

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.11325133

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: BRIDGING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Received: 27/07/2025

Accepted: 27/08/2025

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a mediating strategy between corporate management and community development in the diverse situations. Indeed, acknowledging the fact that CSR is no longer a pure concept of voluntary charity, but rather a significant part of business logic, the study was conducted with a qualitative and posthumanistic approach through the prism of situated inquiry. Semi-structured interviews with document and artefact analysis, and some field observation was conducted in India, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia with 27 participants who were corporate managers and NGO and community stakeholders. Findings show that on one hand CSR is integrated as a strategy with organizational objectives, but on the other hand the perceptions differ so much. Interactions historically and the level of participatory planning tended to focus relationships. Digital dashboards were a form of technology that mediated transparency but posed the threat of dehumanizing engagement. There were continuation tensions between performance-based strategies and community-based ethics. The research comes to the conclusion that effective CSR presupposes a combination of strategic intent and trust-building and shared responsibility. It is suggested that collaborative project design, long-term partnership, and proper technological support are to be used as, rather than a substitute to direct community interaction. This issue is to be investigated in the future with respect to how non-human forces and time processes can determine the impressions and results of CSR. On the

whole, the study highlights that the transformative aspect of CSR is adaptive, relational, and circumstantially-sensitive practices.

KEYWORDS: Corporate Social Responsibility, Community Development, Strategic Management, Relational Ethics, Technological Mediation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a necessary paradigm in the modern management discourse, transforming itself over the years as a voluntary philanthropic activity to an important strategic element that defines corporate identity and stakeholder relations. As it was noted by Blowfield and Frynas, CSR in developing countries can be seen to be playing a dual role, on one hand meeting community needs and on the other hand filling in the institutional gaps in governance and the provision of public services [1]. This contradiction explains why CSR must be redefined outside the old Western-based models to suit the various socio-economic environments.

An early theoretical input into CSR was by Carroll, who developed the much-quoted Pyramid of CSR, which argued that businesses have economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities [2]. Later, Carroll outlined the history of the definition of CSR, demonstrating how it evolved into a multi-dimensional concept that is part of organizational strategy [3]. This kind of definitional fluidity is reflected in the various views that have been integrated by Crane et al. in their extensive Oxford Handbook of Corporate Social Responsibility, which has recorded how CSR has become part and parcel of corporate governance and performance measurement [4].

Dahlsrud also showed this complexity by examining 37 definitions of CSR, and found that there were common themes of stakeholder engagement, social responsibility, and voluntary practices [5]. Simultaneously, the rise of such concepts as shared value has triggered a discussion of whether CSR is a material managerial tool or just a rhetorical mechanism of competitive positioning [6]. The Triple Bottom Line framework developed by Elkington further contributed to the discussion by including the dimensions of social equity, environmental stewardship and economic viability as fundamental performance aspects [7], [8]. This comprehensive approach has seen business enterprises consider sustainability as a part and parcel of the success of the business.

The Stakeholder Theory developed by Freeman also transformed the thinking of managers because it promoted the idea that companies should take into account the interests and expectations of a wide variety of stakeholders rather than just shareholders [9]. Such broadened stakeholder orientation has been realized through strategic bridging where companies enter into an alliance with community groups and local governments to establish social legitimacy [10].

This was further supported by Gheraia et al. who integrated the concept of business ethics and CSR by arguing that ethical corporate cultures are the cornerstones to meaningful social responsibility [11].

There has been growing research interest in the role of CSR as an intermediary between organizational culture and the results of community development. As an example, Iqbal and Parray demonstrated that CSR may be used to mediate the connection between the organizational culture and employee citizenship behaviors [12]. These results are in line with the study by Jamali and Mirshak in developing countries where CSR activities are influenced by the culture and institutional pressures [13]. Jin and Lee stressed the role of social capital-bonding and bridging- in the development of community capacity-building initiatives via CSR programs [14].

As digital communication has continued to spread, internal CSR has also become an essential factor in employee advocacy and engagement. Lee investigated the role of internal CSR activities in provoking employee advocacy in anonymous social media contexts, which places emphasis on the interactions between organizational values and external reputation [15]. In a related article, Matten and Moon differentiated between what they termed as explicit and implicit CSR with the former being voluntary in nature and the latter being part of formal institutional settings [16]. Moon also suggested that CSR plays a substantive part in achieving sustainable development goals especially when firms voluntarily seek to align their activities with the needs of the community [17].

