

# Corporate Governance Reforms and Their Influence on Indian Corporate Sector Performance

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## Abstract:

This study aims to examine the gradual evolution of corporate governance reforms in India and assess their impact on corporate performance and issues encountered while implementing them. This is based on the descriptive qualitative methodology to comprehensively review scholarly articles, industry reports, and regulatory documents to analyze key governance reforms pertinently, including Clause 49, the Companies Act of 2013, and Securities and Exchange Board of India, Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements Regulations (2015). The findings have revealed that such reforms have enhanced financial transparency and strengthened the shareholder's rights, as well as have shown improvement as per various key performance indicators (KPIs)- like Return on Assets, and market valuation-reducing chances of fraud and increasing financial stability. However, family-owned businesses often resisted many of the governance norms imposed on them, leading to superficial compliance and, ultimately, impediments to the overall effectiveness of those reforms. The study concludes that uneven enforcement and regulatory loopholes constrain the achievement of consistency in governance standards. The study shall recommend better enforcement mechanisms and strengthen board independence and greater Environmental, Social, and Governance integration for accountability. The findings would most likely be practically useful to policymakers, regulators, and corporations alike regarding pushing toward their sustainable and transparent governance practices.

**Keywords:** Corporate Governance, Governance Reforms, Indian Corporate Sector, Financial Performance, Transparency and Accountability.

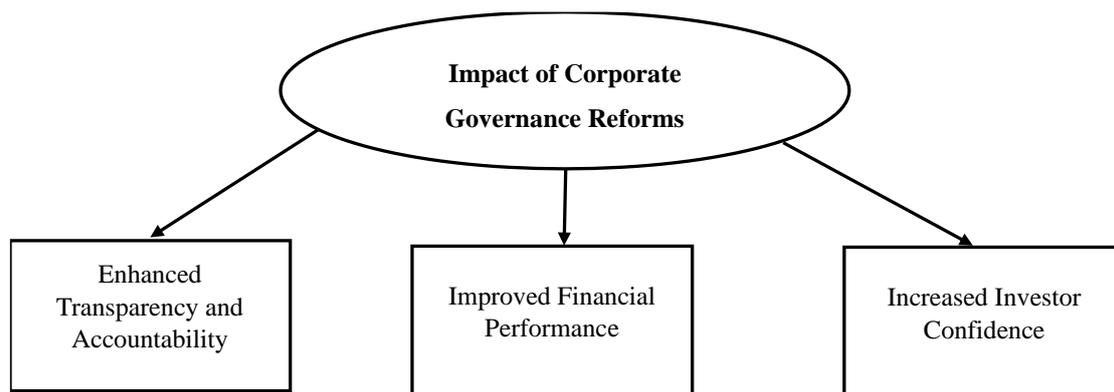
## 1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate governance in India has changed significantly through various phases in different years. Corporate governance reforms have emerged as the most poising regulatory measures for effectiveness; such reforms have, among other things, brought transparency and accountability, hence offering great corporate performance. The year 1991 was a landmark in Indian economic liberalization and saw the beginning of market-oriented reforms aimed at shoring up the need for tighter governance frameworks to attract investors. The organization for regulatory oversight concerning ensuring market integrity and protecting investor interests was established in 1992 in the instrumentality of establishing the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) [1]. A historic entry was Clause 49 in the Listing Agreement, which was launched in 2000 and made compliance with stricter disclosure norms, independent board members, and audit committees mandatory for listed companies [2]. This reform was intended to prevent corporate fraud and bring about transparency. The independent directors mandated by the new Companies Act of 2013 are also considered as having further important reforms for corporate governance in service of shareholder empowerment and strengthened financial disclosures [3]. Some studies indicated that Indian companies were better than South Koreans in implementing extensive governance mechanisms in terms of market performance and high returns [4]. Some parts, however, remain unresolved. There are numerous improvements in regulations; however, as large parts of the family-owned business still dominate the governance norms, it creates impediments to the

application of these regulations [5]. Corporate governance has a positive influence on the performance of the firm, but the impact differs according to the different sectors and sizes of the firm. On the whole, India is making strides in corporate governance, but a lot remains in terms of uniform enforcement and adjustment to the global standard for sustainable corporate growth [6].

