

## URGENCY: THE NEED FOR DISCLOSURE OF SUSTAINABILITY REPORTS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to provide an overview of the importance of implementing sustainability report disclosure in the public sector. This type of research is qualitative research using literature study and observation methods. The background of this research begins with recent movements in sustainable development that have increased the need for sustainability reporting in the public sector at various levels of government from central to regional levels. For example, institutions in Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand and the UK are involved in reporting that includes environmental and social impacts of their operations. The results of this research provide considerations in the application of sustainability reports in the public sector such as in local governments, NGOs and the education sector, also encourage the socialization of sustainability reports in the public sector, including millennial accountants, and encourage the issuance of regulations or basics or guidelines for implementing sustainability reports in the public sector.

**Keywords:** Disclosure, Sustainability Reporting, Public Sector

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### INTRODUCTION

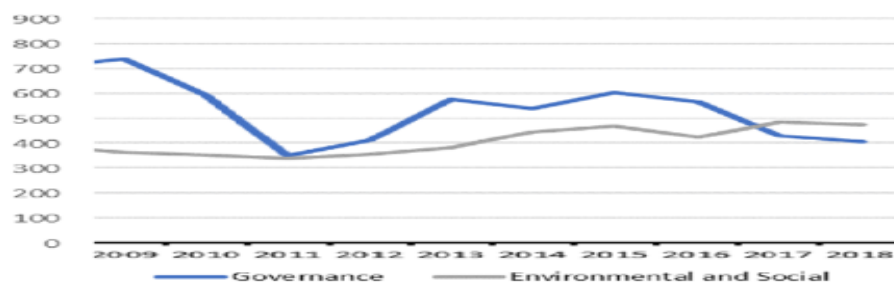
A company in order to maintain sustainability must continue to try to find various ways to improve and manage its business to achieve company performance including maximum profits. Along with intense competition, companies must also indirectly be able to follow and defend themselves with global business developments and manage their companies well so that they have advantages that are able to compete with other competitors. One of the factors in achieving maximum company performance is good corporate governance (Edi & Felicia, 2022).

Governance (Corporate Governance) of the company is one of the components that affect the basis of the economic stability of the company. Companies that apply corporate governance such as transparency and accountability effectively, the decisions determined within the company are expected to reduce problems, including those triggered by company ownership, as found in agency theory where in the company there are two parties, namely the owner (principal) and management (agent). Company performance will be better if corporate governance is implemented efficiently compared to companies that have poor corporate governance (Edi & Felicia, 2022). Companies that carry out governance effectively, the company's performance can produce maximum results. This will also have an impact on minimal capital costs in order to produce sufficient capital sources for companies with effective corporate governance (Reminov & Hadiprajitno, 2015).

Apart from good governance, companies are generally founded to gain profits or profit as proof of company performance. However, companies are also required to be involved and participate in social activities in the community. All social activities should be reported to stakeholders. In accordance with stakeholder theory, it relates to the efforts made by companies to maintain good relations with stakeholders so that they have trust in the entity. One way to increase trust is by

publishing financial reports to the public. This relates to the need for corporate legitimacy from society. This activity reporting is known as a sustainability report which can be carried out voluntarily by companies by reporting their activities through three aspects, namely economic, social and environmental (Hasanah et al., 2017). A sustainability report can contain statements regarding company sustainability information relating to the company's performance in the economic, social and environmental aspects in which the company operates (Weda, 2021).

Based on the results of a survey conducted by Papadopoulos (2019) in the US as presented in Figure 1, it shows that there has been an increase in proposals for disclosing sustainability information to companies from 2009 to 2018.



Source: Papadopoulos (2019)

Figure 1. Proposed Disclosure of Sustainability Information

A survey conducted by Norges Bank Investment Management (2020) also found an increase in proposals for disclosing sustainability information to companies in the US, Canada, Japan and other parts of the world (Weda, 2021).

