



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Analysis of Peer Effects in Environmental, Social, and Governance Disclosure: The Moderating Role of Firm Experience and Size

Hamed Parvizikia, Daruosh Foroghi*, Narges Hamidian, Hasan Fattahi Nafchi

Department of Accounting, Faculty of Administrative Sciences and Economics, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

How to cite this article:

Parvizikia, H. , Foroghi, D. , Hamidian, N. and Fattahi Nafchi, H. (2026). The Analysis of Peer Effects in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Disclosure: The Moderating Role of Firm Experience and Size. *Iranian Journal of Accounting, Auditing and Finance*, 10(2), 37-54. doi: 10.22067/ijaaf.2026.47506.1530
https://ijaaf.um.ac.ir/article_47506.html

ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received: 2025-09-01

Accepted: 2025-11-18

Published online: 2026-04-12

Abstract

This study examined the peer effect on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) disclosure in industries through imitative and reciprocal mechanisms and assessed the moderating roles of experience and company size. From 2012–2024, 117 different firms were listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange, making them part of the statistical sample. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to generate the composite ESG index, and linear regression models were used to evaluate the hypotheses. A company's ESG disclosure was positively affected by its peers' ESG practices, according to the results, which showed a substantial intra-industry peer effect on ESG disclosure. The intra-industry peer impact was unexpectedly amplified by company experience. Large companies operating in the same industry showed mimetic peer influence, whereas small and large companies did not. On the other hand, whereas large and small enterprises were found to have a mimetic peer impact, small firms did not exhibit any reciprocal peer effect. This study took a fresh look at the impact of firms' size and experience as moderators of intra-industry peer effects on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) disclosure in Iran, differentiating between reciprocal and imitative dynamics. Policymakers and practitioners can use these findings to improve corporate transparency, and the literature on peer influence in ESG disclosure benefits from them as well.

Keywords:

ESG, Experience, Firm Size,
Peer Effect

<https://doi.org/10.22067/ijaaf.2026.47506.1530>



NUMBER OF REFERENCES
38



NUMBER OF FIGURES
-



NUMBER OF TABLES
5

Homepage: <https://ijaaf.um.ac.ir>
 E-Issn: 2717-4131
 P-Issn: 2588-6142

*Corresponding Author: Daruosh Foroghi
 Email: foroghi@ase.ui.ac.ir
 Tel: 09131163291
 ORCID: 0000-0002-7164-6728

1. Introduction

In recent years, investing in corporate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) information disclosure has been considered of significant importance. The disclosure of ESG information enhances a company's non-financial performance indicators, such as consumer satisfaction and market acceptance, which signals stakeholders that the organization is ethically committed to environmental sustainability (Chen and Ma, 2017). As a result of this dedication, the company's standing with its creditors improves. Capelle-Blancard and Petit (2019) found that investors can react negatively to inconsistent ESG disclosure procedures.

Companies' actions and decisions within the same industry affect one another, a phenomenon known as the intra-industry peer effect, a prominent feature of corporate ESG disclosure. Even in Iran's stock market, companies' ESG reporting procedures are affected by their peers, whether they realize it or not. There are mainly two ways in which the peer effect shows itself: logical imitation and reciprocal imitation. When it comes to logical imitation, smaller businesses often mimic larger ones to stay competitive, secure cheap financing, and keep operations running smoothly. In reciprocal imitation, firms of similar size, whether large or small, tend to mimic each other's practices (Hu et al., 2022). Consequently, firm size is expected to significantly shape the intra-industry peer effect in ESG disclosure.

In addition to firm size, firm-specific factors, such as experience, also affect the peer effect on ESG information disclosure. Firm experience can moderate the influence of peers on firms (Leary and Roberts, 2014). Specifically, firms with limited ESG reporting experience are prone to imitate their more experienced counterparts to produce comprehensive reports and enhance their chances of survival in the market (Chen and Ma, 2017). Accordingly, greater experience is expected to reduce a firm's tendency to imitate its peers in ESG disclosure. In other words, more experienced firms are less likely to be influenced by their intra-industry peers' ESG reporting practices.

Peer effects in this domain, especially in emerging markets such as Iran, remain underexplored despite growing attention to ESG disclosures. Little is known about ESG-specific imitation, even though firms often mimic peers in financial decisions (Leary and Roberts, 2014; Adhikari and Agarwal, 2018). This study investigates the moderating role of firm size and experience in ESG disclosure behavior. Larger firms often serve as benchmarks (Haunschild and Miner, 1997; Hu et al., 2022), but the responses of smaller or younger firms are unknown. Prior research has mainly focused on financial outcomes, such as earnings management (Kordestani and Jafari Souq, 2023; Golijani and Jafar Salehi, 2024), overlooking strategic ESG dynamics. This research provides deeper insight into the effect of peer dynamics on ESG transparency across industries, filling a significant gap in the Iranian capital market literature by distinguishing between rational and reciprocal imitation (DiMaggio and Powell, 2022). Thus, this study seeks to evaluate the peer effect on ESG disclosure, with firm size and experience as moderating factors. For managers, the findings provide strategic insights into leveraging ESG disclosure not only for regulatory compliance but also for competitive positioning by better understanding and anticipating peer behavior, enabling more effective resource allocation, reputation management, and long-term value creation. Imitation helps policymakers better understand potential regulatory dynamics, leading to better regulation design that promotes transparency and reduces greenwashing, particularly in emerging markets where formal ESG standards are still maturing.

This paper first reviews the theoretical and empirical foundations, then presents the methodology and findings. Finally, it discusses conclusions, practical implications, and directions for future research.

2. Literature review

The peer effect, originating in sociological theory, describes the tendency for individuals to adjust their behavior in response to others' actions, often leading to patterns that reflect broader group dynamics (Manski, 1993), which is not only true for people, but also for entities such as companies or enterprises whose behavior and decision-making can also be greatly influenced by the actions of others in their environment. Sociological theories emphasize that imitation based on social ties is a widespread phenomenon and that there are strong similarities in firm behavior.

Peer firms with structural similarities in industry and technology can significantly affect one another's performance across various domains. Academic studies have paid little attention to the phenomenon of financial and industrial strategies converging through mutual influence (Duong et al., 2015). This has been further supported by empirical research showing that companies often mimic their competitors' ESG policies and disclosures (Adhikari and Agarwal, 2018; Leary and Roberts, 2014). Such imitative behavior is well-documented in the corporate context, with evidence suggesting that firms often adopt and replicate information from one another (Yang et al., 2017).

