

## **IMPACT OF LEVERAGE AND FINANCIAL DISTRESS ON ACCOUNTING CONSERVATISM**

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### *Abstract*

*This study aims to determine the effect of financial distress and leverage on accounting conservatism. The population in this study were all manufacturing companies listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange in 2018-2020, totaling 165 companies. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling so that the number of samples in this study was 52 companies. Sources of data used are secondary data obtained from financial statements. The research method uses quantitative methods. The data analysis technique used consisted of descriptive statistical analysis, multiple linear regression analysis, analysis requirements test, classic assumption test, and hypothesis testing with SPSS version 26 software. The results of this study resulted in the following facts: (1) Financial distress partially has no significant effect on accounting conservatism. (2) Leverage partially has no significant effect on accounting conservatism. (3) Financial distress and leverage simultaneously have no significant effect on accounting conservatism.*

**Keywords:** *Financial Distress, Leverage, Accounting Conservatism*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Financial statements are essential for evaluating the performance of a company. The financial statements of a business are the result of its operational activities and provide a clear picture of its financial condition (Tazkiya & Sulastiningsih, 2020). Financial statements are compiled so that business decision-makers have accurate and complete information about a company's financial health and performance as well as its resources and liquidity. All companies are required to follow all of the established rules and principles for accounting when preparing their financial statements. In Indonesia, the accounting standard that is set and enforced is the Financial Accounting Standards (hereinafter referred to as SAK) which is prepared by the authorized agency, namely the Indonesian Accounting Association (IAI). Financial Accounting Standards (SAK) provide flexibility for each company to choose the accounting method to be used (Sugiyarti & Rina, 2020).

Future economic conditions that are fraught with unpredictability necessitate caution on the part of businesses in dealing with the various possible outcomes. Accounting conservatism, when applied to the creation of financial reports, can help companies weather economic problems. According to Harahap (2012) states that Accounting conservatism is a precautionary strategy for dealing with uncertain future economic conditions, in which organizations must immediately record expenditures and losses that may occur but do not wish to immediately report revenues and profits despite the possibility that they will occur profitability and revenue are realized.

There are pros and cons to accounting conservatism application in financial statements. From the pro side, one of them was stated by Yuniarsih & Permatasari (2021)

which states that the application of accounting conservatism will result in typically pessimistic financial statements; this condition is required to reduce and neutralize managers' opportunistic behavior, particularly in regards to contracts that utilize financial statements (Very, 2022). Meanwhile, from the contra side, one of them was stated by Efendi & Handayani (2021) which states that companies that apply accounting conservatism in their financial reporting will produce financial statements that are biased due to their understatement, preventing them from being used as a benchmark for assessing company risk.

Apart from the pros and cons regarding the accounting conservatism application in financial statements, this principle is still used today (Ramadhani & Sulistyowati, 2019; Syifa et al., 2017). One of these conditions is supported by the growing research on accounting conservatism which indicates that Financial statements that adhere to accounting conservatism continue to play a significant role in the industry (Ramadhani & Sulistyowati, 2019). The tendency of companies to overestimate the value of earnings in their financial statements can be mitigated by applying accounting conservatism, which tends to produce pessimistic financial statements, so as to counteract the excessive optimism of managers and company owners. In addition, overstatement of profit is riskier than understatement because the company faces a greater risk of receiving lawsuits if it presents financial statements with earnings that are too high (Noviantari & Ratnadi, 2015).

Indirectly, the high rate of fraud in many Indonesian businesses suggests that not enough care is taken when compiling financial statements. One instance of this fraud occurred at PT Hanson International. The Financial Services Authority (hereinafter referred to as OJK) found that PT Hanson International Tbk manipulated the presentation of its 2016 annual financial statements (hereinafter referred to as LKT) by initially recognizing revenue using the full accrual method on the sale of ready-to-build lots (hereinafter referred to as KASIBA) with a gross value of Rp732 billion. Consequently, leading to a significant rise in the company's bottom line. In its 2016 annual financial statements, PT Hanson International Tbk failed to include revenue from the sale and purchase of ready-to-build plots under the Sale and Purchase Binding Agreement (henceforth referred to as PPJB). In 2016, it was overpriced by Rp613 billion (Idris, 2020).