### 1.1 The Crucial Role of Corporate Governance in Boosting Transparency and Accountability

Corporate governance is key to enhancing transparency and accountability, especially in the Indian corporate sector. The introduction of regulatory reforms like the Companies Act of 2013 and the SEBI Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) Regulations has further increased the transparency of companies through mandatory financial disclosures and independent audits. Such reforms enhanced corporate accountability through concepts of board independence alongside enhanced shareholders' rights and excessive penalties for infractions [7]. Effective governance mechanisms would not only alleviate the information asymmetry but would also actively work against management disloyalty [8].



**Figure 1: Impact of Corporate Governance Reforms**

Source: self-made by author

Reforms in corporate governance in India are creating an accountable corporate environment through stringent CSR practices promoting transparency and sustainable business operations. Increased regulatory enforcement should lead to a higher level of transparency between stakeholders and therefore engender a trustful investor milieu, along with enhancing the corporate image and improving the quality of financial reporting [9]. Although these disclosure provisions and enforcement mechanisms are in place, many constraints exist that limit their application. Family-owned business organizations have enormous gaps in efficiency enforcement, though the regulations are all meant to promote transparency as the significant barrier to the benefits that could have easily accrued from these reforms [10].

### 1.2 Transforming India with Corporate Governance Reforms

Corporate governance reforms in India have undergone major transformations over the past decade to improve transparency, accountability, and corporate performance as their main aims. One such major reform was the enactment of the Companies Act, of 2013, which made board independence mandatory, strengthened shareholder rights, and included more financial disclosures. In recent times, the SEBI amendments have changed the corporate governance norms as these amendments have come into force, with the introduction of Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) in 2015 and its subsequent revisions, which have now established stricter compliance requirements under the overall umbrella of corporate governance norms. The mechanisms of corporate governance pointed to firm value such that better effective means will lower stock return volatilities and boost financial safety; [11]. Better governance practices in India changed investor confidence in terms of risk management and thereby positioned benefits to it in the long-term financial stability and performance [10]. Corporate governance reforms have reduced earnings management practices across the industries in India, thereby improving financial integrity. However, despite such improvements, effective governance is still challenged in India in areas such as irregular enforcement and the dominance of family-owned businesses [12].



**Figure 2: Corporate Governance Reforms**

Source: self-made by author

- **SEBI's Clause 49**

In the year 2000, the introduction of Clause 49 of the Listing Agreement was a milestone in the evolution of corporate governance in India. It introduced provisions for independent directors, audit committees, and financial disclosures for strengthening transparency, accountability, and investor protection. Such provisions of the Clause were repealed under a comprehensive amendment to the Companies Act, 2013, in 2014, and there have been stringent provisions introduced concerning the independence of boards, transactions with related parties, and protection of whistleblowers. Moreover, this update also increased the punishment of non-compliance to enhance the level of transparency. Still, its effectiveness has not been achieved because of many enforcement gaps and compliance loopholes, especially in the case of family businesses [13].

- **Companies Act 2013**

The Companies Act, of 2013, represents a major overhaul of corporate governance in India as far as the Act of 1956 is concerned. It imposed stricter compliance requirements to enhance transparency, accountability, and protection of investors. Some of the important provisions include mandatory CSR, greater independence for boards, and tighter regulations on related-party transactions. Other changes included the introduction of stricter audit norms, penalties for any form of misreporting from the finance or accounting side, and better protection for minority shareholders to encourage ethical business conduct [14].

- **SEBI (LODR) Regulations 2015**

The LODR found that unified legal regimes lead to the simplification and phenomenon of invigorating corporate governance and citizenship norms in the country. Tougher requirements for disclosures associated with accountability at the board level were established. An improvement in shareholder rights was achieved as well. These parameters improved disclosures relating to the financial aspects, and private parties, and had to follow a very stringent compliance regime [15].

- **Kotak Committee Recommendations (2017)**

The Kotak Committee on Corporate Governance constituted in 2017, recommended various measures to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency in corporate functioning. Some of the core recommendations were the separation of the chair and CEO roles, an increased number of independent board members, and improved disclosure norms. Many of these recommendations were implemented by SEBI, which resulted in stringent board composition rules, better risk management, and stronger whistleblower policies. The committee promoted diversity in boards and transparent decision-making [16].

