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Determinants of the dividend payout policy of multinational companies in Bangladesh: Evidence from Dhaka stock exchange

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ABSTRACT

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This study tries to establish the important factors influencing the dividend payout policy of the Multinational Companies (MNCs) in Bangladesh in order to assist investors in making the best possible investment decisions. Data for this study was collected from several MNCs listed on the DSE from 2015 to 2021. The relationship between the dependent variable, Dividend Payout Ratio (DPR) and selected independent variables such as Return on Equity (ROE), Liquidity Ratio (LEQR), Leverage Ratio (LEVR), Firm Size (FS), Dividend Payout Ratio of Previous Year (PDPR), Corporate Tax Ratio (CTR) and Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) is evaluated using Pearson's correlation and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models for data analysis and hypothesis testing. The regression analysis results showed a mixed result. The ROE and CTR are significantly related to DPR. Higher ROE and CTR emphasis a higher dividend for stock holders. The FS is significantly negatively related to DPR. Due to the costs associated with paying for the profits of substantial assets, large firms pay lower dividends. Other variables such as LEQR, LEVR, PDPR, CTR and CAR have no significant impact on the DPR. The investors and the concerned authorities can consider ROE, CTR and FS to forecast the future dividend for the MNCs in Bangladesh.

Contribution/Originality: This research is important in finding out the crucial factors influencing the dividend payout policy of Multinational National Companies (MNCs) in Bangladesh. This research is one of the fundamentals in Bangladesh where additionally CTR and CAR are used as independent variables.

1. INTRODUCTION

A dividend is a distribution of profits by a company to its shareholders for their investment. It is the proportion of gain provided by the company as the return on investment to the owners of their shareholdings.

The company's dividend payout strategy is influenced by different micro- and macro-economic factors in addition to commercial success. Companies provide dividends considering the present financial conditions and long-term strategic plans. Investors invest their funds to get a return as a dividend or capital gain (Tarik Hossain, 2013; Hossain, Nesa, Dowla, & Akter, 2021). Here dividend is a very integral factor to consider in making investment decisions. Due to uncertain situations, sometimes companies fail to provide handsome dividends to investors. Al-Malkawi, Rafferty, and Pillai (2010) argued that dividends are not only the return on investment but also the symbol of performance. Potential investors always want to ensure that they will get a handsome and stable return from their investment (Hossain, 2020b; Hossain, Chowdhury, & Begum, 2014). There are many theories developed

by different researchers about dividend distribution policy. Most of the theories tried to find out the basis for predicting the dividend of the company. However, no theory can precisely predict the company's future payout. Zameer, Rasool, Iqbal, and Arshad (2013) concluded that DPR defers among the countries due to varying rules, regulations, tax policies and different capital markets and institutions. Dividend payout decision is the managerial decision of distributing to the owners and retaining for expanding business and reinvestment of profit. The choice to pay out dividends is a difficult and crucial one (Abor & Bokpin, 2010) because of the intense competition worldwide that makes it impossible to make large profits (Faruky, Uddin, & Hossain, 2011). Businesses require substantial funding for growth and development in addition to satisfying investors with a sufficient payout. The distribution of dividends and reinvestment are inversely related to each other and collectively significantly influence organizational success. The company should make dividend payout decisions carefully to maximize shareholder wealth. The DPP of companies operating in emerging economies is reasonably different from developed (Glen & Singh, 2004) and underdeveloped countries. It also differs from country to country (Frankfurter & Wood Jr, 2002), economy to economy (Aivazian, Booth, & Cleary, 2003) and from time to time (Sarig, 2004). The types of businesses and corporate formations also affect the DPP. Numerous studies have been done about the factors that determine the DPP both nationally and internationally for various kinds of companies. Many researchers used determinants such as profitability, liquidity, leverage, corporate tax policy, firm size, capital adequacy and the dividend payout ratio of the previous year. In Bangladesh, the majority of research focuses on local businesses. Research on manufacturing businesses listed on the DSE was carried out by Islam and Adnan (2019). Recently, there has not been a DPP study on MNCs in Bangladesh that focuses on DSE. This study will enrich the DPP literature and facilitate investors and concerned stakeholders in making perfect decisions.