In an organizational behavior approach, Moon et al. proved that the CSR practices have the potential to reinforce perceptions of organizational justice and compassion, which in turn can improve employee commitment [18]. Porter and Kramer took this strategic orientation a step further by suggesting that the most promising avenue to incorporate CSR into competitive strategy is the creation of shared value, in which businesses create economic benefits by solving societal problems [19]. Nevertheless, Dembek et al. warned that shared value is still controversial, and its empirical strength and practicability are questioned [6].

Rasheed and Ahmad also investigated the connection between CSR and the competitive advantage and discovered that the intensity of competition can enhance the strategic value of CSR [20]. Within the environmental sphere, Sharma et al. explored the possibility of aligning CSR principles with green chemistry practice in the steel industry to

demonstrate the intersection of social responsibility and sustainability innovation [21]. In their reflections on CSR endeavours in India, Singh and Verma emphasised the significance of matching corporate interventions with the priorities of the community to prevent the lack of correlation between the intention and outcome [22].

CSR has been envisioned at the bottom of the economic pyramid as a market development and inclusion mechanism. According to Singh *et al.*, CSR initiatives that serve the underserved populations can serve business and social goals at the same time [23]. In a similar way, Song *et al.* proved that green organizational identity can mediate the connection between CSR activities and new product success, especially in sustainability-oriented markets [24]. Uddin has further extended this view to the context of CSR in Pakistan and the rights-based approach to CSR in Pakistan, focusing on the participatory development approaches and empowerment of the marginalized population [25].

Lastly, Widhagdha *et al.* analysed the relational nature of effective CSR interaction by studying bonding, bridging, and linking social relationships in CSR-focused communities [26]. The insights together point to the fact that linking management practices to community development involves more than compliance or image management but involves embedding ethical frameworks, stakeholder involvement and context-sensitive approaches in the heart of organizational decision-making.

This convergence of views indicates that CSR is not a fixed set of practices, but a moving, changing paradigm which questions organizations to combine profitability with social impact and sustainable development. The proposed research will help to shed light on the avenues of more natural and meaningful incorporation of CSR into the modern management practice by critically examining these frameworks and empirical research findings.

1.1. Research Objectives

- To analyze how current management in various organizations incorporates the CSR frameworks to meet the need of the community development especially within the scope of developing nations.
- To determine how the strategic instruments of bridging (e.g. partnerships, stakeholder involvement, co-creation of value) can be used to transform the CSR policies into actual social impacts.
- To name the difficulties and key to success that impact the factor of match between

organizational CSR strategies and the local community expectation.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This research follows small, exploratory, qualitative research design on posthumanist constructivist ground. Such orientation acknowledges that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is not just a projection of management choice or communal demands, but through complicated complexities of human actors, non-human agglomeration, infrastructures, and institutional discourses. In that vein, the design focuses on situated inquiry rather than generalizations, as the relational nature of enactment and experience of CSR practices must be accounted.

Although the method used is mainly qualitative, descriptive statistics were also used to provide background trappings of the scale and dimension of CSR activities in such case organizations. Nevertheless, the essence of the analysis is interpretive, experiential, and relational that focuses on the interaction of the actors of the corporation, the stakeholders of the community, and technological mediators.

2.2. Data Collection Methods

2.2.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interview was used as the primary method of data collection chosen due to its adaptability and ability to produce detailed and subtle information. Interviews were done to identify how CSR strategies were conceptualized, operationalized and understood both within and between organizations and communities. In addition to viewing CSR as a policy or a practice, the interviews also looked at the emotional aspects, conflicting norms, and digital systems that shape and influence our behaviour (e.g., reporting systems and monitoring IT).

The interviews were recorded with the informed consent and then transcribed. Fidelity was cross-linguistic, through use of both back-translation and bilingual researchers.

2.2.2. Document and Artefact Analysis

Varied selection of documentary and material artefacts was analysed to aid the triangulation and further contextual understanding in the study. These were CSR strategy reports, sustainability dashboard, internal assessment and independent audit reports. The said artefacts were not looked upon as mere

records but they were rather regarded as material-discursive texts, around which corporate imaginaries, regime structures, and performance stories are being actively formulated and conveyed [10]. The method also allowed the researcher to be in a position to discover how organizations articulate their commitments, express their values, and bargain with legitimacy towards various stakeholders and expectations in the community.

2.2.3. Limited Field Observation

The worked sites in India and Nigeria were chosen to carry out field observations. These comprised tours to health clinics, computer learning centers and clean water installation. Case studies were made based on spatial planning, material infrastructures, lived practices of stakeholders and their interactions with CSR initiatives. It is through this approach that the researcher was able to learn to admire CSR not as a fixed deliverable but an interweaving of design, discourse, social practice.