Several factors influence the implementation of the principle of accounting conservatism in financial statements. One of the elements that can influence accounting conservatism is financial distress. Financial distress is a reduction in a company's capacity to pay its debts preceding bankruptcy or liquidation (Irnawati et al., 2021). Financial distress can occur in every company, both small and large scale companies and can threaten the survival of the company itself. In fact, if the company's management does not immediately take the right decisions and actions in dealing with these financial distress conditions, the worst possibility that will happen is that the company will go bankrupt (Efendi & Handayani, 2021).

In addition to financial distress, the application of the conservative accounting principle can be impacted by leverage in addition to monetary difficulties. Leverage is a ratio that indicates how much of a company's assets are backed by its debt (Fitriani & Ruchjana, 2020). When excessive debt is utilized, extreme leverage, a scenario in which a corporation is locked in a high amount of debt from which it is difficult to extricate itself, is unquestionably a threat to a company's survival. In addition, significant leverage

might jeopardize the continuation of a company's operations. Companies with a high level of leverage will therefore construct their financial accounts with extra care (Kodriyah & Framita, 2019).

Numerous studies on accounting conservatism have been conducted in the past, but the results of these studies are still inconsistent, as demonstrated by the various research outcomes. Research conducted by Syifa et al. (2017), Tazkiya & Sulastiningsih (2020), and Murti & Yuniarta (2021) show that financial distress positively and significantly effect on accounting conservatism. In contrast to the research results obtained by Risdiyani & Kusmuriyanto (2015), Rivandi & Ariska (2019), and Rif'an & Agustina (2021) which showed that financial distress negatively and significantly effect on accounting conservatism. The results of this study also contradict those obtained by Abdurrahman & Ermawati (2018), (Haryadi et al. (2020), and Maulana et al. (2021) which show that financial distress has no effect on accounting conservatism.

Research conducted by Pahriyani & Asiah (2020), Dewi & Heliawan (2021) and Leon(2021) shows that leverage positively and significantly effect on accounting conservatism. In contrast to the results of research conducted by Noviantari & Ratnadi (2015), Putra & Sari, (2020), and Soekowati et al. (2021) which shows that leverage negatively effect on accounting conservatism. The results of this study also contradict those conducted by Susanto & Ramadhani (2016), (Maharani & Kristanti, 2019), and Putri et al. (2021) which shows that leverage has no effect on accounting conservatism.

The goals of this study is to determine the following: (1) how the presence of financial distress influences accounting conservatism; (2) how the use of leverage influences accounting conservatism; and (3) how the presence of financial distress and the use of leverage together influence accounting conservatism. This study was inspired by the inconsistency of the aforementioned research results. It builds on the research background and research gap from previous studies.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research employs quantitative methods. Quantitative research focuses on numerical data, with statistical analysis serving as the method of analysis. According to (Sugiyono, 2013) The goal of quantitative research which is grounded in the positivist philosophy, is to test hypotheses about specific populations or samples through the use of numerical or statistical analysis of collected data with specially designed instruments.

Various secondary resources were consulted in order to compile the data presented here. The Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX) financial statements and annual reports of manufacturing companies listed on the IDX in 2018-2020 were downloaded for this study as secondary data in website [www.idx.co.id](http://www.idx.co.id). In addition, secondary data in this study were also sourced from books, research journal articles, and online news portals that were used by researchers as references.