In recent years, rapid industrial expansion and the resulting environmental degradation have intensified global concern regarding sustainability, placing increasing pressure on firms to adopt responsible ESG practices. Simultaneously, stakeholders are calling for increased corporate accountability, especially after several corporations have been embroiled in scandals that point to governance lapses that not only cause direct parties to suffer economic losses but also affect many innocent bystanders. This is particularly a source of legitimacy and acceptance for firms in developing economies pursuing deeper engagement with global markets, where this position on ESG has emerged as a clear imperative. Corporate sustainability is commonly understood as a holistic approach, conducted within an organization's portfolio of activities to meet current stakeholder needs without compromising resources for future generations. Although the concept has been widely discussed in the literature, its precise definition remains debated (Chen and Ma, 2017). The ESG framework is a widely accepted model for evaluating non-financial performance that encompasses three key dimensions: environmental, social, and governance.

Environmental: This dimension varies across industries. For instance, carbon emissions are generally more essential for manufacturing firms than financial institutions (Eccles and Serafeim, 2013). Common environmental concerns include climate risks, pollution, energy and water management, and biodiversity loss. As sustainability becomes an increasingly important business priority, these concerns are increasingly shaping firm strategies.

Social: The social piece includes human rights, labor conditions, employee welfare, and consumer relations, each of which is important in different situations. Labor practices in developing countries are comparatively lower-cost, and thus their human rights incidents are more pronounced (Eccles and Serafeim, 2013). Tackling these challenges is essential for upholding stakeholder confidence and purposeful accountability.

Governance: Governance encompasses systems and procedures that direct corporate behavior and decision-making, which concerns the dynamic among management, shareholders, and other stakeholders (Bernardi and Stark, 2018). Despite this, the recent literature has begun to examine how firms respond to the governance practices of other firms in their industry, demonstrating a growing recognition of peer effects.

Emerging ESG tensions compel firms to increasingly refer to peer behavior when determining their disclosure approach, especially in complex or uncertain situations. Two theoretical frameworks are used to explain this tendency: information-based theory and competition-based theory. The information-based theory (Lieberman and Asaba, 2006) posits that firms copy one another largely

due to incomplete information. Without clear standards to work from, firms watch and copy what peers do to mitigate uncertainty and help them decide how to behave. Under this theoretical lens, social learning theory (Bikhchandani et al., 1998) has been widely adopted to highlight that imitation of leading firms is generally undertaken by fewer resourceful or experienced firms, aiming to achieve conformity and legitimacy with best practices (Dodgson, 1993). These top firms, endowed with deeper pockets, strategic foresight, and visibility, are also information conduits that others follow suit (Wang et al., 2024). Such a peer effect is stronger in ESG-related domains, where follower firms can learn from their peers' disclosures and strategies with less risk of externalities (Li et al., 2018). This dynamic has empirical backing; for example, Li et al. (2018) and Zhi-guo and Bo-yi (2020) found that firms mimic financial behavior, such as capital structures and dividend policies, based on regional or local peers, implying that peer influence is not limited to ESG decisions but extends to broader strategic choices.

The competition-based theory adds a strategic rivalry perspective to the information-based view. In competitive markets, companies imitate their peers not just to reduce uncertainty, but also to avoid being outperformed. For example, companies employ similar investment and sustainability strategies to offset periodic costs and prevent strategic flops (Xi et al., 2024). Dynamic competition theory reinforces this notion, suggesting that firms adjust ESG disclosures to maintain legitimacy and competitive edge (Wan et al., 2016). As ESG performance becomes a benchmark in investor decisions and regulatory evaluations, the pressure to emulate increases (Kaustia and Rantala, 2015). Firms closely monitor competitors' ESG-specific activities to maintain market relevance (Gimeno et al., 2005). Delay in keeping pace with peers can affect stakeholder confidence, while benchmarking helps get ESG efforts back on track and improves visibility. Gu and Shen (2024) investigate peer effects on environmental information disclosure in Chinese heavy-polluting industries. Their findings show that peer effects shape both "real green" and "fake green" behaviors. True pro-environmental behaviors are largely competitive in nature, but fake green or symbolic actions, we find, are more indirect and akin to social learning. In addition, Hu et al. (2022) report an intra-industry peer effect in corporate environmental information disclosure.

Such convergence, driven partly by information gaps and marketplace pressures, makes the widespread dissemination of ESG practices possible. When leading firms launch high-profile ESG initiatives, this often triggers imitative behavior (Grewal et al., 2021), prompting other companies to follow suit; in turn, this accelerates the emergence of standardized ESG disclosures across industries. From the theoretical arguments explained above, we propose our first hypothesis listed below:

H1: There is a significant intra-industry peer effect in ESG disclosure.

Research has shown that anchoring managerial capabilities in experiential knowledge is a core element of their development. Accumulated professional experience largely reflects an individual's expertise (Bonaiuto et al., 2003), especially the ability to assume important responsibilities or to assess a firm's position within an industry. Ultimately, learning from diverse experiences enhances both strategic judgment and operational efficiency (and firms led by more experienced managers outperform those guided by less experienced managers; managers, Demerjian et al., 2012). Managerial experience for corporate governance is essential if we consider the core functions of management, like planning, decision-making, etc., by which it keeps the managerial actions aligned with strategic goals. Also, wiser and more experienced minds are usually better equipped to handle complex decisions, which adds to organizational maturity. Further, given the competitive landscape today, ESG disclosure has evolved into a significant means of shaping stakeholder perceptions and sustaining a firm's market position, thereby enhancing organizational success (Hambrick and Mason, 1984).

The level of experience accumulated by a firm, reflected in its resources, knowledge accumulation, and organizational maturity, is an integral factor influencing how much it relies on peer behavior when making ESG disclosure decisions. Theoretical and empirical studies favor this perspective. However, firms that have less experience or fewer resources rely heavily on their peers' behavior due to heightened information uncertainty (Lieberman and Asaba, 2006). These firms rely on leading companies to reduce uncertainty and inform their behavior by observing the actions of more-experienced firms. In the same vein, social learning theory (Bikhchandani et al., 1998) suggests that firms with less experience often adopt the practices of high-profile peers to obtain legitimacy and align with what is perceived as best practice. In the absence of internal knowledge or well-developed ESG norms, firms tend to rely significantly more on disclosure and strategies implemented by other organizations (Dodgson, 1993). By contrast, seasoned firms, which tend to have more robust resources and deeper strategic awareness, are in a stronger position not only to produce their own information but also to rely less on imitation, often serving as reference firms for others (Wang et al., 2024).

In fact, competition-based theory (Wan et al., 2016) supports the aforementioned argument by indicating that a firm's level of experience further influences its response to competitive pressure. Less seasoned firms are more inclined to mimic their competitors' ESG strategies to avoid falling in competitive markets. They also try to reduce repeat expenses and mitigate the risk of strategic errors by emulating these behaviors (Hu et al. 2022). On the contrary, more established companies are usually far better suited to innovate and build their own ESG strategies. Thus, they are less swayed by peers' behavior, even as they closely follow and respond to competitors to secure their competitive standing (Gimeno et al., 2005).

