

Reality of implementation corporate social responsibility accounting in Algerian companies

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Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) accounting in Algerian companies by analyzing the perspectives of accounting professionals regarding its importance, benefits, and limitations within the Algerian context.

Results revealed that the adoption of CSR accounting is influenced by several factors, primarily the economic and environmental landscape. Tax incentives and the enhancement of company reputation and brand emerged as significant incentives for implementing CSR, with sustainable development being a prominent expected benefit.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility; Accounting; Implementation.

Jel Classification Codes : M41 ; Q51 ; N30.

Résumé:

Cette étude vise à étudier la mise en œuvre de la comptabilité de responsabilité sociale des entreprises dans les entreprises algériennes en analysant les perspectives des professionnels comptables concernant son importance, ses avantages et ses limites dans le contexte algérien.

Les résultats ont révélé que l'adoption de la comptabilité est influencée par plusieurs facteurs, principalement le paysage économique et environnemental. Les incitations fiscales et l'amélioration de la réputation et de la marque de l'entreprise sont apparues comme des incitations importantes à la mise en œuvre de la RSE, le développement durable étant l'un des principaux avantages attendus.

Mots clés: Responsabilité Sociale des entreprises; Comptabilité; Implémentation.

Jel Classification Codes : M41 ; Q51 ; N30.

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I. Introduction

Amidst evolving business environments and a global drive towards social welfare and environmental protection, economic enterprises are increasingly emphasizing the social dimension alongside the economic dimension to leverage several advantages benefiting society and the company itself. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can confer a competitive advantage upon companies, facilitating their entry into international markets by integrating CSR principles and dimensions into their strategies.

The growing interest in CSR by international bodies has given rise to the concept of CSR accounting, a new branch aiming to measure and evaluate the social aspect of companies. Algerian companies face the challenge of ensuring corporate sustainability while fulfilling stakeholder interests and environmental responsibilities through adherence to CSR accounting guidelines.

I. 1 Research Problematic:

From the above, the main problematic of our study can be presented as follows:

What is the reality of implementation corporate social responsibility accounting in Algerian companies?

The sub-questions that serve the topic of our research are explained as follows:

- What is the importance of implementation corporate social responsibility accounting in Algerian companies?
- What is the most important incentive to implement corporate social responsibility accounting in Algerian companies?
- What are the limitations of implementation corporate social responsibility accounting in Algerian companies?

I. 2 Research Hypotheses:

The study posits three hypotheses:

- (Hyp.1): Achieving competitive advantage is the paramount benefit of implementing CSR accounting in Algerian companies.
- (Hyp.2): Reputation and brand enhancement serve as the primary incentives for implementing CSR accounting in Algerian companies.
- (Hyp.3): Inadequate economic and environmental contexts constitute the principal limitations for implementing CSR accounting in Algerian companies.

I. 3 Study Objectives:

The objectives of the study are to:

- Define the concept of CSR in financial and accounting literature, focusing on its dimensions.

- Identify reasons for adopting CSR accounting in Algerian companies by analyzing expected benefits and application incentives from the viewpoint of accounting professionals.
- Identify measurement challenges and obstacles to applying CSR accounting in the Algerian context from the perspective of accounting professionals.

I. 4 Methodology of Research:

The study employs a theoretical framework based on previous literature to describe and analyze the concept and importance of CSR accounting and its application mechanisms. In the applied part, a qualitative approach is adopted, involving direct interviews with accounting professionals to validate hypotheses and provide recommendations.

II. The Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The growing interest among researchers in the subject of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) accounting is attributable to companies' recognition of the imperative to fulfill their responsibilities towards their social and economic environments. Today's challenge lies in bridging the gap between companies and their surroundings, a fundamental prerequisite for attaining sustainability and societal well-being from an ethical standpoint that acknowledges the inseparability of the company from society.

Before delving into the definitions of corporate social responsibility, it is imperative to elucidate the key terms associated with it:

- Stakeholders: These encompass individuals or groups both within and outside the company who wield influence over and are impacted, either directly or indirectly, by the company's decisions and actions.
- Sustainability: This denotes a company's capacity to manage its natural resources and operations over time.

It is noteworthy that corporate social responsibility can be expressed in various forms, including corporate sustainability, corporate citizenship, ethical organization, and civil organization (Hopkins, 2006, pp. 300-302).