In this study, the population consists of all manufacturing companies listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange in 2018-2020. Meanwhile, the sampling technique in this study used Non-Probability Sampling with Purposive Sampling as its sampling method. Purposive Sampling is a sampling technique based on considerations on certain predetermined criteria (Sugiyono, 2013). The certain criteria that have been set for determining the sample in this study are presented in the following table:

**Table 1. Sampling Criteria**

No.	Information	Total
1	Manufacturing Companies listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX) during the 2018-2020 period	165
2	Manufacturing companies that do not publish complete and consistent financial reports on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX) during the 2018-2020 period	(8)
3	Manufacturing companies that do not present financial statements in rupiah currency	(32)
4	Manufacturing companies that do not present completed data regarding the research variables used	(59)
5	Detected data <i>outliers</i>	(14)
<b>Number of Research Samples</b>		<b>52</b>

Source: (Data processed by researchers, 2022)

This study consists of three variables, consisting of 1 dependent variable, namely accounting conservatism and 2 independent variables which include financial distress and leverage. Thus, the measurements for the three variables are as follows:

- 1) Accounting conservatism is measured using a proxy accrual measures model adapted from Givoly & Hayn (2000) or what is called conservatism based on accrued items, with the following formula:

$$CONNAC = \frac{(NIO + DEP - CFO)}{TA}$$

Information:

- NIO : Operating profit for the year
- DEP : Depreciation expense of fixed assets
- CFO : Cash flow from operating activities
- TA : Book value of total assets

- 2) Financial Distress measured using the Altman Z-Score model for the category of manufacturing companies, with the following calculations:

$$Z = 0,717(X_1) + 0,847(X_2) + 3,107(X_3) + 0,420(X_4) + 0,998(X_5)$$

Information:

- $X_1 = \frac{\text{Working capital}}{\text{Total Assets}}$
- $X_2 = \frac{\text{Retained earnings}}{\text{Total Assets}}$
- $X_3 = \frac{\text{Profit Before Interest and Tax (EBIT)}}{\text{Total Assets}}$
- $X_4 = \frac{\text{Market Value of Equity}}{\text{Total Debt}}$
- $X_5 = \frac{\text{Sales}}{\text{Total Assets}}$
- Z = Bankruptcy Index

- 3) Leverage proxied by the formula Debt to Asset Ratio (DAR), with the following calculation:

$$DAR \text{ (Debt to Asset Ratio)} = \frac{\text{Total Debt}}{\text{Total Assets}}$$

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Research Results

##### 3.1.1. Descriptive Statistics

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistical Analysis Results**

Variable	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
<b>Financial Distress</b>	52	8.53	0.19	8.72	167.59	3.22	1.99	3.94
<b>Leverage</b>	52	0.79	0.10	0.89	21.44	0.41	0.18	0.03
<b>Accounting Conservatism</b>	52	0.54	-0.03	0.51	12.40	0.24	0.12	0.01

Source: SPSS version 26 output (Data processed by researchers, 2022)

Based on the table 2, it is known that the descriptive statistics for the accounting conservatism variable have a minimum value of -0.03 at PT Alakasa Industrindo Tbk (ALKA) and a maximum value of 0.51 at PT Garuda Metalindo Tbk (BOLT). Furthermore, the mean value is 0.24 and the standard deviation value is 0.12. The standard deviation is lower than the mean thus showing a relatively homogeneous distribution of data.

Based on the table 2, it is known that the results of descriptive statistics for the financial distress variable with a minimum value of 0.19 at PT Martina Berto Tbk (MBTO) and a maximum value of 8.72 at PT Charoen Pokphand Indonesia Tbk (CPIN). Furthermore, the mean value is 3.22 and the standard deviation value is 1.99. The standard deviation is lower than the mean thus showing a relatively homogeneous distribution of data.

Based on the table 2, it is known that the results of descriptive statistics for the leverage variable with a minimum value of 0.10 at PT Indospring Tbk (INDS) and a maximum value of 0.89 at PT Saranacental Bajatama Tbk (BAJA). Furthermore, the mean value is 0.41 and the standard deviation value is 0.18. The standard deviation is lower than the mean thus showing a relatively homogeneous distribution of data.