Based on theoretical predictions, we provide robust empirical evidence that firms' tendency to copy peers in ESG disclosure declines with increasing firm-level experience. For example, Li et al. (2018) demonstrated that firms with less experience and fewer resources in financial matters (e.g., capital structure decisions) are more influenced by the behavior of local or regional peers, from whom they receive phylogenetic and learning benefits, and this is also true for ESG disclosure practices. Likewise, Zhi-guo and Bo-yi (2020) indicate that in emerging markets, less experienced firms frequently imitate the financial and sustainability policies of several leading companies to adopt market practice. Under institutional and market pressures, particularly regarding ESG-related issues, Kaustia and Rantala (2015) demonstrate that nascent firms imitate their peers to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of investors and other stakeholders. This happens particularly in sectors where ESG standards are not yet well established.

By contrast, firms with greater experience, supported by stronger internal systems and well-established reputations, are generally less reactive to such pressures. Nevertheless, they may still align certain aspects of their ESG disclosures with those of their peers to preserve their competitive position (Hu et al., 2022; Xi et al., 2024). In addition, Hu et al. (2022) show that firm experience plays a significant moderating role in the peer effect associated with environmental information disclosure, an important component of ESG reporting. Their findings suggest that firms with limited experience, often lacking sufficient knowledge, resources, or internal infrastructure, rely more heavily on peer imitation.

Overall, these results show that experience is a relevant moderator of the ESG disclosure peer effect. Relatively inexperienced firms are more inclined to imitate because they have limited resources and knowledge. In contrast, highly experienced firms tend to act as informational reference points and pursue less imitative, novel strategies. Based on the theoretical arguments and empirical evidence discussed above, the second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H2: A company's experience reduces the influence of intra-industry peers on its ESG disclosures.

Firm size plays a substantial role in corporate governance and ESG disclosure by shaping stakeholder perceptions and practices guiding disclosure; establishing the framework of a firm's social responsibility initiatives, and the extent to which they will engage with industry peers. Larger firms frequently act as reference points within their industries, encouraging smaller or less established companies to follow their lead (Haunschild and Miner, 1997). As a result, strategic choices—including ESG reporting, often become similar across firms due to external pressures and peer influence (Leary and Roberts, 2014).

The size of the firm thus significantly mediates peer influences on ESG disclosure through both information and competition channels. According to information-based theory, companies with incomplete or asymmetric information are more likely to follow the actions of their peers that they perceive as knowledgeable or competent (Lieberman and Asaba, 2006). Relatedly, social learning theory indicates that in environments with few prominent ESG benchmarks, large organizations are more likely to observe their better-informed peers and emulate their practices to attenuate uncertainty and buttress legitimacy (Bikhchandani et al., 1998). In practice, resource-rich large firms with greater market visibility and stronger reporting capabilities have been the ones informing the market about ESG best practices. These signals prompt other smaller firms to follow suit with similar disclosure strategies. Such mimicry allows smaller organizations to reduce decision-making risk and builds confidence amongst stakeholders (Li et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2024).

Concomitantly, as the competition-based theory indicates that firms operating in competitive markets establish their strategies relative to those of their competitors, they follow this path when ESG performance is seen as relevant by stakeholders and regulators (Xi et al., 2024; Wan et al., 2016). Within this logic, peer effects can arise via two channels. In large firms, companies often mimic competitors and improve their ESG practices in line with competitors' target-driven behavior (Haunschild and Miner, 1997; Hu et al., 2022). Simultaneously, firms in the same niche and of similar size often follow one another to avoid falling into a negative equilibrium (Hu et al., 2022). Such back-and-forths tend to be most pronounced within smaller firms, as their analogous constraints and exposure to aligned market pressures compel them to surveil for and mimic the ESG strategies of peer companies.

These trends are well-documented in empirical research. Larger A-share firms have more ESG disclosure, according to Zhang and You (2024), while Huang et al. (2024) find that firms with information disadvantages often mimic the ESG practices of industry leaders. In addition, Hu et al. (2022) provide direct evidence of intra-industry spillover effects in environmental disclosure. Overall, these findings imply that firm size plays a role not only in shaping the aggregate level of ESG disclosure but also in the peer effect mechanism by which firms with peers share information about sustainability, leading to faster convergence in transparency outcomes within an industry. On this basis, the following hypotheses are advanced:

H3: Large firms exhibit a reciprocal intra-industry peer effect in ESG disclosures with other large firms.

H4: Large firms do not exhibit an intra-industry peer effect in ESG disclosures with small firms.

H5: Small firms demonstrate an intra-industry peer imitation effect in ESG disclosures with large firms.

H6: Small firms exhibit a reciprocal intra-industry peer effect in ESG disclosures with other small firms.

The present study introduces several innovative dimensions which distinguish it from prior research on peer effects and ESG disclosures. Although peer effects have been extensively

investigated in the social sciences, particularly in sociology, their application in accounting research, especially within the Iranian context, remains limited. While Joodaki et al. While [Golijani and Jafar Salehi \(2024\)](#) explore the influence of environmental disclosure on earnings management, and [Kordestani and Jafari Souq \(2023\)](#) examine these relationships with respect to capital market pressures to achieve profits, none provide a substantive examination of the motivations underlying positive investment outcomes. As a result, the dynamics underlying ESG disclosure, and how peers influence them, remain insufficiently explored.

This study fills that gap in four important ways. First, it provides the first empirical analysis of intra-industry peer effects on ESG disclosure within Iran's capital market, using panel data from firms listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange. Second, by separating imitative peer effects (small firms imitating large firms) from reciprocal peer effects (mutual influence among peers), the study identifies behavioral patterns that had not yet been documented in research within the domestic context. Third, it demonstrates that firm size and managerial experience jointly moderate these peer effects, adding more nuance to the understanding of how organizational characteristics drive ESG disclosure behavior. Finally, the study devises a context-specific theoretical framework that can inform practitioners and policymakers in enacting more transparent and effective ESG reporting through blending social learning and competition-based theories with a rigorous understanding of Iran's regulatory and cultural backdrop.

These four innovations have obvious practical advantages. First, substantive evidence on intra-industry peer effects enables regulators to design disclosure guidelines tailored to firm size and industry characteristics. Second, identifying the presence of imitative and reciprocal peer effects enables managers to tailor their benchmarking strategy, either to mimic industry leaders or to compare with peers of a similar size. Third, recognizing how the size and experience of firms affect dynamics among contemporaries enables investors to make more informed decisions about the risks and opportunities of ESG disclosure. Finally, a context-specific framework that integrates social learning and competition theories helps policymakers design measures that promote transparent and effective ESG reporting across firms with different characteristics.