Table (01): Concept of corporation social responsibility (CSR)

Study by	Definition
(Abagail & Donald, 2001, p. 117)	Interest in social responsibility is primarily due to increased stakeholder demand. Definitions of corporate social responsibility vary due to the varying purposes and goals of its application. It is also defined as procedures that serve the social aspect apart from what is required by law.
(Wan-JAN, 2006, p. 183)	The research paper focused on presenting the concept of corporate social responsibility in the literature, where it is viewed as an ethical position while its concept is limited by some researchers to be merely a business strategy.
(Frederick, 2008, pp. 522-523)	Board members or executives leaders seek to allocate the necessary resources to achieve social responsibility by achieving the well-being of stakeholders, which creates a strong link between companies and the environment in which they operate.
(Abdulaziz, 2018, p. 1)	The study emphasized the ambiguity and lack of clarity in the definitions of corporate social responsibility, despite their many types. It generally represents the inclusion of environmental and social information on a voluntary basis in transactions with stakeholders, and it also represents a commitment to achieving well-being beyond the company's goals and what is required by law.
(Becchetti, Ciciretti, & Dalo, 2018, pp. 25-26)	Social responsibility generally aims to go beyond the traditional goals of companies, relying on a broader vision that meets the needs of a wide range of stakeholders, and it primarily includes environmentally friendly measures.

Source: Compiled by researchers

As delineated in Table 1, corporate social responsibility (CSR) lacks a globally unified definition endorsed by international bodies. The absence of uniformity in definitions is attributed to various factors, with some rooted in voluntary adherence to CSR processes, while others emphasize the role of serving stakeholders and fostering interactions between companies and their environments.

Hopkins (2006, pp. 300-301) highlights the European Union (EU) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) concept of CSR as the most prevalent and comprehensive. According to this perspective, CSR embodies a moral commitment to stakeholders in line with international standards, encompassing economic, financial, and environmental dimensions. It serves as a conduit to achieving sustainability both within societies and organizations.

In order to elucidate the intricacies of CSR, it is pertinent to examine and analyze the dimensions of social responsibility delineated in the literature. Table 2 below presents the most commonly discussed dimensions.

Table (02): dimensions of corporate social responsibility

Presented by (Carroll, 1991, p. 42)	Presented by (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003, p. 509)	Presented by (Uddin, Hassan, & Tarique, 2008, p. 204)
- Philanthropic - Ethical - Legal - Economic	- Ethical - Legal - Economic	- Economic - Social aspects - Environmental and Ecological aspects

Source: Compiled by researchers

The delineation of CSR dimensions and their application areas offers valuable insights into both the accounting and resource allocation processes essential for its implementation. Many theorists contend that Carroll's (1991, p. 42) classification of social responsibility areas remains prevalent, particularly in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, due to its emphasis on ethical considerations as a means of integrating companies into their environments and enhancing their competitiveness. Subsequently, alternative suggestions for CSR dimensions have emerged, notably emphasizing the environmental aspect.

The variability in defining the dimensions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) by researchers underscores the multifaceted nature of CSR concepts. This diversity in definitions further accentuates the nuanced understanding and application of CSR within different contexts.

III. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Accounting

Amidst the escalating pressures exerted on companies by stakeholders and the burgeoning significance of CSR, the legitimacy of social responsibility practices has emerged as a paramount requirement. Present endeavors are predicated on formalizing processes for objectively measuring and accounting for environmental and social policies, akin to the established practices in financial accounting (Bessire, 2005, pp. 148-149).

Numerous researchers attribute the proliferation and diversification of social responsibility accounting to developed nations. However, disparities in levels of interest are discernible, with accounting bodies in Britain and Europe exhibiting greater dedication to the implementation of social responsibility accounting compared to their counterparts in the United States of America (Tilt, 2010, p. 20).

Social responsibility accounting endeavors to encompass the environmental and social dimensions of companies while also refining methodologies and

measurement techniques to comprehensively address the environmental, social, and economic domains.

Various organizations have spearheaded initiatives to promote corporate adherence to social responsibility accounting practices, including the Commonwealth Organization (offering recommendations regarding the feasibility of adopting Australian corporate social responsibility) and the Association of Certified Public Accountants (Tilt, 2010, p. 20-22).

Social responsibility accounting entails the measurement and categorization of social and environmental occurrences, enabling management to evaluate them within the framework of their strategic imperatives.