In Indonesia, awareness of social responsibility has existed since 1999. However, it is still only mandatory for State-Owned Enterprises and in fact there are no regulations regarding the form and content of sustainability reports that should be reported, so the content is still voluntary. Based on data from the OJK as of 2016, only around 9 percent of all public companies listed on the IDX have published sustainability reporting that refers to GRI Standards and disclosure is still voluntary (Farhana & Adelina, 2019).

Disclosure of sustainable reports in Indonesia, initially voluntary, and mandatory, the Government of Indonesia has issued two regulations regarding sustainability reports, namely (POJK No.51/POJK.03/2017) and Minister of BUMN Regulation PER-05/MBU/04/2021. Regulation of the Financial Services Authority (POJK No.51/POJK.03/2017) which regulates the Implementation of Sustainable Finance for Financial Services Institutions, Issuers and Public Companies. According to these regulations, a sustainable report is a report announced to the public regarding the economic, financial, social and environmental performance of a financial service institution (LJK), issuers and public companies in running a sustainable business (Sutawan & Sisdyani, 2022).

How to implement sustainability reports in the public sector because in this sector there is also the government as a maker of regulations and policies, whether it is necessary to implement sustainability reports and no less important is how the world of education answers the needs of human resources who make sustainability reports and who review sustainability reports.

## THEORY, LITERATURE REVIEW, AND HYPOTHESIS

### Sustainability Reporting

#### Definition of Sustainability Reporting

The concept of sustainability reporting is taken from the basic concept of the Triple Bottom Line which is a continuation of the concept of sustainable development (Elkington, 1997).

Sustainability reporting is a report that contains information outside the company's financial performance. The information referred to is information on social activities that enable the company to grow in a sustainable manner.

Sustainability reporting is an organization's practice of openly reporting on its economic, environmental and/or social impacts, and therefore including its positive or negative contribution to sustainable development goals. Through this process, an organization identifies its significant impacts on the economy, environment and/or society and discloses them in accordance with globally accepted standards. The information available through sustainability reporting enables internal and external stakeholders to form opinions and to make informed decisions about an organization's contribution to sustainable development goals (GRI Standards, 2016). The concept of sustainability reporting is taken from the basic concept of the Triple Bottom Line which is a continuation of the concept of sustainable development (Elkington, 1997). Sustainability reporting is a report that contains information outside the company's financial performance. The information referred to is information on social activities that enable the company to grow in a sustainable manner.

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The benefits of implementing sustainability reporting include being a company that cares more about society and the environment by providing added value, increasing a positive image, reducing risks that have an adverse impact on the company, and increasing the trust of shareholders and other stakeholders.

## **THEORY**

The theoretical basis used by researchers to justify the results of the analysis in this research is political economic theory, especially stakeholder theory and legitimacy theory. Economic political theory according to Gray, et al. (1995) is a grand theory that derives stakeholder theory and legitimacy theory. This political economy theory is defined as the social, political, and economic framework within which human life operates. Social, political, and economic perspectives according to Gray, et al. (1995) cannot be separated, because an economic analysis cannot be meaningful if it does not consider political, social issues and the institutional framework in which the economic activity is located.

The use of stakeholder theory and legitimacy theory is also based on the opinion of Deegan (2004) which states that social and environmental research is more appropriate to use stakeholder theory and legitimacy theory in justifying research results. Both of these theories assume that accounting disclosure policies are considered as a strategy to influence other parties with which the organization is integrated. Social and environmental problems more closely link organizations with the community and environment in which the organization operates.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Research methods**

This research method is a qualitative method. Sale, et al. (2002) stated that the use of methods is influenced by and represents a paradigm that reflects a perspective on reality. Furthermore, Kasinath (2013) suggests there are three reasons for using qualitative methods, namely (a) the researcher's view of phenomena in the world (a researcher's view of the world), (b) the nature of the research question,

and (c) practical reasons associated with the nature of qualitative methods.