3. Research methodology

To test the hypotheses, linear regression models were estimated using EViews 12. The study population consists of firms listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange over the period 2012–2024. The sample was selected based on several criteria, including that firms must have been listed on the TSE prior to the study period; their fiscal year had to end in March to ensure comparability; they could not belong to the insurance, banking, brokerage, or investment sectors; and the necessary annual data had to be available for calculating the study variables. Firms that changed their fiscal year during the sample period were also excluded. In addition, because some variables are measured at the industry level, each industry had to include at least 5 firms. Applying these criteria yielded a final sample of 117 firms across 12 industries listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange.

3.1. Research models

The hypotheses were tested following the methodology of Hu et al. (2022). The regression model is as outlined in Model 1 for testing the first hypothesis.

$$ESG_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 ESG_Industry_{j,t-1} + \beta_2 Size_{i,t} + \beta_3 CR_{i,t} + \beta_4 LEV_{i,t} + \beta_5 ROA_{i,t} + \beta_6 QTobin_{i,t} + \beta_7 Grow_{i,t} + \beta_8 Auditor_size_{i,t} + \beta_9 Opin_{i,t} + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

ESG_{i,t}: The Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) disclosure score of company *i* in year *t*.

ESG_{Industry j, t-1}: The average ESG disclosure score for industry *j* (excluding company *i*) in year *t*-1

SIZE: Company size

CR: Concentration Ratio

LEV: Financial leverage

ROA: Return on Assets

Q_{Tobin}: The market value ratio of assets to the book value of the company's assets.

Grow: Capture of the operating income growth rate

Auditor_{Size}: The size of the firm's auditor

Opin: The audit opinion

The coefficient β_1 captures the effect of industry-level ESG disclosure on firm-level ESG disclosure. In line with the first hypothesis, β_1 is expected to be positive and statistically significant, indicating the presence of peer effects in ESG disclosure within industries. To test the second hypothesis, the regression specification presented in Model 2 is employed.

$$ESG_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 ESG_Industry_{j,t-1} + \beta_2 AGE_{i,t} + \beta_3 ESG_Industry_{j,t-1} \times AGE_{i,t} + \beta_4 Size_{i,t} + \beta_5 CR_{i,t} + \beta_6 LEV_{i,t} + \beta_7 ROA_{i,t} + \beta_8 Q_{Tobin,i,t} + \beta_9 Grow_{i,t} + \beta_{10} Audi_Size_{i,t} + \beta_{11} Opin_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (2)$$

AGE: The firm's experience, along with the remaining variables, is consistent with the specifications outlined in Model 1. Under this hypothesis, the coefficient β_3 is expected to be negative and significant, in which case, the hypothesis is not rejected.

To test the third and fourth hypotheses, firms are categorized into small and large companies. The size variable is split at the median; firms with sample median values are coded as large, and those below the median are categorized as small. To test these two hypotheses, the regression relationship in Model 3 is estimated for the large company sample.

$$ESG_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 B ESG_Industry_{j,t-1} + \beta_2 S ESG_Industry_{j,t-1} + \beta_3 CR_{i,t} + \beta_4 LEV_{i,t} + \beta_5 ROA_{i,t} + \beta_6 Q_{Tobin,i,t} + \beta_7 Grow_{i,t} + \beta_8 Auditor_Size_{i,t} + \beta_9 Opin_{i,t} + \varepsilon_i \quad (3)$$

B ESG_{Industry j, t-1}: The environmental, social, and governance (ESG) disclosure score for large firms within industry *j*, excluding the score of company *i*.

S ESG_{Industry j, t-1}: The ESG disclosure score for small companies within industry *j* (excluding company *i*) is constructed, while the remaining variables are consistent with those specified in Model 1.

Based on the research hypothesis, large companies may imitate the ESG disclosure practices of other large companies within the same industry. However, no such imitation occurs with small companies in the industry. The coefficient β_1 captures the reciprocal peer effect of ESG information disclosure among large companies within the same industry. The coefficient β_1 captures the reciprocal peer effect of ESG information disclosure among large companies within the same industry. When β_1 is positive and statistically significant, the third hypothesis cannot be rejected. Conversely, the coefficient β_2 measures the peer effect of ESG information disclosure between large companies and small companies within the same industry. When β_2 is statistically insignificant, the fourth hypothesis is accepted.

The regression relationship in Model 3 is also estimated for the sample of small companies to test the fifth and sixth hypotheses. Small companies are expected to imitate the ESG disclosures of large

companies in their industry and also engage in reciprocal information imitation with small companies in the same industry. In other words, the coefficient β_1 captures the peer-imitation effect of ESG disclosures across small and large companies within the same industry. When this coefficient is positive and significant, the fifth hypothesis is accepted. The coefficient β_2 captures the reciprocal peer effect of ESG disclosures between small companies in the same industry. When this coefficient is positive and significant, the sixth hypothesis will not be rejected.

3.2. Research variables

3.2.1. Dependent variable

Following Fakhari et al., a weighted scoring model is used to compute the ESG disclosure score for companies listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange (2017). An adapted checklist of environmental (e.g., carbon emissions, waste management), social (e.g., employee welfare; community engagement), and governance (e.g., board independence; transparency) indicators based on Fakhari et al., which helps in the analysis of board reporting) (Madiraju et al., 2022). A score of 1 is assigned if each indicator is present, and a score of 0 if absent. ESG scores are calculated separately for the environmental (E), social (S), and governance (G) dimensions. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is then employed to obtain the weights for these dimensions from the research data to create the composite ESG index. The ESG score is obtained using Equation 4:

$$ESG = 0.5969 * E + 0.6039 * S + 0.5280 * G \quad (4)$$

These coefficients are derived from the PCA output and reflect the relative importance of each dimension. Here, ESG represents the composite Environmental, Social, and Governance reporting score, and E, S, and G denote the respective dimension scores. PCA is used exclusively to weight the ESG index rather than for other analyses.

3.2.2. Independent variable

The independent variable is the disclosure of environmental, social, and governance reporting at the industry level ($ESG_{Industry}$). The ESG disclosure score of the companies within each industry (excluding company i in the same industry) is averaged to calculate this variable.

3.2.3. Moderator variables

The studied moderating variables, following Hu et al. (2022), are company size and experience, which are explained as follows:

Size: The natural logarithm of total assets is used to calculate this variable.

Company Experience (Age): The company experience is measured using the company's age. The company age is calculated by taking the natural logarithm of the difference between the number of years since the company's listing date on the stock exchange and the current year.

3.2.4 Control variables

In this study, the variables influencing the ESG disclosure of companies were controlled, following the research of Hu et al. (2022), Khozein et al. (2018), and Akbas (2014). These variables are as follows:

Company Size (SIZE): The natural logarithm of total assets, which is used as a control variable in hypotheses 1 and 2, and as a moderating variable in hypotheses 3 to 6.

Ownership Concentration (CR): Equal to the sum of the ownership percentage held by shareholders owning at least 5% of the company's shares (Bahramoghadam et al., 2013).

Financial Leverage (LEV): The ratio of total liabilities to total assets.