Further exploration into accounting procedures for social responsibility led us to delve deeply into the financial and accounting literature. In this pursuit, we observed a dearth of comprehensive elaboration on the topic alongside a scarcity of authoritative sources. The quest for a universally applicable framework for accounting procedures proves challenging, with existing models largely considered suggestive rather than prescriptive.

After scrutinizing seminal financial and accounting studies, we distilled the most crucial steps and measurement items pertaining to corporate social responsibility (CSR), which are presented in Table 3 below.

Table (03): Measuring and accounting for corporate social responsibility

The basis for measuring social and environmental events	In general, the measurement is made on a physical and financial basis Physical Measures: Physical measures represent tangible units in the form of weights and volumes such as carbon dioxide emissions. Financial Measures: Environmental events are expressed monetarily as replacement value.
Measuring and accounting of environmental aspects	Three types of environmental costs can be enumerated
	Environmental Product Costing: It is concerned with determining the environmental cost of manufacturing a product. Environmental Period Cost: It is concerned with the time factor of pollution and the impact of environmental disasters. Environmental Capital Expenditures and Revenues: It is concerned with the expenditures and revenues of investments related to environmental protection.
	Tiers of Environmental Accounting

	Conventional Costs and Benefits: Costs associated with capital expenditures. Hidden Costs and Benefits: Indirect and unexpected costs Contingent Costs and Benefits: It appears as a result of non-compliance with environmental procedures Relationship and Image Costs and Benefits: It is related to how stakeholders view the company
Measuring and accounting of social aspects	Measuring internal social aspects: It is linked to the company's strategy and the treatment of employees, in addition to the incentives and benefits provided. Measuring external social aspects: It is based on material and financial assistance provided to stakeholders, such as donations directed to patients.

Source: Compiled by researchers based on insights from (Lautour, 2019, pp. 79-91)

IV. Benefits and Importance of Corporate Social Responsibility Accounting

In this segment of the study, we endeavor to underscore the principal benefits of implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) accounting and assess its significance by drawing upon previous studies that have addressed the topic.

Our examination of prior research enabled us to discern two categories of benefits: theoretical conjectures and empirically confirmed benefits observed across diverse environments through models and comprehensive analytical investigations.

Theoretical benefits pertain to benefits that are inherently intangible and thus cannot be empirically measured. Examples include accurately gauging brand or customer satisfaction. Empirically confirmed benefits represent tangible benefits that are measurable and are distinctly manifested in a company's operations.

IV.1 A Tool for Achieving Competitive Advantage

Attaining a competitive advantage entails distinguishing the company from its counterparts within the same sector in a manner that entices customers to patronize its goods and services at a premium price, typically higher than that of competitors.

Social responsibility accounting serves as a conduit for achieving competitive advantage when integrated into a company's strategic blueprint. For companies aspiring to enhance their product offerings, this strategic step hinges upon the awareness and organizational culture fostered by the board of directors. The adoption of social responsibility practices may ultimately enhance employee

efficiency, optimize resource utilization, and influence the costs associated with goods and services provided (Asemah, Okpanachi, & Edegoh, 2013, pp. 48-49).

IV.2 Investing in Human Resources

In the landscape of the twenty-first-century global economy, characterized by knowledge-based paradigms, knowledge and creativity have emerged as pivotal drivers of business growth and sustainability.

Enhancing employee efficiency through the adoption of social responsibility accounting is intrinsically linked to employee motivation. Such initiatives foster positive employee behaviors, including heightened loyalty, trust, morale, and commitment (Keinert, 2008, pp. 89-90).

IV.3 Enhancing Customer Satisfaction

Social responsibility accounting can significantly contribute to fostering positive relationships between the company and the community, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction through advanced pricing estimates and negotiation strategies. By addressing customer concerns and actively engaging with stakeholders, companies can cultivate strong relationships, thereby attracting potential investors and mitigating social risks (Nimani, Zeqiraj, & Spahija, 2022, p. 316).

IV.4 Elevating Brand and Company Reputation

The consensus within financial and accounting literature underscores the pivotal role of a company's brand as one of its most valuable assets, with its intangible value often surpassing that of tangible assets in certain enterprises.