### 1.3 Problem Statement

Corporate governance reforms have progressed quite a bit, but they are still not effective, mainly due to inconsistent enforcement. One of the worst cases has been family-owned and promoter-driven firms that would rather avoid compliance altogether. Weak internal controls, an unwillingness to promote independent directors, and conflicts of interest dilute whatever impact reforms such as the Companies Act, 2013, and SEBI's LODR Regulations of 2015 may have had. The ill effects of such practices permeate transparency and accountability levels in India. These slipshod systems are seriously undermined by a lack of audit processes, which estranges investors and disrupts market stability. For better compliance and on grounds of ethical corporate conduct and accountability, stricter enforcement mechanisms and graver penalties for non-compliance must be worked on.

## 2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Corporate governance reforms and their effect on performance in India are an extremely important area of study since they bring out the direct link between governance mechanisms and firm performance. Strong governance practices, including board independence, open financial disclosures, and risk management, are instrumental in improving corporate efficiency and profitability. Therefore, through an assessment of the impact of governance reforms on improvements in accountability and transparency, this study seeks to determine the degree to which those translate into enhanced financial stability, reduced fraud, and more investor confidence. Moreover, governance reforms are relevant in the Indian corporate sector today, given the quick pace of regulation changes in the country. Corporate governance reforms, particularly the Companies Act of 2013, and SEBI's LODR Regulations of 2015, have made the need to assess effectiveness in enhancing corporate accountability ever more apparent. This study will consider compliance difficulties, particularly in family-owned and promoter-driven entities that often harbor governance gaps. Assessing the effects of governance reforms will give immense insights into how they can be used to promote ethical business practices, instill stability in the market, and create a sustainable business environment. Finally, it is anticipated that the study will make policy recommendations to strengthen governance frameworks for more transparent and accountable corporate conduct.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Yadav (2024) examined the evolution of the corporate governance system in India from the perspective of economic liberalization and globalization [17]. The study examined the link to governance practices in corporate management, control, and accountability. The study analyzed the impact of reforms such as the Companies Act of 2013 and Clause 49 of SEBI on corporate performance and shareholder confidence. The study showed that as Indian companies entered into global markets, governance was thought to be essential in terms of greater transparency, lesser financial irregularities, and greater investor confidence. The study stated that policymakers and managers increasingly viewed governance as critical to corporate sustainability and long-term growth. Strengthening regulatory compliance and promoting ethical practices were identified as fundamental building blocks for restoring market confidence and accountability.

Kumar (2024) examined the regional effects of corporate governance on financial performance [18]. Consideration was given to the relationship among governance mechanisms, regulation, and financial performance. The study indicated that good governance led to improved sustainability, profitability, and investor satisfaction. Active and diverse board involvement in strategic alternatives was found to have a positive influence on financial performance, while strong regulation suited to local fiscal and cultural conditions led to more transparency and accountability. Challenges consisted of poorly enforced laws and evolving standards of governance. Recommendations made by the study indicated that ongoing reforms were vital for sustainable business success, stakeholder trust, and adjustments to digital and ESG factors.

Rao (2024) explored substantial legal reforms impacting corporate governance in different countries and jurisdictions and evaluated their effectiveness in enhancing transparency, accountability, and participatory stakeholding [19]. While surveying core reforms in the United States, the European Union, and transitional countries, themes, challenges, and shortcomings of existing governance frameworks were sought. The methodology incorporated an analysis of the impacts of these reforms on corporate conduct and the strengthening of governance practice. The findings indicated that while legal reforms made a substantial impact on corporate accountability and transparency, some gaps remained, particularly in enforcement and adaptability to changing market conditions. The study concluded that there will always be a need for continuous upgrading of governance frameworks to achieve vibrant corporate governance in a global economy.

Kumar, et al. (2023) ascertained the conception of corporate governance and its relative importance for the Indian market in the face of the criterion of ensuring transparency and accountability [20]. This need for a governance mechanism was said to be directly caused by an increasing number of companies and thus the significant reflection of the structures and operations of businesses. The study focused on analyzing regulatory frameworks such as SEBI's Clause 49 concerning mandatory and non-mandatory governance requirements

for listed companies. The study identified challenges and opportunities regarding the implementation of corporate governance practices in India. The study revealed that corporate governance was essential to be answerable for the frauds committed against corporations, provide transparency, and ensure the protection of the interests of shareholders.