Return on Assets (ROA): The ratio of net profit to total assets.

Q_{Tobin} : The ratio of the market value of assets (book value of debt plus the market value of equity) to the book value of the company's assets.

Operating Income Growth Rate (Grow): The difference between the operating income of year t and year $t-1$ divided by the operating income of year $t-1$.

Auditor Size ($Auditor_{size}$): If a firm is audited by the Audit Organization or an auditing firm with an "A" rating, the variable is assigned a value of 1; otherwise, it is assigned a value of 0.

Audit Opinion (Opin): If the auditor has issued an adverse or qualified opinion, the value is 1; otherwise, it is 0.

4. Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the key variables under study.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	Max	Min	Std. Dev
ESG	9.294	9.501	19.705	0.000	3.787
ESG _{Industry}	8.927	8.844	15.388	4.275	1.774
SIZE	15.220	14.927	21.899	10.532	1.858
AGE	2.871	2.944	4.025	0.693	0.462
CR	0.683	0.720	1.000	0.000	0.208
LEV	0.536	0.529	2.327	0.017	0.230
ROA	0.165	0.140	1.140	-0.400	0.163
QTobin	2.561	1.899	32.702	0.490	2.490
GROW	0.609	0.297	23.725	-15.786	2.557
Auditor _{size}	0.674	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.468
Opin	0.179	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.384

For the dependent variable—the ESG disclosure score—the mean of 9.29 indicates that most observations are clustered around this level. Similarly, the independent variable—industry-level ESG disclosure—has a mean value of 8.92, indicating that its observations also tend to cluster around this level. The company-level ESG disclosure reaches a maximum of 19.70, with a mean of 9.29, while industry-level ESG disclosure reaches a maximum of 15.38 (mean= 8.92). This difference also implies a greater level of ESG disclosure at the individual firm level compared to the aggregated (industry) level, indicating how important firms view transparency around ESG. The ownership concentration variable (min = 0, max = 100, mean = 0.68) indicates that many companies are majority-owned by large shareholders. Tobin's Q (mean = 2.65) indicates that the stocks of the studied companies have relatively high risk. In the case of multiple firms, we have some level of growth. In others, a negative growth variable, which is explained by its average fee of up to 0.606 and a minimum value of up to -15.7 for this examine revenue increase rate. The average of size and auditor's opinion variables have been recorded as 0.67 and 0.18, respectively; this demonstrates that most companies have gone through acceptable audit processes. For the dependent variable, the standard deviation is 3.78, indicating that these firms' ESG disclosure scores differ from the average by about 3.78 points. The maximum and minimum parameters indicate the dispersion of observations, i.e., the range of values. Moreover, the min-max values for the dependent and independent variables, i.e., 19.70 and 15.38, respectively, provide clarity regarding the variability present within the data itself.

4.1. Hypothesis testing

The regression models in the study are estimated while controlling for year and industry effects. The White test was used to assess heteroskedasticity, and the Breusch-Godfrey test was used to assess first-order autocorrelation. The p-values for both tests were below 5%, indicating heteroskedasticity

and autocorrelation. The Newey-West correction method was employed to mitigate these effects in the regression estimations. Additionally, multicollinearity among the explanatory variables was examined using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistic. The VIF values for all explanatory variables in the models were below 10, indicating no significant multicollinearity issues.

4.1.1. Test of H1

Hypothesis 1 predicts an intra-industry peer effect in ESG disclosure. Table 2 summarizes the Regression Model 1 results.

Table 2. Regression results for H1

$ESG_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 ESG_{Industry,j,t-1} + \beta_2 Size_{i,t} + \beta_3 CR_{i,t} + \beta_4 LEV_{i,t} + \beta_5 ROA_{i,t} + \beta_6 QTOBIN_{i,t} + \beta_7 Grow_{i,t} + \beta_8 AuditorSize_{i,t} + \beta_9 Opin_{i,t} + \varepsilon_i$				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Statistic	P-Value
ESG _{Industry}	0.164	0.079	2.072	0.038
SIZE	0.566	0.070	8.040	0.000
CR	0.571	0.462	1.234	0.217
LEVERAGE	2.204	0.778	2.832	0.004
ROA	3.920	0.156	3.389	0.000
Q _{TOBIN}	-0.137	0.045	-3.429	0.002
GROW	0.004	0.043	0.106	0.915
Auditor _{Size}	0.909	0.242	0.375	0.707
OPIN	0.319	0.272	1.172	0.241
C	-2.267	1.236	-1.834	0.066
Year & Industry Effect	yes			
Adjusted R ²	0.191			
F-Statistic (Prob)	31.210 (0.000)			

The F-statistic is 2100.31, with a significance level of 0.0000, indicating that the overall regression model is statistically significant. The adjusted R-squared value is 0.1931, suggesting that approximately 19% of the variations in the dependent variable are explained by the independent and control variables. The significance level for the industry-level ESG disclosure score is 0.0384, which is below the 5% error threshold. Additionally, the coefficient for this variable is 0.1643, indicating that peer ESG disclosure has a positive and significant impact on a company's ESG disclosure. In other words, there is an intra-industry peer effect in ESG disclosure. Therefore, the first research hypothesis is not rejected at the 95% confidence level, indicating that industry-level ESG disclosure strengthens firm-level ESG disclosure. The coefficient for this variable, as expected, is positive at 0.1643, indicating that a 1% change in the independent variable (industry-level ESG disclosure) results in a 0.1643% change in the dependent variable (firm-level ESG disclosure score).

4.1.2. Test of H2

Hypothesis 2 expresses that firm experience attenuates the intra-industry peer effect in ESG disclosure. Table 3 presents the results from Regression Model 2, which tests this hypothesis.

Table 3. Regression results for H2

$ESG_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 ESG_{Industry,j,t-1} + \beta_2 AGE_{i,t} + \beta_3 ESG_{Industry,j,t-1} \times AGE_{i,t} + \beta_4 Size_{i,t} + \beta_5 CR_{i,t} + \beta_6 LEV_{i,t} + \beta_7 ROA_{i,t} + \beta_8 QTOBIN_{i,t} + \beta_9 Grow_{i,t} + \beta_{10} AuditorSize_{i,t} + \beta_{11} Opin_{i,t} + \varepsilon_i$				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Statistic	P-Value
ESG _{Industry}	-0.638	0.299	-2.135	0.032
AGE	-0.834	0.973	-0.857	0.391
ESG _{Industry} *AGE	0.249	0.103	2.402	0.016

SIZE	0.475	0.063	7.436	0.000
CR	-0.138	0.439	-0.315	0.752
LEVERAGE	1.109	0.508	2.182	0.029
ROA	3.773	0.824	4.575	0.000
Q TOBIN	-0.146	0.047	-3.102	0.002
GROW	-0.015	0.035	-0.437	0.661
Auditor _{Size}	-0.124	0.202	-0.612	0.540
OPIN	0.773	0.232	3.319	0.000
C	3.176	3.010	1.026	0.304
Year & Industry Effect	yes			
Adjusted R ²	0.188			
F-Statistic (Prob)	25.675 (0.000)			

According to the second hypothesis, the coefficient for the variable $ESG_{Industry} \times AGE$ was expected to be negative and significant. However, as shown in Table 3, the coefficient is significant at the 95% confidence level ($p=0.0164$), but contrary to expectations, it is positive. Therefore, the second hypothesis is rejected at the 95% confidence level. Since the coefficient is positive (0.2495), a company's experience enhances the intra-industry peer effect on ESG disclosure. The intra-industry peer effect on ESG disclosure increases as a company matures.