The integration of social responsibility accounting practices serves to augment the brand and reputation of companies. In today's interconnected world, business entities are scrutinized through various media and communication channels. The ethical dimension of social responsibility not only enhances companies' standing in global markets but also encourages societal trust, leading to increased consumer patronage and investor attraction (Jamshed, 2020, p. 799).

IV.5 Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development

Both social responsibility accounting and sustainable development share a common objective: to meet the present and future needs of society while preserving the environment in which companies operate. These concepts advocate for achieving societal well-being and resource conservation within a framework that maintains economic, social, and environmental equilibrium.

V. Methods and Materials:

To address the raised issue, we opted to solicit the insights of seasoned professionals in the fields of accounting and finance concerning the practical

implementing of corporate social responsibility (CSR) accounting within the Algerian context.

This study adopts a qualitative approach, prioritizing the attitudes, behaviors, and needs of a select group of individuals. The questions posed to participants are designed to elicit detailed and open-ended responses, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

According to (Pope and Nicholas, 2020, p. 2), qualitative research enables the development of conceptual frameworks that facilitate the comprehension of phenomena within their natural contexts.

Given the central inquiry underpinning our research problem, it is imperative to underscore the significance of comprehending and interpreting the collected data, which directly pertains to the addressed topic.

For data gathering, our focus was on conducting direct interviews with individuals directly involved in or impacted by the subject matter at hand.

Prudent consideration was given to selecting an appropriate sample size, recognizing the inherent heterogeneity within society. To ensure robust and convincing results, we opted for a focused sample size, conducting interviews with 15 willing participants. Pre-testing involving 4 individuals was conducted to refine questioning strategies and streamline data collection.

The interviews were conducted between January and March 5, 2024, with each session lasting approximately 40 minutes, leveraging theoretical insights garnered during the research process.

Interview participants comprise accounting professionals with diverse educational backgrounds and professional experiences, representing their respective companies across various roles:

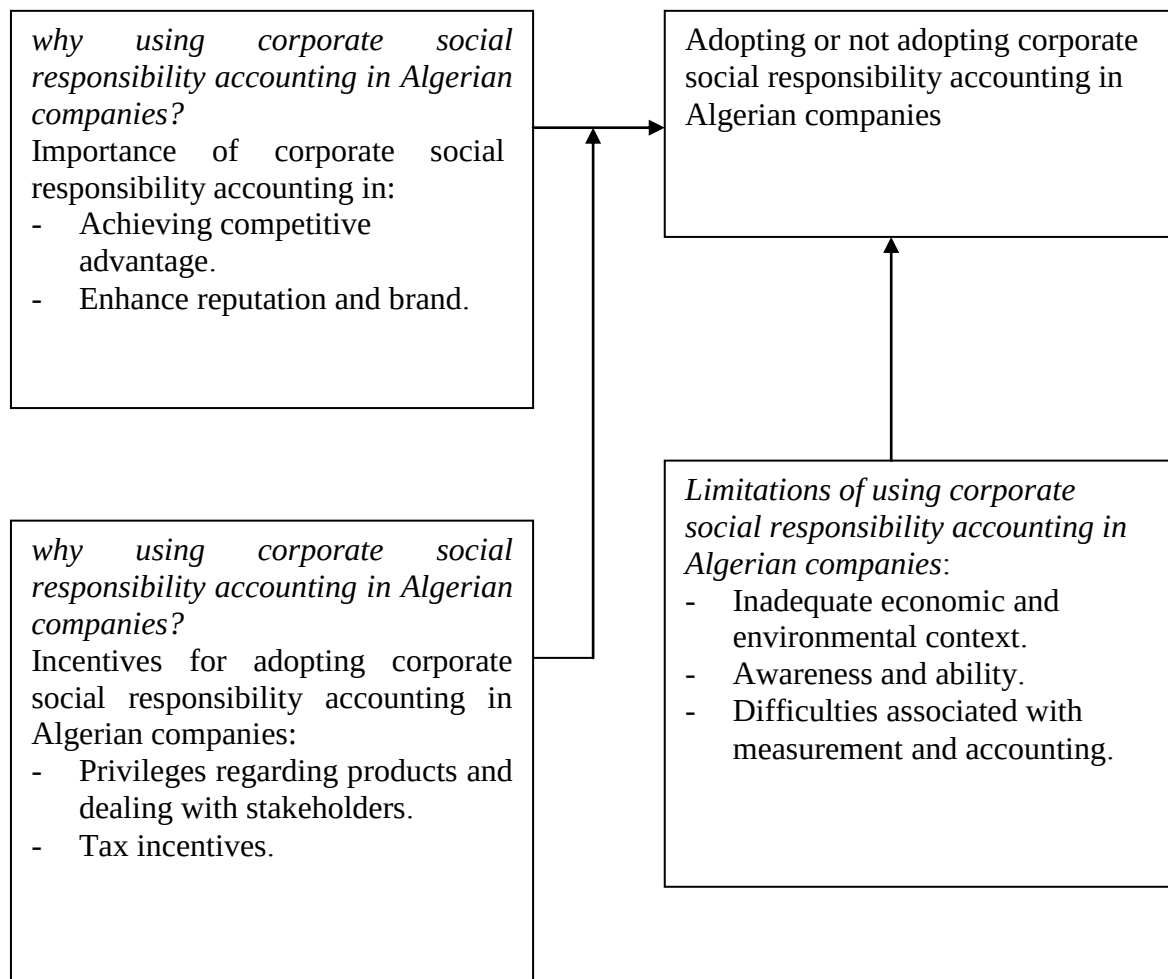
- 10 individuals serve as heads of accounting and financial departments.
- 5 individuals are active auditors.