##### 3.1.2. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The purpose of the multiple linear regression analysis is to make a prediction about the extent to which the independent variables will intensify their influence on the dependent variable in the event that the value of the independent variable either stays the same or changes.

#### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.224	.064		3.508	.001
	Financial Distress	.002	.009	.034	.215	.830
	Leverage	.020	.103	.030	.194	.847
a. Dependent Variable: Accounting Conservatism						

**Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis**

Source: SPSS version 26 output (Data processed by researchers, 2022)

Using the data found in table 3, the following equation model for regression is derived:

$$Y = 0.224 + 0.002 X_1 \text{ (Financial Distress)} + 0.020 X_2 \text{ (Leverage)}$$

The interpretation of the decrease model calculation can be expressed as follows, with reference to the model regression equation presented previously:

- 1) The constant coefficient value is 0.224. This shows that if the financial distress and leverage variables are both zero (0) or are considered not to be involved in this study, then the value of the accounting conservatism variable is 0.224.
- 2) The coefficient value of the financial distress variable is 0.002 and indicates a positive direction. This shows that every 1 unit increase in the financial distress variable, assuming the value of the leverage variable constant (fixed), then the value of the accounting conservatism variable will increase by 0.002.
- 3) The coefficient value of the leverage variable is 0.020 and indicates a positive direction. This shows that every 1 unit increase in the leverage variable, assuming the value of the financial distress variable constant (fixed), then the value of the accounting conservatism variable will increase by 0.020.

### 3.1.3. Analysis Requirements Test

#### 1) Normality Test

The objective of the test normality is to determine whether or not the residual value in a statistical model follows a normal distribution. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was utilized by the researchers so that they could determine whether or not the data were normal. If the significance value is  $> 0.05$ , the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test makes the assumption that the data follow a normal distribution. However, if the significance value is  $< 0.05$ , the test makes the opposite assumption.

**Table 4. Normality Test Results**

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		52
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	.11856027
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.097
	Positive	.097
	Negative	-.049
Test Statistic		.097
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200 <sup>c,d</sup>

- a. Test distribution is Normal.
- b. Computed using data.
- c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.
- d. This is the bare minimum of the actual significance.

Source: SPSS version 26 output (Data processed by researchers, 2022)

Based on the results of the normality test of the data above, a significant value was obtained for Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.200 which indicates that the value is greater than significant 0.05, so it can be concluded that the residual data in the regression model used is normally distributed.

### 3.1.4. Classic Assumption Test

#### 1) Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test aims to see whether or not there is a high correlation between the independent variables in a multiple linear regression modeling. A good regression modeling is that there is no multicollinearity symptom. Multicollinearity testing in this study was carried out by looking at the value of tolerance and VIF. If the value of tolerance > 0.10 and the VIF value < 10, it can be stated that there is no multicollinearity symptom in the regression model.

**Table 5. Multicollinearity Test Results**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>								
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	.224	.064		3.508	.001		
	Financial Distress	.002	.009	.034	.215	.830	.825	1.212
	Leverage	.020	.103	.030	.194	.847	.825	1.212

a. Dependent Variable: Accounting Conservatism

Source: SPSS version 26 output (Data processed by researchers, 2022)

It is possible to draw the conclusion that there is no multicollinearity problem between the two independent variables in this study as a result of the fact that the VIF value is less than 10 and the tolerance value for each independent variable is greater than 0.10.

2) Heteroscedasticity Test

In a regression model, the heteroscedasticity test examines the residuals to determine whether or not the residuals of one observation and another have different variances. The Glejser test was utilized in this study to investigate the phenomenon of heteroscedasticity. If the significance level of the Glejser test is greater than 0.05, then it is possible to infer that the regression model in question does not contain any instances of heteroscedasticity.