MNCs play a vital role in economic development worldwide. Investors like to invest in MNCs to get higher returns and minimize risk. The dividend is an essential way of getting a return on investment in the capital market. Many factors influence the dividend policy of MNCs such as ROE, LEQR, LEVR, CTR, CAR, FS, and PDPR. In Bangladesh, very few studies have analyzed the factors influencing the DPP of the MNCs. This study will add value to the existing literature. The potential investors will be able to know the probable upcoming dividend for their decision-making. The MNCs will also be able to realize the expectations of their owners. This research aims to analyze the impact of different variables on the DPR to find out the potential influence of the DPR on the MNCs in Bangladesh.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to establish the aspects influencing the DPP of MNCs in Bangladesh. The specific objectives for this study are as follows:

- i. To establish the potential aspects of DPP for MNCs in Bangladesh.
- ii. To find out the impact of different determinants on the DPR.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies focus on the many determinants of dividend payout policy worldwide. However, no specific determinants are found for the companies to determine future dividends. The dividend of the company largely depends on the present conditions of the company and its future plans. Al-Kuwari (2009) found that profitability has a significant affirmative influence and the leverage ratio has a significant negative impact on the DPR. Al-Shubiri (2011) in Jordan concluded that leverage is negatively affected and profitability is positively affected by the DPR. Ahmed and Muktadir-Al-Mukit (2014) found corporate tax and profitability. The current ratio is one of the vital determinants of DPR.

2.1. Profitability

Profitability is the ability of a company to earn profit by employing its capital (Hossain, 2022). It is a sign of successfully operating the business and properly using the assets. Many researchers argue that profitability is the vital determinant of DPR (Alfisah & Kurniaty, 2019; Baker & Jabbouri, 2016; Fama & French, 2001; Fitri, Hosen, & Muhari, 2016). It indicates the ability of the company to pay dividends to its shareholders. When the company cannot generate more profit, it will be very difficult to pay more dividends. In dividend signaling theory, Miller and Modigliani (1961) found an affirmative association between profitability and DPR and also concluded that dividend payout represents a sign of a firm's financial condition and future prospects. It also ensures the wealth maximization of the firm. According to Anil and Kapoor (2008), profitability is the most important sign of DPR. Adaoglu (2000) researched emerging markets and argued that the main determinants of cash dividends are current-year earnings and emerging market firms follow unstable dividend payout policies which is also supported by Mahira (2012) and Islam and Adnan (2019). Le, Nguyen, and Tran (2019); Al-Kuwari (2009); Naceur, Goaid, and Belanes (2006); Patra, Poshakwale, and Ow-Yong (2012); Amidu and Abor (2006) and Jabbouri (2016) found a significant affirmative connection between profitability and DPP. Ritha and Koestiyanto (2013) argued that profitability has a negative influence on the DPR. The profitability of a firm can be measured by its return on equity (ROE).

2.2. Liquidity

The liquidity of a company indicates its ability to pay current and short-term debt obligations (Hossain, 2020a). Standard liquidity is very important for successfully operating a business. High liquidity increases the cost while low liquidity increases the risk. Sometimes companies reduce the dividend to ensure the payment of current debt obligations (Le et al., 2019) as the cash dividend decreases the cash of the firm. Companies mainly consider liquidity positions when making dividend decisions (Alshammari, 2012; Deshmukh, Goel, & Howe, 2013; Islam & Adnan, 2019; Khan & Ahmad, 2017). Okpara and Godwin (2010) also found a significant optimistic relationship between liquidity and DPP.

2.3. Leverage

Leverage is the ratio between the debt and equity of a firm. The leverage ratio focuses on financing and other external sources. More leveraged firms mean more financed from debts and less leveraged firms means more financed from equity. Diverse opinions were found about the influence of leverage on the DPR. Gugler and Yurtoglu (2003) found an opposite relationship between financial leverage and DPP which is also supported by Al-Kuwari (2009) and Alzomaia (2013). Ritha & Koestiyanto (2013) argue that there is a positive relationship between leverage and DPR. Le et al. (2019) suggested reducing the leverage ratio.

2.4. Corporate Tax

Corporate tax is the income tax imposed on the company on the basis of corporate income for a period of time. It is a compulsory payment for the company and no direct benefits are received from providing corporate tax. After deducting corporate tax, net income can be distributed to shareholders as a dividend. Higher-income generates higher taxes and also pursues higher dividends. Ahmed and Muktadir-Al-Mukit (2014) concluded in DSE that corporate tax is a strong determinant of DPR. Amidu and Abor (2006) and Rehman and Takumi (2012) also concluded that there is a positive relationship between corporate tax and the DPR.

2.5. Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR)

Capital adequacy is the availability of capital to smoothly operate the business. The capital adequacy ratio can be measured by dividing the total assets by the total equity of a firm. More CAR means a higher proportion of

capital financed by owners. [Rahma and Syarif \(2020\)](#) found an affirmative influence of CAR on the DPR. [Yesyurun \(2021\)](#) found in Indonesia that CAR has a noteworthy impact on the DPR.