2.4. Population and Sampling

The selection of information-rich cases with respect to various CSR ecosystems geographically and within institution were identified using a purposive, relational sampling strategy. Three regional contexts were deliberately chosen to show spatial and cultural variety: India, where the CSR programmes of industrial manufacturing cooperate with local structures of labour and sustainability networks; Nigeria, where CSR in extractive sectors is involved in environments with ecological sensitivity and political complexity; and Saudi Arabia, where the state mediated CSR system interfaces with the Social Development Centres as intermediaries. The last sample involved 27 participants, 9 managers of corporate CSR, 6 people representing non-governmental organizations (NGO) or intermediaries, and 12 community representatives who included elders, young leaders, and other beneficiaries. It occurred in several iterations till thematic saturation.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

To guarantee the soundness of the research procedure, ethical rigorousness was held up via numerous precautions. All interviews and observations were conducted on an informed consent basis and confidentiality and anonymity was ensured by coding the participants and keeping the data in secure places. They were used to bring out possible biases as viva voice memos

and peer debriefing were used to give interpretive transparency. Checks with the participants were also done to determine descriptive correctness and whether findings were ethically appealing to them. Audit trail reflected an account of primary methodological choices and theoretical transitions of the research. Within the framework of the relational ethics, the research highlighted transparency, respect and epistemic accountability, whereby the understanding of validity is determined as commitment to improvement of the manifestation of the situationally entangled reality of CSR practice.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, a multi-layered analysis of the functioning of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a bridging mechanism between management practices and community development is introduced. The results show the relational, material, and discursive processes that inform the implementation of CSR in the identified regional settings: India, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia.

Findings are organized into four thematic areas which are interrelated and each of them is based on emergent patterns and backed by empirical evidence, theoretical framework and critical interpretation.

3.1. Strategic Alignment and Institutional Embedding Of CSR

In all three regions, CSR has gone beyond the voluntary charity to the embedded strategy that is more in line with corporate goals as proposed by Carroll in his pyramid [2], the Triple Bottom Line [7] and the shared value proposal [19].

In India, managers termed CSR as an extension of core business values where the initiatives are closely connected with sustainability reporting and workforce development. The CSR policy documents focused on performance indicators associated with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were a combination of global frameworks and local adaptation [4], [5].

In Nigeria, CSR was commonly discussed as a means of reducing operational risk in socially and ecologically sensitive areas - a form of responsibility that Blowfield and Frynas describe as responsibility as risk management [1]. CSR in Saudi Arabia was very institutionalized with state policy requirements and organized relationships with the Social Development Centres.

Table 1: Strategic Objectives and Institutional Modalities of CSR.

Region	Strategic Objectives	Institutional Modality
India	Skills development, environmental sustainability	Corporate-led with NGO partnerships
Nigeria	Infrastructure provision, conflict mitigation	Hybrid corporate-community frameworks
Saudi Arabia	Educational and capacity building programs	State-mandated CSR integrated with formal governance

In Table 1 the Mapping strategic CSR priorities and institutional arrangements is stated This is evidence that supports the notion that institutional embedding of CSR is contingent and dependent on regulatory pressures, legitimacy considerations, and stakeholder demands [13], [16].

3.2. Community Perceptions of CSR Legitimacy and Relational Trust

Although managers tended to portray CSR as a socially embedded practice, community stakeholders

depicted a more ambivalent reality. In India, the majority of participants perceived CSR as credible and advantageous, which indicates high relational trust that emerged due to long-term interaction and open communication [14], [22].

In Nigeria, respondents viewed CSR as quite transactional, in that it was an instrument that companies use to sustain access and preserve their social license to operate [1], [13]. Elders in the community pointed out that most of the initiatives were done with little consultation or commitment and thus the corporate motives were doubted.