Mustafa, et al. (2022) examined the understanding of corporate governance and its influence on company and economic performance [21]. The study looked at the primary determinants of good corporate governance practice. The study established the relationships between governance practices and corporate outcomes. The findings revealed that corporate governance significantly affected economic performance. The study concluded that insider ownership has the most positive effect on firm value, and concentrated outside ownership was concluded to affect market value less favorably. The study revealed that direct ownership was more favored than indirect ownership. Strong governance was inferred by the study to be a crucial factor in enhancing market confidence and protection of long-term foreign direct investment, hence leading to growth in the economy.

Al-ahdal, et al. (2021) examined how corporate governance affected the performance of listed firms in India and the GCC using data from 100 non-financial companies (2010-2017) [22]. The study applied manual content analysis to select 50 firms from each region based on market capitalization. The study showed that Indian companies followed stronger governance practices. On the whole, governance was harming firm performance (ROA), except for governance effectiveness (GE), which was beneficial. Board structure (BS) was negatively affecting performance (Tobin's Q), whereas transparency, disclosure, leverage, and GE were all positively effective. The study concluded that these insights would help managers and policymakers improve governance frameworks.

Amin, et al. (2021) investigated how corporate governance (CG) principles might improve a company's performance throughout various organizational life cycles [23]. To investigate how a collection of CG practices work together in collections to provide optimal performance for businesses across their business existences, the study suggested a configurational method. A sample of data from nine sectors and twenty-one nations was analyzed using fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis. Specifically, the data covered nine years from 2005 to 2013. There were a variety of CG procedures that businesses might use to get excellent company efficiency. Furthermore, CG practices varied depending on the stage of a company's development, competence, and decline. The study highlighted the need for politicians to evaluate their nations' existing competitiveness and legislative growth rates and adjust their policies appropriately.

Singh (2020) looked into the business case for effective corporate governance to be developed in the light of economic purposes, especially concerning those doing business in emerging markets and where information deficit and market imperfections might have been found to prevail over those in the developed world [24]. The approach was to channel corporate governance into the boundaries of reduced fraud risk, and compliance, and not incurring huge litigation costs. The study found that such strong governance led to greater transparency within organizations but also improved the way customers, investors, and suppliers viewed the company itself. Hence, the study concluded that stronger corporate governance practices were at the forefront of facilitating sustainable growth, trust-building, and creating an environment of continuous and everlasting success in both targeted and developed markets.

Ciftci, et al. (2019) examined the relationship between internal corporate governance, corporate performance, and the institutional context or environment in Turkey, which was family Capitalism [25]. The study emphasized how particular structures like ownership concentration, board composition, and cross-ownership affected the firm outcomes. Based on the information gathered from analyzing corporate structures, types, and ownership, and its resulting impact on both the market and accounting performance of the firms, the following were discovered: concentrated ownership, where most ownership is held by families, ensures better performance because families have more to lose in terms of the effects of their performance falling below average. Larger boards and foreign ownership also improved performance at the firm level, but cross-ownership wasn't shown to have an impact on any market-based performance measures; rather, it had a

negative association with accounting performance. Interestingly, the size of the family member composition of the board did not show any significant effect.

Pillai & Al-Malkawi (2017) examined how internal corporate governance (CG) mechanisms affected firm performance (FP) in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region [26]. The study used panel data based on 349 financial and non-financial companies that were listed on the GCC stock exchanges from 2005 to 2012. An empirical model was developed based on thirteen testable study hypotheses, and the parameters of the study model were estimated by the Generalized Least Squares (GLS) method. As per the result, several governance variables, such as government shareholder, audit type, board size, corporate social responsibility, and leverage, were found to be significantly influencing firm performance across most countries in the region. The study concluded that strong governance practices need to be in place to create value for these firms, and legislative enforcement of strategic measures was suggested to ensure effective and sustainable corporate governance in the region.

#### **4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

**Obj1** To evaluate the historical progression of corporate governance reforms in India.

**Obj2** To examine how these reforms have influenced key performance indicators of Indian corporate firms.

**Obj3** To critically assess the challenges encountered during the implementation of corporate governance reforms and how to counter these challenges for the Indian corporate sector.

#### **5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**Q.1:** What are the key stages in the historical progression of corporate governance reforms in India?