The positive coefficient suggests that firm experience strengthens the industry-level peer effect on ESG disclosure. In particular, the peer effect on a firm's ESG disclosure practices strengthens with experience. This conclusion is consistent with information-based theory, which argues that firms experience informational gaps in their reporting and seek to adopt peers' disclosure practices, thereby improving the quality and coverage of their own ESG information. Consequently, more mature firms have greater impetus and capacity to absorb and incorporate ESG-related information arising from industry peers, thereby reinforcing the existing peer influence at the industry level. This finding highlights the influence of experience on firms' strategic responses to information deficits and on their dependence on peer-group comparisons in response to ESG disclosure practices.

4.1.3. Testing of the H3, H4

To test the third and fourth hypotheses, Regression Model (3) has been estimated for the sample of large firms. A summary of the results from estimating this model for these two hypotheses is presented in Table 4.

According to the third hypothesis, large firms are expected to exhibit a reciprocal intra-industry peer effect in ESG disclosure with other large firms. The significance level for the variable representing ESG disclosure for large firms relative to other large firms in the same industry is 0.0177, which is below the 5% error threshold. Additionally, the coefficient for this variable is 0.1438, indicating that ESG disclosure by large firms within an industry has a positive and significant impact on the ESG disclosure of other large firms. In other words, there is a reciprocal intra-industry peer effect in ESG disclosure among large firms in the same industry, meaning that large firms not only rely on their own information but also mutually imitate each other's ESG disclosure practices. Therefore, the third hypothesis is not rejected at the 95% confidence level.

Table 4. Regression results for H3, H4

$ESG_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 B_{ESG_Industry_{j,t-1}} + \beta_2 S_{ESG_Industry_{j,t-1}} + \beta_3 CR_{i,t} + \beta_4 LEV_{i,t} + \beta_5 ROA_{i,t} + \beta_6 QTobin_{i,t} + \beta_7 Grow_{i,t} + \beta_8 Auditor_Size_{i,t} + \beta_9 Opin_{i,t} + \epsilon_i$				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Statistic	P-Value
B $ESG_{Industry}$	0.143	0.060	2.378	0.017
S $ESG_{Industry}$	0.079	0.072	1.096	0.273
CR	-0.052	0.631	-0.083	0.933
LEVERAGE	1.114	0.794	1.402	0.161

ROA	4.425	1.402	3.155	0.001
Q TOBIN	-0.158	0.088	-1.787	0.074
GROW	0.077	0.030	2.579	0.010
Auditor_ Size	0.622	0.309	2.013	0.044
OPIN	0.924	0.307	3.005	0.002
C	5.931	0.892	6.644	0.000
Year & Industry Effect	yes			
Adjusted R ²	0.129			
F-Statistic (Prob)	10.428 (0.000)			

According to the fourth hypothesis, large firms are not expected to exhibit a peer effect in ESG disclosure through imitation with small firms within the same industry. As shown in the results in Table 4, as expected, the significance level for the variable representing ESG disclosure by large firms with small firms in the same industry is 0.2731, which is above the 5% error threshold, indicating that there is no peer effect through imitation in ESG disclosure between large and small firms within the same industry. In other words, ESG disclosure by small firms does not have a positive and significant impact on that of large firms, and large firms in a specific industry do not show any tendency to imitate small firms' disclosure practices. The coefficient β_2 in the regression model captures the peer-imitation effect in ESG disclosure between large and small firms within the same industry. Given its non-significance, the fourth hypothesis is not rejected.

4.1.4. Testing of the H5, H6

To test the fifth and sixth hypotheses, Regression Model (3) is estimated for the sample of small firms. The results from estimating Regression Model (3) for testing these hypotheses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Regression results for H5, H6

$ESG_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 B ESG_{Industry,t-1} + \beta_2 S ESG_{Industry,t-1} + \beta_3 CR_{i,t} + \beta_4 LEV_{i,t} + \beta_5 ROA_{i,t} + \beta_6 QTobin_{i,t} + \beta_7 Grow_{i,t} + \beta_8 Auditor_Size_{i,t} + \beta_9 Opin_{i,t} + \epsilon_i$				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Statistic	P-Value
B ESG _{Industry}	0.396	0.147	2.682	0.007
S ESG _{Industry}	0.303	0.168	1.802	0.072
CR	2.716	1.830	1.483	0.138
LEVERAGE	0.696	0.656	1.061	0.289
ROA	0.996	2.122	0.469	0.639
Q TOBIN	-0.109	0.047	-2.331	0.020
GROW	-0.003	0.021	-0.181	0.856
Auditor _{Size}	-0.891	0.548	-1.623	0.105
OPIN	-1.474	0.961	-1.534	0.125
C	3.823	2.471	1.546	0.122
Year & Industry Effect	yes			
Adjusted R ²	0.166			
F-Statistic (Prob)	9.619 (0.000)			

According to the fifth hypothesis, in small firms, there is an imitative intra-industry peer effect on ESG disclosure relative to large firms. The significance level for the ESG disclosure score of large firms in the industry (B ESG_{Industry}) is 0.0076, which is below the 5% error threshold. Additionally, the coefficient for this variable is 0.3976, indicating that ESG disclosure by large firms in the industry has a positive and significant impact on the ESG disclosure of small firms. In other words, an imitative intra-industry peer effect exists in ESG disclosure between small and large firms within the same industry, meaning that small firms engage in informational imitation of large firms. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis is not rejected at the 95% confidence level, suggesting that ESG disclosure by large

firms in an industry enhances ESG disclosure by small firms.

According to the sixth hypothesis, in small firms, there is a reciprocal intra-industry peer effect on ESG disclosure. This hypothesis expected the coefficient of the variable $S_{ESGIndustry}$ to be positive and significant. However, based on the results in Table 5, the coefficient's significance level is 0.0722, which is greater than the 5% error threshold. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis is rejected at the 95% confidence level. In other words, ESG disclosure by small firms in a given industry does not have a positive and significant effect on the ESG disclosure of other small firms. This implies that small firms are not inclined to engage in informational imitation of their small-firm peers within the same industry.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Given the significance of peer effects across firms and industries, this study examines the intra-industry peer effect on ESG information disclosure, with a specific focus on the moderating roles of firm size and experience. By doing so, the study aims to provide deeper insights into the mechanisms driving corporate reporting behaviors in response to peer influence.