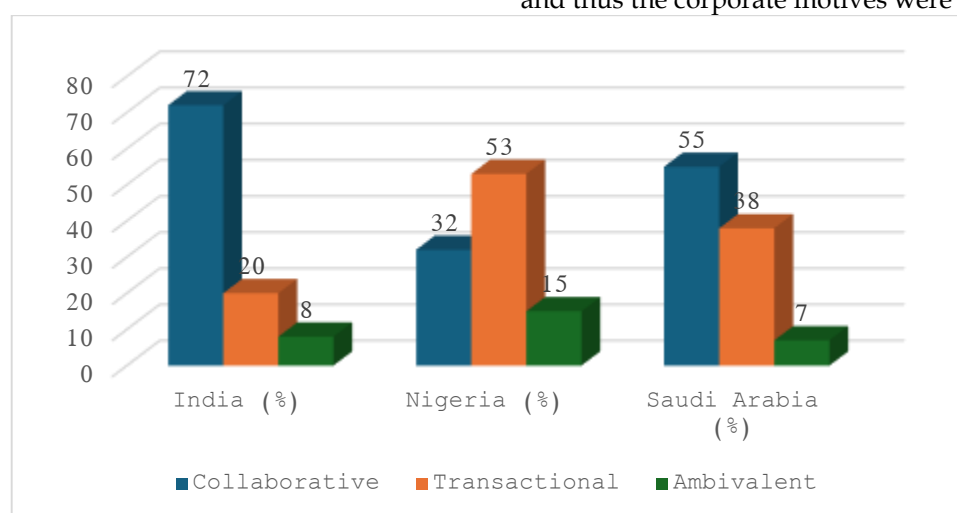


Figure 1: Distribution of Perceived CSR Legitimacy across Regions (N=27).

Figure 1, there was a great deal of difference in the perception of CSR legitimacy and sincerity across regions and among stakeholder groups. This difference in the legitimacy perceptions is consistent with the criticism of Dembek et al. that the rhetoric of CSR is often out of proportion to its substantive effect [6]. It also points out that relational trust is co-produced in the course of time and it is not possible to create it only with the help of formal reporting structures [11], [12].

3.3. Technological Mediation and Material Agency in CSR Implementation

In every region, technological systems played a

significant role in the implementation of CSR, i.e., sustainability dashboards, online reporting tools, and digital monitoring devices. As an illustration in figure 2, a water purification project in India used sensor networks and data visualization dashboards to monitor the quality of water, whereas in Saudi Arabia, the results of CSR activities were reported through standardized online portals meeting the requirements of the state reporting.

Such practices depict what Singh refers to as material-discursive entanglements in which things and methods of making meanings are not viewed and treated as neutral devices merely as means to do things but rather enactors of meaning and legitimacy.

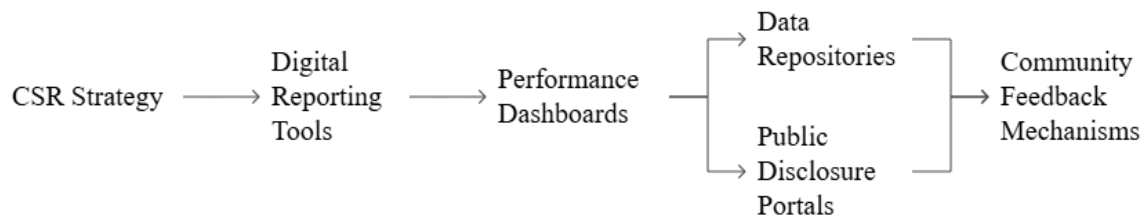


Figure 2: Caption: Schematic Representation of Digital Mediation in CSR Implementation.

On the one hand, these infrastructures increase accountability and transparency [10]; on the other hand, they may generate the distance between the corporate actors and the reality of the communities, which may support the instrumental approach to CSR [1], [9].

3.4. Relational Dynamics and Ethical Tensions

In the cases, the managers of CSR focused on metrics and performance indicators as success

evidence across the cases. Nevertheless, the relational aspects of legitimacy, such as trust, openness, and moral integrity, were always mentioned by the community members as more significant indicators.

In India, a long-term relationship resulted in comparatively high trust and in Nigeria, grievances about extractive activities in the past created a view of CSR as a shallow intervention. In Saudi Arabia CSR was regarded as credible yet was limited by top-down dictates that restricted community agency.