The research approach entails identifying three primary dimensions:

- Importance of implementing CSR Accounting: Understanding the significance of CSR accounting within Algerian companies.
- Incentives for implementing CSR Accounting: Exploring the key motivators driving the adoption of CSR accounting practices.
- Obstacles and Limits of implementing CSR Accounting: Identifying the challenges and constraints hindering the effective implementation of CSR accounting.

To facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the study results, validate hypotheses, and formulate recommendations, the conceptual model of the study is presented in Figure 1.

Figure (01): Conceptual model of study



Source: Prepared by the researchers.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the interviews with accounting professionals shed light on the perceived benefits, incentives, and limitations of adopting corporate social responsibility (CSR) accounting in Algerian companies.

Sustainable development emerged as the most significant benefit of implementing CSR accounting, with 66.67% of respondents acknowledging its importance (Table 04). This finding contradicts the first hypothesis, indicating a strong consensus among professionals regarding the pivotal role of CSR in driving sustainable business practices.

Tax incentives and brand enhancement were identified as the primary incentives for adopting CSR accounting, with 86.67% of respondents endorsing their significance (Table 04). This result corroborates the validity of the second hypothesis.

Table (04): Importance and incentives of corporate social responsibility accounting

Importance and incentives	Interview results			
	Agree		Do not agree	
	N _i	%	N _i	%
Achieving competitive advantage. (employees satisfaction, customer satisfaction, efficiency in using resource)	8	53,33	7	46,67
Achieving sustainable development	10	66,67	5	33,33
Enhance reputation and brand. (Product promotion)	13	86,67	2	13,33
Tax incentives. (Benefit from tax reductions and exemptions)	13	86,67	2	13,33

Source: based on responses from interviewees.

A subset of respondents emphasized the potential of CSR initiatives to improve competitive advantage by aligning social and economic goals. They highlighted the role of CSR in optimizing resource utilization, fostering innovation, and enhancing stakeholder engagement. However, skepticism was expressed by another group regarding the efficacy of CSR in achieving competitive advantage, citing regulatory constraints and potential adverse effects on innovation and company values ((Mithani, 2016, pp. 9-11), (Zhang, Lin, Yu, & Yu, 2020)).

CSR Accounting can Improve the level of innovation along with research and development as basic pillars of business sustainability and development, adopting social responsibility by companies, according to (Shahzad, Qu, Javed, Zafar, & Rehman, 2020), means building an interactive network that includes the knowledge and ideas of stakeholders, thus providing the necessary information to expand areas of creativity.

A subset of respondents considered corporate social responsibility accounting from the perspective that if it doesn't benefit you, it certainly won't hurt you, because of the voluntariness of measuring environmental and social events.

Furthermore, 10 out of 15 interviewees underscored the importance of CSR in achieving sustainable development, emphasizing its role in environmental protection and community well-being. Legal and legislative restrictions, coupled with fiscal policies aimed at reducing tax obligations, were identified as significant challenges to CSR implementation in Algerian companies.

The most important fiscal procedures aimed at adopting social responsibility can be summarized as follows:

- Exemptions from income tax on environmentally friendly projects;
- Customs facilities on equipment for detection and pollution reduction;
- Reductions in the tax base for environmentally friendly goods;
- Subsidies for green business and technology.