**Q.2:** What impact have corporate governance reforms had on the key performance indicators of Indian corporate firms?

**Q.3:** What challenges have Indian firms encountered during the implementation of corporate governance reforms?

#### **6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study adopts a qualitative approach as it revolves around a comprehensive review of existing literature dedicated to exploring the impact of corporate governance reforms on the performance of Indian corporate firms. The qualitative approach allows for the study of historical trends and other regulatory events and their influence on corporate performance indicators such as profitability, transparency, and market value. In this way, the qualitative method permits an in-depth analysis of secondary sources, such as peer-reviewed articles, industry reports, and regulatory documents from SEBI and RBI. The study laid down clear inclusion and exclusion criteria to abide by the necessary relevance and accuracy. The applicable post-2010 literature, on Indian corporate governance reforms was included as the above period consists of the most recent and relevant regulatory changes comprising the Companies Act of 2013 and the LODR Regulations by SEBI. Excluded were non-Indian firms, outdated governance frameworks, and articles published before 2010. The selected option can thus allow a detailed synthesis of existing knowledge to give a broad and competent understanding of how governance reforms have shaped the Indian corporate sector without primary data collection.

#### **7. DISCUSSION**

##### **• To evaluate the historical progression of corporate governance reforms in India**

In India, corporate governance reforms have been part of several major regulatory epochs aimed mainly at improving transparency, accountability, and investor confidence. In 1991, the liberalization of the Indian economy led to the introduction of stricter governance frameworks meant to attract global [1]. These frameworks included regulatory safeguards introduced by SEBI in 1992 to secure the integrity of the Indian market [4]. The year 2000 saw the arrival of one landmark event in these changes, which was the introduction of Clause 49, wherein board independence, audit committees, and stringent financial disclosures were mandated [2]. The focus of the Companies Act of 2013 was on governance and made enforceable norms on corporate social responsibility, enhanced shareholders' rights, and provided for independent directors [3]. The establishment of LODR Regulations in 2015 molded the process of corporate reporting and brought in the value of transparency [15]. While finance and IT sectors have been found for better compliance, family-based

businesses tend to circumvent the legislation' [10]. Therefore, these reforms can be seen through the lens of agency theory, which attempts to resolve conflicts of interest by enhancing transparency and accountability [13]. Unfortunately, inconsistent enforcement and compliance gaps serve to undercut their effectiveness, especially in family firms [16]. With the reforms so far, legal enforcement is rather weak and is merely honored in the breach to the extent that it has almost become a matter of substance [5].

**Table 1: Summary of Discussion**

Particulars	Citations
Economic liberalization in 1991 set the stage for stricter regulatory frameworks and the establishment of SEBI to safeguard market integrity.	Malik & Nehra (2014); Gupta & Sharma (2014) [1,4]
The introduction of Clause 49 in 2000 mandated board independence, audit committees, and rigorous financial disclosures.	Dua & Dua (2015) [2]
The Companies Act of 2013 reinforced governance norms by emphasizing enhanced CSR, independent directors, and improved shareholder rights.	Goel (2018) [3]
The enactment of SEBI's LODR Regulations in 2015 further advanced corporate reporting and transparency.	Rani & Mago (2023) [15]
Persistent enforcement challenges—particularly in family-owned businesses—result in cosmetic compliance rather than substantive reform.	Dhameja et al. (2022); Sehrawat (2022); Pandey & Agarwal (2017); Pande & Kaushik (2012) [10,13,16,5]

Source: Self-made by author

• **To examine how these reforms have influenced key performance indicators of Indian corporate firms**

Corporate governance reforms have had varying effects on the financial performance of Indian firms. Enhanced governance measures have positively affected key performance indicators (KPIs) such as return on assets (ROA) and Tobin's Q, through financial transparency and fraud risk reduction [7]. The Companies Act of 2013 and SEBI's LODR Regulations would make financial reporting much more accurate while restoring the lost faith of the investor [9]. There was more stock return stability and long-term financial sustenance for the larger companies on account of reforms [11]. Yet the reforms vary concerning industry type and firm size. Public companies and financial firms benefited more from stringent oversight of regulations [12], while lower compliance levels allowed family-owned and mid-sized firms to marginally improve on performance [14]. Whatever benefits have accrued under the reforms find endorsement under the stakeholder theory, calling for transparency and trustworthiness, feeding into better results financially [26]. Good governance enables access to capital, lowers the cost of finance, and increases market value [10]. The selective application of the laws and inconsistent compliance by family-owned businesses have been barriers to effective implementation [4]. Again, the direct impact of governance reforms is hazy, owing to market volatility, firm-specific risks, and economic conditions, among others [22].