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### **Data collection technique**

In terms of data collection in this research, observation and literature study were used. This research focuses on literature reviews of articles and the phenomena that occur. Dalam hal pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini menggunakan observasi dan studi pustaka. Penelitian ini fokus pada literature review dari artikel dan fenomena yang terjadi.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The environment, social issues and governance in their development are priorities for all governments around the world. At the very least, they are of concern to the local government because the local government is on the verge of implementing many initiatives. Responses to climate change, engagement with communities and changes to governance structures and systems and organizational culture are evidence of Environment's responses. Social and Governance (ESG) (Armstrong & Li, 2022).

Currently various companies, mostly multinational companies engaged in the extractive sector, the genetic sector, manufacturing, and the service sector in a broad sense, have published corporate governance reports and economic, social, and environmental impacts in sustainability reports (Sofia et al., 2016).

Recent movements in sustainable development have increased the need for sustainability reporting in the public sector at various levels of government from central to local levels for example, agencies in Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand and the UK are engaged in reporting that includes the environmental and social impacts of operations. them (Global Reporting Initiative, 2004) (Joseph & Taplin, 2012).

In public sector organizations such as governments that are not profit-oriented, social and environmental responsibility must be the main focus because the social and environmental impacts caused by technological and industrial developments have caused destruction on the earth (Elkington, 1997).

More and more city governments around the world are engaging in sustainability reporting, voluntarily and in response to legal pressure. This can be seen as the UN's international framework for sustainable development goals (especially SDG target 12.6) calls for increased reporting by all types of institutions. In the European Union, a recent directive (2014/95/EU) requires all large public interest entities to start disclosing non-financial and diversity information. France recently mandated all cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants to produce regular sustainability reports (CGDD 2012), and similar laws are still being debated elsewhere (Niemann & Hoppe, 2018).

A variety of practices emerged based on unique choices regarding format, periodicity, authorship, and dissemination efforts. The question of what design looks like and what associated outcomes are highly relevant to practitioners but remains unanswered in standards guidance and most previous research that has focused on the content and benefits of sustainability reporting (Niemann & Hoppe, 2018). The following are several applications of sustainability reporting that are implemented in several countries.

Table 1.

Implementation of Sustainability Reports in Several Countries

No.	Country	Achievement
1.	Amerika Latin (Guerrero-Gómez et al., 2021)	<p>Applications in Latin American countries include:                      Publication of information on the websites of 200 large regional governments, in 20 Latin American countries, to measure the level of sustainability transparency and to identify factors influencing the disclosure of this information, aimed at achieving the SDGs detailed in the 2030 Agenda.</p> <p>On average, local governments only publish 60% of the information recommended in the GRI guidelines. The highest level of transparency provided concerns information of an economic nature, followed by general and social information and, to a much lesser extent, environmental information. Therefore, there is still much room for improvement among Latin American LGUs in terms of their sustainability transparency, especially in terms of environmental sustainability.</p> <p>The highest levels of sustainability transparency were recorded in Uruguay, Chile, Colombia and Guatemala, while Nicaragua and Venezuela showed the lowest levels. However, these rankings are inconsistent among the four types of information analyzed (general, economic, social and environmental), suggesting that, in the absence of a common policy for Latin America, LG commitment to sustainability transparency may depend on the one hand on the cultural environment. and its socio-economic and, on the other hand, on the interests of politicians and managers in this regard, in response to the particular characteristics and information demands of the population. In Brazil, the highest level of transparency relates to economic information, followed, to an equal degree, by social and economic information.</p>
2.	Skotlandia (Sofia et al., 2016)	<p>The purpose of this report is to improve performance management in relation to sustainability, through greater accountability and transparency.</p>
3.	Italia (Sofia et al., 2016)	<p>Implementation in Italy includes:                      Equal opportunities in society and social integration, namely access to all basic services such as education, employment, energy, health care, housing, job training and - transportation;                      Local governance/decentralization/democratic practices, namely shared access and participation in planning and local decision-making;                      The relationship between local and global issues, namely satisfying local needs, from production to consumption</p>

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and waste management, and making it more sustainable;  
Local economy, namely combining local goals and needs with available jobs and other services to minimize damage to natural resources and the environment;

Environmental protection by reducing the depletion of land and natural resources, controlling waste accumulation and toxic emissions and increasing biodiversity;

Reporting on multiple sustainability indicators is a relatively new phenomenon that is still in its infancy for the public sector and, with regard to the second point, council officers require increased resources and in particular, training and education to meet the requirements of the GRI guidelines.