**Table 6. Heteroscedasticity Test Results**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.048	.040		1.205	.234
	Financial Distress	.003	.006	.079	.511	.612
	Leverage	.080	.064	.192	1.242	.220

a. Dependent Variable: Abs\_RES

Source: SPSS version 26 output (Data processed by researchers, 2022)

According to the findings of the test for heteroscedasticity, the significance level of each independent variable is  $> 0.05$ . This suggests that the regression model that was utilized in this investigation does not have issues with heteroscedasticity as a result of the presence of heteroscedasticity.

3) Autocorrelation Test

The autocorrelation test examines the relationship between the period t and period t-1 perplexing errors in a regression model (before). The autocorrelation properties of the regression model are revealed if a correlation is discovered. The presence of autocorrelation is evidence of a robust regression model. The Durbin-Watson (D-W) test was utilized to ascertain if a regression model displayed symptoms of autocorrelation. If the Durbin-Watson value of the regression model (d) is between the values of dU and 4-dU ( $dU < d < 4-dU$ ), then the model has no autocorrelation problem.

**Table 7. Autocorrelation Test Results**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.035 <sup>a</sup>	.001	-.040	.12096	2.137

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leverage, Financial Distress  
b. Dependent Variable: Accounting Conservatism

Source: SPSS version 26 output (Data processed by researchers, 2022)

According to the aforementioned autocorrelation test findings, the Durbin Watson (d) value is 2.137. Examining the Durbin Watson table with a 5% significance level reveals that the value of dU is 1.6334 and that of 4-dU is 2.3666. Due to the fact that the Durbin-Watson value (d) lies between dU and 4-dU ( $dU < d < 4-dU$ ), which is  $1.6334 < 2.137 < 2.3666$ , so it can be concluded that the regression model in this study is free from autocorrelation problems, both positive and negative.

### 3.1.5. Hypothesis Testing

#### 1) t-test

The t-test is utilized in the process of determining whether or not each independent variable has a partial effect on the variable that is being investigated (the dependent variable). To be more specific, a significance level of 0.05 was chosen for the t-test to be applied here. It is possible to argue that there is a significant relationship between the independent variable on the dependent variable if  $t_{\text{statistic}} > t_{\text{table}}$  and vice versa.

**Table 8. t-Test Results (Partial)**

Model		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.224	.064		3.508	.001
	Financial Distress	.002	.009	.034	.215	.830
	Leverage	0.020	.103	0.030	.194	.847

a. Dependent Variable: Accounting Conservatism

Source: SPSS version 26 output (Data processed by researchers, 2022)

According to the table 8, the results can be interpreted as follows:

#### a) Financial Distress Testing on Accounting Conservatism

According to table 8, the  $t_{\text{statistic}}$  value for the financial distress variable is 0.215, less than  $t_{\text{table}}$  value which is 2.00958, with a significance of  $0.830 > 0.05$ . Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant effect between financial distress on accounting conservatism.

#### b) Leverage Testing on Accounting Conservatism

According to the table 8, it is known that  $t_{\text{statistic}}$  value for the leverage variable is 0.194, less than  $t_{\text{table}}$  value which is 2.00958, with a significance of  $0.847 > 0.05$ . Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant effect between leverage on accounting conservatism.

#### 2) F-Test (Simultaneous)

The F-test aims to determine whether the independent variables together have a significant effect or not on the dependent variable. The test criteria for this F-test is if the value of  $F_{\text{statistic}} > F_{\text{table}}$  and a significance value of  $< 0.05$ , it is concluded that there is a significant effect simultaneously between the independent variables on the dependent variable and vice versa.

**Table 9. F-Test Results (Simultaneous)**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>1</b>	<b>Regression</b>	.001	2	.000	0.030	.971 <sup>b</sup>
	<b>Residual</b>	.717	49	0.015		
	<b>Total</b>	.718	51			
a. Dependent Variable: Accounting Conservatism						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Leverage, Financial Distress						

Source: SPSS version 26 output (Data processed by researchers, 2022)

According to the preceding table 9, it is known that the value of  $F_{\text{statistic}}$  is 0.030, less than  $F_{\text{table}}$  which is 3.19 with a significance of  $0.971 > 0.05$ . In conclusion, there is no significant effect simultaneously between financial distress and leverage on accounting conservatism.