2.6. Firm Size

Firm size represents the volume of a company in terms of specific factors such as total assets and total sales. There are various findings about the relationship between DPP and business size. The life-cycle theory developed by [DeAngelo, DeAngelo, and Stulz \(2006\)](#) concluded that firm size and DPP are positively related. [Fama and French \(2001\)](#) also concluded that small firms pay little or no dividend. [Le et al. \(2019\)](#) found an insignificant relationship between firm size and DPP decisions. [Hoque, Hossain, and Saha \(2022\)](#) argued that FS significantly affected the financial performance of the companies.

2.7. Dividend Payout Ratio of the Previous Year

The previous year's dividend payout ratio is very important for determining the future dividend. Sometimes companies try to maintain the consistency of DPR annually. Owners expect a higher dividend compared to previous years ([Hossain, 2021](#)). According to research on the Jakarta Islamic Index by [Fitri et al. \(2016\)](#), the DPR from the prior year had an influence on the DPP decision. [Islam and Adnan \(2019\)](#) studied manufacturing companies listed in the DSE of Bangladesh and argued that most of the firms follow the preceding years' pattern of dividend payment for dividend decision-making. [Imran \(2011\)](#) also found that the dividend of the previous year positively influences the DPR of the company.

2.8. Conceptual Scheme

The conceptual framework which focuses on the interactions between independent, control and dependent variables, is shown below.

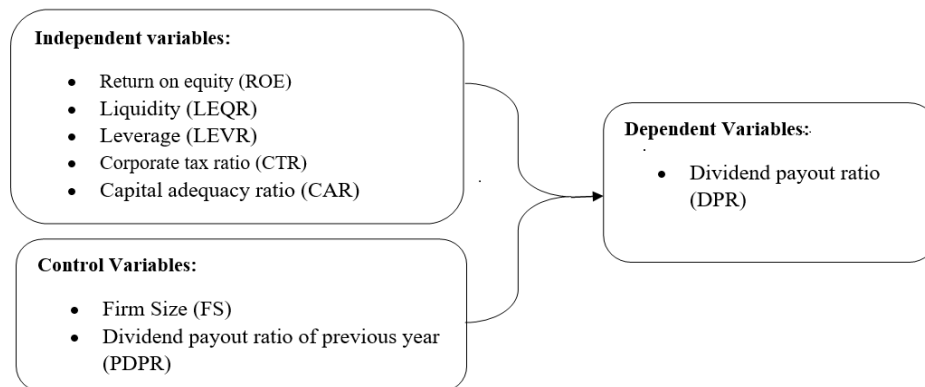


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship among the dependent variable DPR, the independent variables ROE, LEQR, LEVR, CTR and CAR and the control variables FS and PDPR.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Instruments

The variables of this research have been adopted from several research articles in the literature review. Return on Equity (ROE) is adopted by [Le et al. \(2019\)](#) as a proxy for a firm's profitability measures. The variable Liquidity (Leq) has been taken from [Okpara and Godwin \(2010\)](#); Leverage (Lev) from [Alzomaia \(2013\)](#); Firm Size (FS) from [Fama and French \(2001\)](#); Dividend Payout Ratio of Previous Year (PDPR) from [Fitri et al. \(2016\)](#); Corporate Tax Ratio (CTR) from [Rehman and Takumi \(2012\)](#) and Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) from [Yesyurun \(2021\)](#). The

dependent variable is used as the Dividend Payout Ratio (DPR) in this research to justify the Dividend Payout Policy (DPP).

3.2. Sample, Population and Data Collection

In Bangladesh, fifteen MNCs listed in the DSE are working. Eleven MNCs are chosen at random to gather data from 2015 to 2021. This study examines the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable using a total of 77 data entries.

3.3. Data Analysis Procedures and Hypotheses

The statistical software SPSS 16 has been used to process and analyze the collected data. The descriptive statistics are presented and explain the variables. The OLS regression is conducted to test the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable DPR.

The study will test the following hypotheses:

- i. H₀₁: Profitability is positively related to the DPR.
- ii. H₀₂: Liquidity is positively related to the DPR.
- iii. H₀₃: Leverage is negatively related to the DPR.
- iv. H₀₄: The corporate tax ratio is positively related to the DPR.
- v. H₀₅: The capital adequacy ratio is positively related to the DPR.
- vi. H₀₆: Firm size is positively related to DPR.
- vii. H₀₇: The DPR of the previous year is positively related to the DPR.