The environmental quality of cultural heritage in cities is to protect, preserve and restore works of historic, cultural, architectural importance including buildings, monuments and local cultural events; protect the aesthetic and functional quality of urban spaces and buildings.

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4. Jepang (Burritt, 2009) Implementation in Japan, among others:  
The central and local governments of Japan have established an institutional and legislative structure for environmental conservation since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.  
Environmental administration in Japanese local governments is the diffusion of environmental management systems (hereinafter referred to as EMS), such as ISO 14001.  
At the prefectural and municipal local government level, sustainability accounting tries to adopt the idea of the importance of input, output and outcome data as a basis for measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of environmental activities. The objective of this activity is to manage effectively the implementation of the basic environmental plan for local government environmental policies and verify EMS progress.  
Iwate Prefecture (Iwate) provides the second example of a local government that has integrated two types of sustainability accounting. Iwate takes a different approach and recognizes different performance areas, as reflected in the Balanced Scorecard (BSC). Inputs are expressed in monetary representations of these activities; outputs designed around organizational learning and internal processes that can help reduce environmental impact; while the results are recorded in the perspective of the customer (or user).
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5. Australia application in Australia, among others:
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(Burritt, 2009) In 1992, in line with Agenda 21, introduced by the Earth Summit, the importance of reporting and social dan management for public sector entities was highlighted (Williams et al., 2011). with the release of the „Social Responsibility of Commonwealth Legal Authorities and Government Business Enterprises by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts of the Australian Government (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992). This report acknowledges existing reports on the social performance of Commonwealth entities and highlights deficiencies, especially in relation to issues of social justice for citizens and 'clients', responsibilities to employees, and to society.

Australia published three Australian State of the Environment Reports in 1996, 2001 and 2006 which show the state of the country's environment at a particular time. With the aim of evaluating the long-term sustainability of Commonwealth Government policies, the Treasury publishes an Intergenerational Report (IGR) every five years.

Several local authorities in Australia have incorporated the triple bottom line into their annual reporting processes, the City of Melbourne being the first to do so (GRI Resource Document, 2004, p.14). Other examples include Lake Macquarie City Council, Onkaparinga City Council, and Manningham City Council.

The City of Melbourne continues to take steps to increase its capacity to monitor its environmental footprint. It has identified greenhouse gas, water and waste emissions as the most relevant environmental sustainability issues (City of Melbourne, 2008b).

Local authorities reported, with the highest reporting rate being in the area of social reporting (90.5%). There is great potential to utilize sustainability reporting as a tool towards sustainable development goals. With local government reporting practices still in their infancy, careful planning and consideration needs to be undertaken now towards progressing and developing such reporting. Thus, with local government's closeness and relationship with the community, this sector can play an important role in all aspects of the economic, social and environmental sustainability agenda.

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Sumber: Data diolah 2023

Adopting a sustainability report is not easy for the government, especially regional governments. Often, limited financial resources available and a lack of skills among municipal civil servants result in sustainability reports being prepared only by larger local governments (Giacomini & Mazzoleni, 2020). In Indonesia, the implementation of sustainable reporting in the public sector, especially the government, is still very limited and there are no regulations that regulate this matter.

However, state or regional-owned companies are required to carry out and report on the social activities they carry out, namely according to the Minister of State-Owned Enterprises Regulation (PER-05/MBU/04/2021) concerning the Social and Environmental Responsibility Program for State-Owned Enterprises.