### 3.2. Discussion

#### 3.2.1. The Effect of Financial Distress on Accounting Conservatism

The value of  $t_{\text{statistic}} < t_{\text{table}}$  is  $0.215 < 2.00958$  with a significance value of 0.830, which indicates the significance value is greater than 0.05, as shown by the table of t-test results (partial). Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant effect between financial distress on accounting conservatism. The results of this study indicate that financial distress not be part of the factors that affect the application of accounting conservatism.

Financial distress is a condition that indicates the company is experiencing financial difficulties. When companies experience financial distress, companies tend not to apply accounting conservatism in preparing financial statements. This is in accordance with positive accounting theory which explains that if the company faces financial distress high, the company manager tends to reduce the level of application of the principle of accounting conservatism. If the company experiences financial distress and continue to apply the use of accounting conservatism, it will result in financial statements being understatement so that it will give a bad signal to parties with an interest in the company such as creditors where creditors because they have a bad view of the company cause they do not provide loans to the company (Rif'an & Agustina, 2021; Sari & Srimindarti, 2022).

#### 3.2.2. The Effect of Leverage on Accounting Conservatism

The value of  $t_{\text{statistic}} < t_{\text{table}}$  is  $0.194 < 2.00958$  with a significance value of 0.847, which indicates the significance value is greater than 0.05, as shown by the table of t-test results (partial). Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant effect between leverage on accounting conservatism. According to the findings of this analysis, the degree of accounting conservatism is unaffected by the level of leverage.

A high leverage ratio shows that the company is in a poor financial position, as its entire debt exceeds its total assets, indicating that it lacks the resources to pay off and meet all of its obligations. In conditions of high leverage, managers as the party responsible for managing the firm tend to pursue profit-maximizing strategies in an effort to protect the company's image in the eyes of stakeholders such as creditors (Noviantari & Ratnadi, 2015). This is done as a form of maintaining creditor confidence related to the

level of security of refunds so that creditors are willing to lend funds to the company. Thus, greater the leverage, the more likely the company's financial statements are not to adhere to accounting conservatism principles (Haryadi et al., 2020; Fitriani & Ruchjana, 2020).

### **3.2.3. The Effect of Financial Distress and Leverage on Accounting Conservatism**

The value of  $F_{\text{statistic}} < F_{\text{table}}$  is  $0.030 < 3.19$  with a significance value of 0.971, which indicates the significance value is greater than 0.05, as shown by the table of F-test results (simultaneous). Thus, it can be concluded that simultaneously there is no significant effect between financial distress and leverage on accounting conservatism.

Similar results were found in previous research conducted by Setiyaning, Nuraina, & Murwani (2018) which suggests that accounting conservatism is not significantly affected by a combination of financial distress and leverage. In addition, the research conducted by (Soekowati et al., 2021) also obtained the results that simultaneously there was no effect between financial distress and leverage on accounting conservatism. In contrast to the findings of the research conducted by Fitriani & Ruchjana (2020) which demonstrates that both financial distress and leverage simultaneously affect on accounting conservatism. In line with research by Septriana et al. (2021) which proves that financial distress and leverage simultaneously affect on accounting conservatism.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

The following conclusions are reached based on the outcomes of the analysis and data processing:

- 1) Financial has no significant effect on accounting conservatism. This shows that financial distress not be part of the factors that affect accounting conservatism.
- 2) Leverage has no significant effect on accounting conservatism. This indicates that high or low levels of leverage owned by the company does not affect the company's policy to apply accounting conservatism.
- 3) Financial distress and leverage have no significant effect on accounting conservatism. Thus, the company's decision to apply accounting conservatism is not based on financial stress and leverage. However, based on company policy by taking into account the condition of the company.

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