The ISO 26000 standards include the basic principles of corporate social responsibility so that companies can adopt them into their strategies, and Algerian companies seek to enroll in global ISO certifications as a visa to access global markets. Algeria today cannot remain isolated from technological developments and trends related to social responsibility, especially while encouraging the export of local products.

The inadequacy of the economic and environmental context emerged as the most substantial limitation of applying CSR accounting, with 93.33% of respondents acknowledging its significance (Table 05). This finding validates the third hypothesis, highlighting the need for contextualized approaches to CSR adoption that account for local economic and environmental dynamics (Gugler & SHi, 2009, pp. 3-4).

Table (05): Limitations of using corporate social responsibility accounting

Limitations of application Algerian companies	Interview results			
	Agree		Do not agree	
	N _i	%	N _i	%
Inadequate economic and environmental context. (companies peculiarities, legal enforcement)	14	93,33	1	6,67
Awareness and ability. (education, training and skills)	10	66,67	5	33,33
Difficulties associated with measurement and accounting.	12	80	3	20

Source: based on responses from interviewees.

The private sector in Algeria depends on small and medium enterprises. According to the interviewees, small and medium enterprises do not receive sufficient attention and resources to implement corporate social responsibility accounting, which is confirmed by (Xiao, Xue, Ahlstrom, Zheng, & Hao, 2023) in their study, which confirmed the effect of the size and status of companies on commitment to corporate social responsibility procedures. Medium-sized companies tend to implement CSR accounting more widely than market leaders and smaller companies.

Moreover, challenges related to awareness, education, and measurement were recognized as impediments to effective CSR accounting practices. Limited awareness and education, coupled with difficulties in measuring environmental and social costs, were identified as key barriers to adoption.

Through our interviews with accounting professionals and based on their interactions with the concept of corporate social responsibility accounting, we recorded reactions that express a lack of awareness, as social responsibility is still new to a group of interviewees. We also recorded weak awareness of the subject for the other group, as some of them express Accounting for social responsibility through environmental accounting, or accounting for environmental impacts such as pollution, waste dumping costs, and environmental protection expenses.

It is difficult to measure the benefits resulting from the application of social responsibility in the absence of a unified accounting framework for social responsibility. Voluntary in accounting and measurement processes may lead to judicial disputes and accountability.

In conclusion, while the potential benefits of CSR accounting are widely recognized among Algerian accounting professionals, challenges related to regulatory constraints, awareness, and measurement pose significant barriers to implementation. Addressing these challenges and leveraging tax incentives and brand enhancement strategies will be essential in fostering a culture of CSR accountability and driving sustainable business practices in Algeria.

VII. Conclusion

In recent years, Algeria, akin to other developing nations, has embarked on a journey to integrate into the global financial and business landscape through a series of reforms. Notably, comprehensive revisions to investment laws and initiatives aimed at fostering export operations and promoting local products have underscored Algeria's commitment to accelerating economic growth. These transformations have engendered a heightened awareness among Algerian companies regarding advancements in financial and management accounting, enabling them to assess not only their economic objectives but also their social and environmental responsibilities. This heightened awareness coincides with the growing recognition of corporate social responsibility (CSR) accounting.

According to Algerian accounting professionals, tax incentives and brand enhancement emerge as primary drivers for adopting CSR accounting practices. This strategic shift is perceived as instrumental in achieving sustainable development, conserving natural resources, and fostering constructive engagement with stakeholders.

International certifications such as those issued by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) serve as valuable tools for promoting Algerian products in global markets at competitive prices. However, the adoption

of CSR accounting may encounter obstacles, notably the challenges posed by the economic and environmental context. Additionally, difficulties in measuring environmental and social events present significant hurdles.

It is noteworthy that CSR accounting has gained considerable traction in developed countries compared to their developing counterparts. This discrepancy can be attributed to a lack of awareness and understanding regarding the importance and benefits of CSR accounting among companies in developing nations.

In light of these observations, it is imperative for Algerian companies to enhance their awareness and understanding of CSR accounting principles. By leveraging tax incentives, enhancing brand reputation, and fostering sustainable development practices, Algerian companies can navigate the challenges posed by the economic and environmental context while strengthening their competitive position in global markets.

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