The only entity in the public sector that has prepared a sustainability report is the Supreme Audit Agency, namely the 2020 BPK Sustainability Report. BPK demonstrates its active role in achieving state objectives through audits as a form of implementing its constitutional mandate. The BPK also conducted mapping of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are in accordance with the 7 (seven) national priorities for the development agenda in the 2020-2024 RPJMN (BPK RI, 2022).

The implementation of sustainability reports in local governments has not yet been regulated by the government, but draft guidelines for preparing Sustainability Reports have been prepared by A. Sofia, et al. in 2015 through their research with the title "Development of Sustainability Reporting Guidelines for Indonesian Local Government" (Sofia et al., 2016). This research was conducted to identify sustainability report disclosure indicators related to the economy, environment and social affairs of local governments, as well as determine important factors that must be disclosed by local governments in their sustainability reports. However, the results of this study still need further study.

The implementation of sustainability reports does not only have an impact on regional governments and non-government organizations (NGOs) but also on educational institutions, especially universities. Universities also have an interest in implementing sustainability reports but also producing human resources who will become sustainability report makers and those who evaluate sustainability reports. A tough task is the socialization and adjustment of the curriculum at universities which applies sustainability aspects to each study program. Because this is where sustainability begins to be introduced and studied.

There are many parties who must be socialized in universities, such as decision makers, rectors, leaders or directors, lecturers, staff and technicians as well as laboratory assistants and the entire academic community.

Challenges are also faced in implementing sustainability reports (Daniel, 2020) such as:

1. Development of wider literature related to Sustainability Reporting.

Even though there are GRI guidelines that can provide a framework for preparing SRs, a broader understanding and literature regarding the "sustainability context" of each entity is required for millennial accountants.

2. Regulations regarding sanctions commensurate with the material impacts caused.

The imposition of sanctions for violations of the SR regulations contained in POJK Number 51 / POJK.03 / 2017 is only in the form of administrative sanctions in the form of a warning or written warning. The focus of these sanctions is on conditions when companies do not report SR.

3. The need for "assurance" from SR.

The need for third party services or assurance services (guarantee services, such as financial statement audit services in an annual report) to ensure whether the information submitted in the SR is true (and fairly) requires a series of checks and tests by an independent service institution.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

Based on the explanation above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Recent movements in sustainable development have increased the need for sustainability reporting in the public sector at various levels of government from central to local levels for example, agencies in Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand and the UK are engaged in reporting that includes



environmental and social impacts from their operations (Global Reporting Initiative, 2004) (Joseph & Taplin, 2012).

2. Responses to climate change, engagement with communities and changes to governance structures and systems and organizational culture are evidence of Environment's responses. Social and Governance (ESG) (Armstrong & Li, 2022).
3. Sustainability reporting is steadily increasing across the public sector. International frameworks such as the UN's 'Sustainable Development Goals' (specifically SDG target 12.6) (Niemann & Hoppe, 2018).
4. Adoption of sustainability reports is not easy for local governments. Often, limited financial resources available and a lack of skills among municipal civil servants result in sustainability reports being prepared only by larger local governments (Giacomini & Mazzoleni, 2020).
5. The implementation of sustainability reports does not only have an impact on regional governments and non-government organizations but also on educational institutions, especially universities.
6. Challenges in implementing sustainability reports (Daniel, 2020).
7. In Indonesia, the implementation of sustainability reports in the public sector, especially the government, is still very limited and there are not even regulations governing this matter.

## **IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **Implications**

1. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide considerations in implementing sustainability reports in the public sector such as local governments, NGOs and the education sector.
2. Encourage the dissemination of sustainability reports to the public sector, including millennial accountants.
3. Encourage the issuance of regulations or basis or guidelines for implementing sustainability reports in the public sector.

### **Limitations**

This research is only a literature study and observation of phenomena related to the application of sustainability reports in the public sector has not conducted direct research into the public sector.

### **Suggestions**

1. The need for standards or guidelines in implementing sustainability reports in the public sector.
2. The need for further research that conducts research with public sector objects.

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