The results show that there is a large set of intra-industry peer effects in ESG disclosure level between firms, which is in line with the literature review done by the study. Alternatively, companies follow their industry peers' lead in ESG disclosure, which indicates that industry-level ESG disclosure has a positive and statistically significant impact on firm-level ESG disclosure. Firms' strategic imitation of industry leaders to remain relevant and meet their social responsibility, in turn, leads to a peer effect in this regard. These findings are consistent with previous studies by Hu et al. (2022) and Joodaki et al. (2023).

Drawing on this, the findings show that firm experience strengthens the peer effect on ESG disclosure, contrary to previous studies' findings. Moreover, because firms follow their peers' ESG disclosure behavior, as they gain more experience, they continue to do so. This behavior aligns with information-based imitation theory (Lieberman and Asaba, 2006), which posits that firms, regardless of their experience level, imitate others to address asymmetric information. Mimetic behavior is typical among social creatures; thus, it should come as no surprise that both functionalist and interactionist sociologists also theorize it across most social groups, including corporate entities. However, these results are at odds with Elahi et al. (2020), Wan et al. (2016), Zhi-guo and Bo-yi (2020), and Chen and Ma (2017).

The results also reveal an intra-industry peer effect in ESG disclosure, especially among large firms, which aligns with the theoretical constructs underpinning the current study. Larger companies replicate the ESG disclosure practices of similarly large peers in their industry. The desire for industry leadership, stronger stakeholder trust, better borrowing terms, and improved sustainability presentation drives such imitative behavior. These findings are consistent with the notion of reciprocal peer effects, which refers to the impact one firm has on a similar-sized firm (Hu et al., 2022), and they echo previous research by Hu et al. (2022), Roberts and Leary (2014), and Haunschild and Miner (1997).

Furthermore, the findings indicate that large firms do not exhibit an imitative peer effect toward ESG disclosures made by small firms, lending further credence to the paper's hypothesis. This indicates that big corporations are less willing to emulate ESG practices from industry peers on a smaller scale. Indeed, such asymmetric imitation behavior aligns with the accounting literature, which shows that for-profit and not-for-profit peer firms exhibit a greater propensity to imitate those they believe are better or more visible, doing so in ways necessary to respond positively to stakeholder expectations (or to emulate peers with good qualities). Hu et al. (2014) and Leary et al. (2022) further support these findings.

Likewise, the results reveal a peer effect on ESG disclosure within industries, with small firms mimicking large firms. This finding aligns with the existing literature. It supports the imitative peer effect and information-based imitation theories, in that small firms are more likely to copy industry leaders' policies to gain access to better information and build their credibility. These results align with previous studies conducted by Hu et al. (2022) and Chen and Ma (2017).

Finally, the evidence suggests that scaling up peer-group influence amongst smaller firms does not appear to result in reciprocal behavior on ESG disclosures, as expected, but rather in mimicking larger-firm behaviors (Hu et al., 2022), which differs from Leary and Roberts (2014). In this section, several theoretical and contextual factors are presented to frame the overall findings that explain this absence. According to information-based theory, small firms tend to regard larger firms (which possess superior resources and knowledge) as central actors in information networks and, as a result, induce imitative peer effects (Lieberman and Asaba, 2006; Li et al., 2018). This aligns with social learning theory, small firms are more likely to imitate leaders than peers (Bikhchandani et al., 1998). In line with this, competition-based theory suggests that small firms mimic large ones to conform to sector expectations and that they have weak competitive drivers among themselves in the ESG fields, which mitigates reciprocal impacts (Wan et al., 2016; Cho et al., 2025). Due to resource scarcity (Haunschild and Miner, 1997), small firms typically prioritize operational needs that are less mutually aligned between the acting firm and the imitator, thereby diminishing reciprocal imitation. In addition, heterogeneity in business models and environmental, social & governance (ESG) priorities among small firms renders peer disclosures less valuable to them; they are more likely to mimic the practices of large firms. All of these factors combine to demonstrate the interplay between theoretical and contextual dynamics, which will also explain why reciprocal peer effects do not persist in Iran's small firms.

The implications of these findings are highly relevant for policymakers interested in improving corporate ESG reporting. Governments should use cross-industry imitation to lift the average quality of ESG disclosures. Specifically, policymakers should clearly identify and promote firms with exemplary ESG disclosure practices as an industry benchmark. These model firms should be publicly recognized through media campaigns and incentivized with long-term tax benefits. Establishing industry leaders can provide a framework for firms with weaker ESG practices, guiding them on what to disclose and how. Regulatory bodies should also consider providing standardized frameworks for integrated ESG reporting to ensure consistency and comparability. Additionally, enforcing compliance with ESG reporting standards can foster active learning and imitation among firms. It is crucial to account for firm size and experience when promoting ESG reporting, as these factors significantly influence intra-industry imitation.

For future studies, it is recommended to examine the impact of peer financial reporting quality on peers' ESG disclosure. Additionally, by analyzing the peer effects of ESG disclosure across industries, it can be investigated which industries experience stronger peer effects.

Reference

1. Adhikari, B. K. and Agrawal, A. (2018). Peer influence on payout policies. *Journal of Corporate Finance*, 48, pp. 615-637. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2017.12.010>
2. Akbas, H. E. (2014). Company characteristics and environmental disclosure: an empirical investigation on companies listed on Borsa Istanbul 100 index. *The Journal of Accounting and Finance*, 62, pp. 145-164. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/427507>
3. Bahramoghadam, M., Sadeghi, Z.A. and Safarzadeh, S. (2013). Investigating the relationship