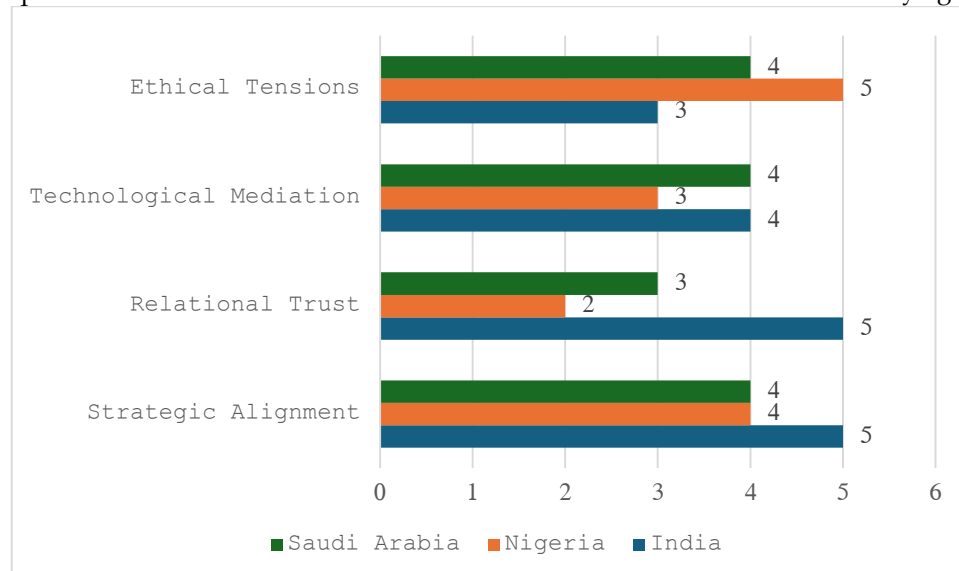


Figure 3: Relative Intensity of Themes Based on Frequency and Interpretive Weight.

Tensions associated with inclusivity, shared ownership, and long-term sustainability

characterized the interaction between strategic objectives and relational ethics in the Figure 3.

Table 2: Comparative Assessment of Relational Attributes Across Cases.

Relational Factor	India	Nigeria	Saudi Arabia
Transparency	High	Low	Moderate
Inclusivity of Planning	High	Low-Moderate	Moderate
Ethical Consistency	Moderate-High	Low	Moderate
Relational Trust	High	Low	Moderate

In Table 2: Relational Factors Shaping CSR Outcomes are referred to. These results confirm the claim of Moon that CSR performance relies on formal and informal aspects explicit and implicit structures, and informal relations practices [16], [17].

3.5. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The paper adds to the CSR literature by showing that CSR is an emergent assemblage of human agents, material infrastructures and institutional discourses, not a distinct set of managerial practices [3], [5], [9],

[25].

Important Theoretical Inputs:

- Adds material agency and technological mediation as co-constitutive forces to the stakeholder theory [9], [24].
- Confirms accusations that the legitimacy of CSR is relationally constructed, and relies on

community trust and mutual ownership [6], [13], [18].

- Demonstrates how the posthumanist approaches can help to enhance the analysis of CSR by prioritizing the intra-actions between human, non-human and discursive factors.

Table 3: Summary of Thematic Insights.

Theme	Key Insight
Strategic Alignment	CSR increasingly embedded within management systems aligned with business strategy.
Relational Trust	Dependent on historical relationships and inclusivity.
Technological Mediation	Digital infrastructures central but can depersonalize engagement.
Ethical Tensions	Tension between strategy and relational ethics remains unresolved.

Practical Implications:

- Relational infrastructures (participatory planning, transparent dialogue) and technical reporting tools are the two areas that managers should invest in.
- The CSR strategies must be co-designed with communities to make them contextually

relevant and prevent the feelings of extractive interaction.

- All stages of CSR have to be imbued with ethical responsibility that focuses on decentralized responsibility between corporate and community stakeholders.

5. CONCLUSION

This study sought to discuss the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as an intermediary process between management practices and community development in diverse contexts. The study shows how CSR is much more than a system of formal policies by examining case studies in India, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, that CSR is a practice of processes and is informed by strategic intentions, relations and material infrastructures. Among the major discoveries is that CSR has become an inseparable strategic business priority as opposed to being an adjunct activity. Such integration will present the possibility to engage communities on a more regular and meaningful basis. But the views of CSR were not similar in contexts. Although CSR was considered credible and collaborative in some communities, in other communities it was considered transactional or even sceptical, and this was usually dependent on whether they felt they were really

engaged in planning and decision-making. There is another valuable lesson that relates to the place of technology. Such tools as video reporting or digital dashboards have increased transparency and efficiency and are dangerous to undermine personal contacts and trust when used as an alternative to direct communication. The ongoing conflicts were clear between corporate goals focused on quantitative results and the demands of communities of inclusiveness, trust, and continuity of ethics. Companies are thus encouraged to focus on participatory design whereby communities are given the power to co-design CSR strategies at the inception. Trust is developed through long-term relationships and not through one-time projects and technology should only complement human interaction but not replace it. The effect of non-human elements and time aspects on CSR perceptions and effectiveness should be investigated in the future. Finally, CSR requires relational accountability, moral responsibility and situational practices to generate enduring value.

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