3.4. Model Specification

The DPR is a function of five independent and two control variables such as ROE, LEQR, LEVR, CTE, CAR, FS and PDPR. The model is specified as

$$\text{Model: } \text{DPR}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ROE}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{LEQR}_{it} + \beta_3 \text{LEVR}_{it} + \beta_4 \text{CTR}_{it} + \beta_5 \text{CAR}_{it} + \beta_6 \text{FS}_{it} + \beta_7 \text{PDPR}_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

3.5. Data and Variables

The variables and measurement scales are presented below:

In Table 1, all the variables (dependent, independent and control) are used in this study with abbreviations and measurement scales.

Table 1. List of variables.

Variable	Abbreviation	Measurement
Dividend payout ratio	DPR	Total common dividend (Cash)/net income after tax and depreciation
Return on equity	ROE	Net income divided by shareholder's equity
Liquidity	LEQR	Current ratio (Current assets/current liabilities)
Leverage	LEVR	Financial leverage ratio (Book value of debt/total assets)
Corporate tax ratio	CTR	Corporate tax/Profit before tax
Capital adequacy ratio	CAR	Equity capital / Total assets
Firm size	FS	Firm size (Natural logarithm of total assets)
Dividend payout ratio of the previous year	PDPR	Previous year dividend payout ratio.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics.

Variables	Mean	Std. deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
DPR	0.5946	0.33060	0.109	-0.349	1.166
ROE	34.6886	40.2788	1622.377	1.973	5.184
LEQR	1.3232	0.69710	0.486	0.487	0.255
LEVR	0.5613	0.15863	0.025	-0.133	-0.939
CTR	0.1625	1.4793	2.188	-8.242	71.261
CAR	0.4413	0.1599	0.026	0.111	-0.995
FS	10.2604	0.4998	0.250	0.283	-1.215
PDPR	0.5840	0.3506	0.123	-0.302	0.772

For the variable DPR, the mean, standard deviation, variance, skewness and kurtosis are 0.5946, 0.3306, 0.1090, -0.3490, and 1.166, respectively. The mean, standard deviation, variance, skewness and kurtosis for ROE are 34.6886, 40.27875, 1622.377, 1.973, and 5.184, respectively. The average LEQ ratio is 1.3232 with standard deviation, variance, skewness, and kurtosis as follows 0.6971, 0.486, 0.487, and 0.255, respectively. The average LEV ratio is 0.5613 with standard deviation, variance, skewness and kurtosis as follows: 0.15863, 0.025, -0.133, and -0.939, respectively. The mean value of the CT ratio is 0.1625 with standard deviation, variance, skewness, and kurtosis as follows: 1.47924, 2.188, -8.242, and 71.261 respectively. The average CA ratio is 0.4413 with standard deviation, variance, skewness, and kurtosis as follows: 0.15981, 0.026, 0.111, and -0.995, respectively. The mean value of the FS is 10.2604 with standard deviation, variance, skewness, and kurtosis as follows: 0.49978, 0.250, 0.283, and -1.215, respectively. The average PDPR is 0.5840 with standard deviation, variance, skewness, and kurtosis as follows: 0.35053, 0.123, -0.302, and 0.772, respectively.

4.2. Correlations Analysis

The correlation results of the variables are displayed in Table 3. Here the dependent variable DPR is positively correlated with ROE, LEQR, LEVR, CTR and PDPR and negatively related to CAR and FS.

Table 3. Correlations results.

Variables	DPR	ROE	LEQ	LEV	CTR	CAR	FS	PDPR
DPR Sig. (2-tailed)	1							
ROE Sig. (2-tailed)	0.334**	1						
LEQR Sig. (2-tailed)	0.075	-0.257*	1					
LEVR Sig. (2-tailed)	0.054	0.344**	-0.745**	1				
CTR Sig. (2-tailed)	0.361**	0.146	0.094	-0.206	1			
CAR Sig. (2-tailed)	-0.055	-0.353**	0.749**	-0.992**	0.227*	1		
FS Sig. (2-tailed)	-0.270*	0.010	-0.616**	0.410**	-0.103	-0.420**	1	
PDPR Sig. (2-tailed)	0.098	0.220	0.014	0.159	-0.210	-0.160	-0.231	1

Note: **. Significant at 1%.
*. Significant at 5%.