**Table 2: Summary of Discussion**

Particulars	Citations
Enhanced financial transparency through reforms has positively influenced KPIs such as Return on Assets (ROA) and Tobin's Q.	Azinogo & Erasmus (2025); Ganesh et al. (2024) [7,9]
Reforms have contributed to improved stock return stability and long-term financial sustainability.	Singh et al. (2025) [11]
The impact of reforms varies by firm type—with public and larger companies showing more significant benefits compared to family-owned firms.	Thoppan et al. (2021); Khandelwal & Parmar (2022); Gupta & Sharma (2014) [12,14,4]

The application of stakeholder theory supports the idea that increased transparency builds trust and improves market valuation.	Al-ahdal et al. (2021); Pillai & Al-Malkawi (2017) [22,26]
Overall, improved governance practices have enhanced access to capital and raised corporate market value.	Dhameja et al. (2022) [10]

**Source: Self-made by author**

• **To critically assess the challenges encountered during the implementation of corporate governance reforms and how to counter these challenges for the Indian corporate sector**

Corporate governance reforms in India have faced stiff resistance from family businesses, poor enforcement, and loopholes in the regulations, which can be exploited. Family businesses perceive governance reforms as an encroachment on their control and lead to mere compliance instead of proper adherence [25]. Although there were reforms like the SEBI LODR regulation or recommendations of the Kotak Committee, such reforms can be easily circumvented because companies practice only cosmetic compliance [24]. Much better governance compliance has been observed among larger and publicly listed companies due to aggravated scrutiny by investors and regulators [24], while family-owned and smaller businesses hardly receive any punishment for non-compliance, which curtails the effectiveness of reforms [22]. Compliance is significantly stricter in consumer-centric sectors such as finance and telecom. Such dilemmas reflect the deficiencies in the agency theory, which relies on the assumption that regulatory oversight will minimize opportunistic managerial behavior within the organization [21]. Stronger audits, independent boards, and whistleblower protection can bring improvements in governance [17].

**Table 3: Summary of Discussion**

Particulars	Citations
Family-owned businesses often exhibit resistance, leading to superficial or cosmetic compliance with governance reforms.	Ciftci et al. (2019) [25]
Inconsistent and lax enforcement of governance regulations hampers effective implementation.	Singh (2020) [24]
Regulatory loopholes and gaps undermine the intended impact of the reforms.	Al-ahdal et al. (2021) [22]
There is a need for stronger audit mechanisms, enhanced board independence, and better whistleblower protection to counteract implementation challenges.	Mustafa et al. (2022) [21]
Recommendations include stricter regulatory oversight and improved internal corporate practices to ensure effective compliance.	Yadav (2024) [17]

**Source: Self-made by author**

## 8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study discloses corporate governance reforms that have changed the performances and accountability status of the Indian corporate sector. The historical progression introduction of Clause 49, then the Companies Act of 2013, and lastly SEBI's LODR Regulations (2015)-have amplified the company's transparency, strengthened shareholder rights, and improved the accuracy of financial reporting. It derives that good governance practices positively affect key performance variables: return on assets (ROA) and market valuation, mainly because they have reduced both the risks of fraud and enhanced financial stability. However, it has been found that the concepts are still challenged, especially in family-run businesses, where governance norm principles are often neglected, hindering the viability of reforms. In conclusion, the study shows that very good and consistently enforced governance reforms are vital for achieving an organization's accountability, the confidence of the investors, and ultimately, long-term economic stability.

## LIMITATIONS

- The enforcement is inconsistent, and the regulations have numerous loopholes, leading to little more than cosmetic compliance.

- Family-owned businesses, on average, resist the necessary changes benefiting shared value businesses so that reforms end up remaining particularly unable to be turned into greater legislative initiatives.

### IMPLICATIONS

- The enhancements have improved the financial transparency and reporting standards, thus consolidating the trust of market players.
- Corporate governance has a considerable bearing on the firm's financial health and competitive advantage.

### FUTURE STUDIES SCOPE

- Further research should encompass comparative trends in corporate governance reforms across other emerging markets such as Brazil, South Africa, and China to identify best practices.
- There is also the ability to consider the potential role of emerging technologies, like artificial intelligence and blockchain, in improving governance practices and creating stricter compliance with regulations.

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