- between corporate governance mechanisms and corporate social responsibility disclosure, quarterly. *Journal of Financial Accounting*, 5(20), pp. 90-107 (In Persian). <http://qfaj.mobarakkeh.iau.ir/article-1-123-fa.html>
4. Bernardi, C. and Stark, A. W. (2018). Environmental, social and governance disclosure, integrated reporting, and the accuracy of analyst forecasts. *The British Accounting Review*, 50(1), pp. 16-31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bar.2016.10.001>
 5. Bikhchandani, S., Hirshleifer, D. and Welch, I. (1998). Learning from the behavior of others: Conformity, fads, and informational cascades. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 12(3), pp. 151-170. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.12.3.151>
 6. Bonaiuto, M., Fornara, F. and Bonnes, M. (2003). Indexes of perceived residential environment quality and neighborhood attachment in urban environments: a confirmation study on the city of Rome. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 65(1-2), pp. 41-52. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-2046\(02\)00236-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-2046(02)00236-0)
 7. Capelle-Blancard, G. and Petit, A. (2019). Every little help? ESG news and stock market reaction. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 157(2), pp. 543-565. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3667-3>
 8. Chen, S. and Ma, H. (2017). Peer effects in decision-making: Evidence from corporate investment. *China Journal of Accounting Research*, 10(2), pp. 167-188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cjar.2016.11.002>
 9. Cho, H., Choi, A. and Jung, T. (2025). Peer effects in investment: Evidence from early-tenure CEOs. *European Accounting Review*, 34(3), pp. 1249-1275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638180.2024.2363444>
 10. Demerjian, P., Lev, B. and McVay, S. (2012). Quantifying managerial ability: A new measure and validity tests. *Management Science*, 58(7), pp. 1229-1248. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.1110.1487>
 11. DiMaggio, P. J. and Powell, W. W. (2022). The iron cage revisited: collective rationality and institutional isomorphism in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), pp. 145-160. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2095101>
 12. Dodgson, M. (1993). Organizational learning: a review of some literature. *Organization studies*, 14(3), pp. 375-394. <https://doi.org/10.1177/017084069301400303>
 13. Duong, H. K., Ngo, A. D. and McGowan, C. B. (2015). Industry peer effect and the maturity structure of corporate debt. *Managerial Finance*, 41(7), pp. 714-733. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MF-02-2014-0050>
 14. Eccles, R. G. and Serafeim, G. (2013). The performance frontier. *Harvard Business Review*, 91(5), pp. 50-60.
 15. Elahi, E., Khalid, Z. and Zhang, Z. (2022). Understanding farmers' intention and willingness to install renewable energy technology: A solution to reduce the environmental emissions of agriculture. *Applied Energy*, 309, Article 118459. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apenergy.2021.118459>
 16. Fakhari, H., Malekian, E. and Jafaei-Rahni, M. (2017). Explanation and ranking of environmental, social and corporate governance components using the Analytic Hierarchy Process in companies listed on the Stock Exchange. *Quarterly Journal of Value and Behavioral Accounting*, 2(4), pp. 153-187 (In Persian). <https://doi.org/10.29252/aapc.2.4.153>
 17. Gimeno, J., Hoskisson, R. E., Beal, B. D. and Wan, W. P. (2005). Explaining the clustering of international expansion moves: A critical test in the US telecommunications industry. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(2), pp. 297-319. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2005.16928411>
 18. Golijani, M. and Jafar Salehi, K. (2024). Investigating the relationship between environmental

- disclosure, earnings management and accounting conservatism. *Contemporary Research in Management and Accounting Sciences*, 16(5), pp. 77-93 (In Persian). <https://civilica.com/doc/1669632>
19. Grewal, J., Hauptmann, C. and Serafeim, G. (2021). Material sustainability information and stock price informativeness. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 171(3), pp. 513-544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04451-2>
 20. Gu, C. and Shen, M. (2024). Peer effect of environmental information disclosure behavior in China: Empirical test based on "Real green" and "Fake green". *Heliyon*, 10(23), e40779. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e40779>
 21. Hambrick, D. C. and Mason, P. A. (1984). Upper echelons: The organization as a reflection of its top managers. *Academy of Management Review*, 9(2), pp. 193-206. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1984.4277628>
 22. Han, J. C., Wild, J. J. and Ramesh, K. (1989). Managers' earnings forecasts and intra-industry information transfers. *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, 11(1), pp. 3-33. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0165-4101\(89\)90012-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0165-4101(89)90012-8)
 23. Haunschild, P. R. and Miner, A. S. (1997). Modes of interorganizational imitation: The effects of outcome salience and uncertainty. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42(2), pp. 472-500. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393735>
 24. Hu, K., Hao, Y. and Yu, D. (2022). Intra-industry peer effect in corporate environmental information disclosure: Evidence from China. *Plos One*, 17(9), pp. 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0274787>
 25. Joodaki, M., Khalili, Y. and Rahmati, L. (2023). Investigating the moderating effect of Leader and Young firms in industry on the relationship between Peer Firms and the Firm's Investment based on the theories of Information Deficit and Competitiveness. *Journal of Accounting Advances*, 15(2), pp. 93-124. <https://doi.org/10.22099/JAA.2024.48344.2369>
 26. Kaustia, M. and Rantala, V. (2015). Social learning and corporate peer effects. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 117(3), pp. 653-669. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfineco.2015.06.006>
 27. Khozein, A., Talebnia, G., Garkaz, M. and Banimahd, B. (2018). Effect of ownership structure on the development of the sustainable reporting. *Management Accounting Research Quarterly*, 11(36), pp. 69-101 (In Persian). <https://sanad.iau.ir/Journal/jma/Article/816328>
 28. Kordestani G. and Jafari Souq S. A. (2022). Peer firm performance and earnings management: the effect of capital market pressure. *The Journal of Judgment, and Decision Making in Accounting and Auditing*, 1(3), pp. 71-9 (In Persian). [10.30495/jdaa.2022.693174](https://doi.org/10.30495/jdaa.2022.693174)
 29. Leary, M. T. and Roberts, M. R. (2014). Do peer firms affect corporate financial policy? *The Journal of Finance*, 69(1), pp. 139-178. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jofi.12094>
 30. Li, Z. S., Su, C. and Li, H., Dongmin, K. (2018). Excess leverage and region-based corporate peer effects. *Journal of Financial Research*, 1(9), pp. 74-90.
 31. Lieberman, M. B. and Asaba, S. (2006). Why do firms imitate each other? *Academy of Management Review*, 31(2), pp. 366-385. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2006.20208686>
 32. Manski, C. F. (1993). Identification of endogenous social effects: The reflection problem. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 60(3), pp. 531-542. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2298123>
 33. Wan, L., Liang, C. and Rao, J. (2016). Industry peer effect in M&A decisions of China's listed companies. *Nankai Business Review*, 19(3), pp. 40-50.
 34. Wang, Y. T., Wang, S. and Duan, M. Y. (2024). The peer effect of green investment activities of China's listed firms. *Systems Engineering Theory and Practice*, 44(3), pp. 874-892. <https://doi.org/10.12011/SETP2023-0011>
 35. Xi, L., Bian, H. and Wang, X. (2024). Is there a peer effect on corporate ESG performance?

- Evidence from China's capital market. *Chinese Journal of Population, Resources and Environment*, 22(4), pp. 423-435. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cjpre.2024.11.006>
36. Yang, S., Ye, H. and Zhu, Q. (2017). Do peer firms affect firm's corporate social responsibility? *Sustainability*, 9(11), p. 1967. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su9111967>
37. Zhang, Z. and You, J. (2024). Does firms' ESG information disclosure have contagion effect? Evidence from China. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 31(4), pp. 3274-3296. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2737>
38. Zhi-guo, D. I. N. G. and Bo-yi, L. I. (2020). Regional peer effect of dividend policy of listed companies. *Journal of South China Normal University (Social Science Edition)*, 1(3), pp. 95-107.