The values that are one percent significant are indicated by ‘***’ and the values that are 5% significant are indicated by ‘**’. The relationship of DPR with ROE, CTR, and FS is two-tailed significant while the relationships with LEQR, LEVR, CAR, and PDPR are insignificant. The correlation of ROE with CAR, FS and PDPR is positive and LEQR and CTR are negative. The relationship between ROE with LEQR, LEVR and CAR is significant. The correlations of LEQR with LEVR, and FS are negative and with CTR, CAR and PDPR are positive whereas the relationship of LEQR with LEVR, CAR and FS is two-tailed significant. The association of LEVR with FS and PDPR is affirmative and with CTR and CAR is negative while the association with CAR and FS is two-tailed significant. The correlation of CTR with CAR is two-tailed and significantly positive and the relationship with FS and PDPR is negative and insignificant. The correlation of CAR with FS and PDPR is negative and the relationship with FS is significant. The correlation of FS with PDPR is negative and not significant.

Table 4. Model summary.

R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics			Durbin-Watson
				R square change	F change	Sig. F change	
0.549 ^a	0.302	0.213	0.293	0.302	3.396	0.004	1.708

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), PDPR, LEQR, CTR, ROE, FS, LEVR, CAR.
Dependent Variable: DPR.

4.3. Regression analysis

Table 4 represents the model summary of regression analysis for the dependent variable DPR and the independent variables PDPR, LEQR, CTR, ROE, FS, LEVR and CAR. The F-value is 3.396 which is significant at the 1% significance level and the Durbin-Watson value is 1.708. In this study, regression analysis can be conducted for the dependent variable DPR. The R, R² and adjusted R², R² change values are 0.549, 0.302, 0.213, and 0.302 respectively.

Table 5 represents the coefficients of regression for the dependent variable DPR. The standardized beta coefficient of ROE is 0.216. This value is significant at the 10 percent confidential level. At a 10% significance level, the ROE of the MNCs positively influences the DPR. So H01 is accepted. The profitability of the MNCs positively impacts the dividend payout policy. The independent variable LEQR has 0.136 standardized beta coefficients but is insignificant. The H02 is rejected due to an insignificant confidential interval level. Liquidity does not influence the DPR of MNCs in Bangladesh. The independent variable LEVR has -0.441 standardized beta coefficients but is not significant.

Table 5. Regression coefficients.

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.359	2.233	3.359	1.504	0.138
ROE	0.002	0.001	0.216	1.668	0.100
LEQR	0.065	0.094	0.136	0.683	0.497
LEVR	-0.919	1.858	-0.441	-0.495	0.623
CTR	0.082	0.028	0.365	2.901	0.005
CAR	-1.463	1.884	-0.707	-0.777	0.441
FS	-0.173	0.100	-0.261	-1.724	0.090
PDPR	0.021	0.119	0.022	0.174	0.862

Note: Dependent variable: DPR.

The H03 is also rejected because of the insignificant confidential interval level. The leverage ratio of the MNCs negatively affects the DPR but the interference is insignificant. The standardized beta coefficient of CTR is 0.365. This value is significant at a 5% confidential level. At a 5% significance level, the CTR of the MNCs positively

influences the DPR. Thus, H_{04} is accepted. The corporate tax ratio of the MNCs positively impacts the dividend payout policy. The independent variable CAR has -0.707 standardized beta coefficients and the p-value is 0.441 which is insignificant. The H_{05} is rejected due to the insignificant confidential interval level and the negative impact of CAR on the DPR. The standardized beta coefficient of FS is -0.261 with a p-value of 0.090. At a 10% significance level, the FS of the MNCs negatively influences the DPR. The H_{06} is rejected because of the negative impact of FS on the DPR. The firm size of the MNCs significantly negatively affects the dividend payout policy. The standardized beta coefficient of PDPR is -0.022 with a p-value of 0.862. This value is insignificant. Thus, H_{07} is rejected because of an insignificant confidential interval. The previous year's dividend payout ratio does not influence the DPR of the MNCs in Bangladesh.

5. CONCLUSION

The MNCs operating in Bangladesh are very important for the country as well as investors. The multinational company has become large and strong due to its huge opportunities for capital, skills and markets. MNCs are taken into consideration by potential investors in order to make profitable investments. Investors can invest in MNCs by considering the following influential factors in dividend payout policy. First, the ROE is positively significant for DPR. The ROE represents the profitability of the firm. More ROE indicates more profitability which means more dividends. Secondly, the CTR significantly influences the DPR of MNCs. Higher taxes paid by the MNCs pay for higher dividends. Third, the FS is negatively related to the DPR which represents that the smaller firm pays more dividends and vice versa. Fourth, the liquidity ratio, leverage ratio, capital adequacy ratio, and previous year dividends cannot significantly influence the DPP of the MNCs. Further research should be conducted to provide insights into the important aspects of DPP for multinational corporations operating in Bangladesh.

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Authors' Contributions: The conception, design, analysis and interpretation of the results, T.H.; collected the data, M.M.K. and R.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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