other private sectors—will strengthen the long-term effectiveness of CSR efforts. Through continuous implementation and adaptation of CSR strategies, a company can enhance its reputation and customer satisfaction and secure long-term financial performance and positive contributions to society. Therefore, it is crucial to understand that implementing corporate governance will keep and maintain the corporation from unnecessary legal liability, which needs a sound CSR strategy.

### **3.5. The link between good governance and legal compliance**

Finally, companies must ensure that their CSR practices evolve in line with changing social, environmental, and policy conditions. A dynamic and adaptive approach to CSR allows organizations to remain relevant and responsive to new challenges that arise. Embedding social responsibility into the corporate DNA and building strong collaborations with external stakeholders—including communities, governments, and other private sectors—will strengthen the long-term effectiveness of CSR efforts. Through continuous implementation and adaptation of CSR strategies, a company can enhance its reputation and customer satisfaction and secure long-term financial performance and positive contributions to society.

The link between good governance and legal compliance is one of the basic pillars of creating an effective and fair governance system. Good governance refers to the practice of managing resources and power in a transparent, accountable, fair, and responsive manner to the needs of society. This cannot be separated from the principle of legal compliance, which is an absolute requirement for a government to gain the trust and legitimacy of its people [37]. Legal compliance means that the government and all its institutions operate within the established legal framework, ensuring that all its policies and actions are based on the rule of law. This creates a strong foundation for clean governance, where decisions are made based on evidence and transparent procedures, and citizens' rights are protected [38].

Furthermore, this link strengthens the social justice and corruption prevention aspects of governance. Good governance that supports legal compliance inherently promotes fair decision-making and resource allocation, thereby reducing inequality



and improving overall social welfare [39]. Legal compliance also strengthens oversight mechanisms, ensuring that any acts of corruption or abuse of power are identified and dealt with in accordance with the law. This, in turn, fosters public trust in government institutions and strengthens the foundations of democracy. Thus, the symbiotic relationship between good governance and legal compliance is key to creating a government that is efficient, effective, and admired by its people [40].

In the context of globalization and rapid social change, the link between good governance and legal compliance further demonstrates the importance of adaptation and continuous improvement in governance systems. As society changes and new challenges emerge, so does the expansion and adjustment of legal policies to ensure that they remain relevant, fair, and effective in protecting citizens' rights and advancing the public interest [41]. This requires a dynamic approach to policymaking, where legal compliance is not just seen as compliance with existing legal obligations but as an opportunity to reflect on and, where necessary, update the legal framework to reflect society's changing values and aspirations [42].

Finally, to ensure effective good governance and legal compliance, the active participation of civil society is essential. The public must be empowered to engage in the governance process, from policy-making to monitoring, to ensure that the government is accountable for its actions and that policies truly reflect the needs and desires of the public. The success of the link between good governance and the rule of law depends on a government's ability to communicate, engage, and listen to its people, strengthening the rule of law through constructive dialog and democratic participation. Thus, sustainable social and economic development can be achieved, by putting justice, transparency, and accountability at the heart of good governance.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Environmental sustainability and corporate governance are two important aspects that are gaining increasing attention in modern business practices, especially in relation to corporate legal responsibility. In this context, companies are required not only to pursue profits but also to consider the impact of their operations on the environment and society. This involves adopting sustainable and ethical business practices that minimize negative environmental impacts and increase positive contributions to social welfare.

It can also be seen from the discussion that philanthropy does not match the requirements for corporate social and legal responsibility. It is well explained that in order to achieve and maintain reasonable and sound corporate responsibility, good corporate governance must be followed. The other aspect is to maintain and support environmental sustainability focused on the implementation of integrated business that matches consumer expectations, with no violation of any regulatory elements, and follows the urgency and importance of accelerating the need to change the climate crisis.

Environmental sustainability and ethical corporate governance then become not only a legal responsibility for corporations but also a strategic imperative measure for companies that wish to be sustainable in the long term. By placing sustainability practices at the heart of their business strategy, companies can reduce legal risks,

strengthen their reputation, and create added value for shareholders and other stakeholders. Therefore, companies must make environmental sustainability part of their future goals or achievements. It is not a choice but an imperative. To accommodate these goals, transparency, responsibility, accountability, and fairness in corporate governance must be supported. Failure to do so will destroy the company's good performance and reputable name. Legal and social sanctions are matters that cannot be avoided anymore. It is recommended that corporations implement a more comprehensive strategy.

**Data availability statement:** The data presented in this study are publicly available and can be downloaded freely from the web.

**Conflict of interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

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