



Exploring the Nexus between Corporate Social Responsibility and Community Engagement: Pathways to Inclusivity and Local Empowerment

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to explore the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Community Engagement (CE) by examining how CSR initiatives translate into meaningful community development, citizen empowerment, and inclusive social welfare. The study particularly focuses on understanding the underexplored pathway through which CSR strengthens trust, participation, and community legitimacy.

Design/methodology/approach – The study adopts a qualitative review-based methodology using conceptual framework analysis. Secondary data were collected from academic journals, government reports, and industry publications through databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The inductive approach based on homogeneity and commonality was used to derive the emergent CSR–CE process.

Findings – The findings reveal that CSR acts as a strategic mechanism for mobilizing organizational resources toward community-focused initiatives such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and environmental development. The output of the study proposes a cyclical CSR–CE model in which CSR strategic intent leads to community engagement outcomes through development initiatives, while continuous feedback from communities refines future CSR priorities.

Conclusion – The study concludes that CSR and CE share a mutually reinforcing relationship in which community engagement amplifies the social legitimacy and long-term effectiveness of CSR initiatives. The integration of participatory dialogue and community-centric planning enables firms to achieve both sustainable development and stronger stakeholder trust.

Originality/value – The originality of this paper lies in proposing an emergent theoretical CSR–CE model derived through cyclical process, offering a structured explanation of how CSR evolves into sustainable community engagement outcomes. The study extends the conceptual understanding of CSR beyond philanthropy by positioning community engagement as a strategic and cyclical process.

Keywords – Citizen empowerment, Community development, Community engagement, Corporate social responsibility

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1. Introduction

In an era where the globe is confronting several challenges, such as climate change, societal inequities, and economic issues. These alarming circumstances have led stakeholders to seek accountability from corporations beyond their profit orientation (Carroll, 1979; Freeman, 1984; Milhem et al., 2024; Rudito et al., 2022). As a result, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) emerged as an instrument to depict the responsible conduct of modern business. CSR incorporates a wide range of initiatives to plan its existence and prove its contribution to holistic development which helps companies to operate ethically, support sustainability, and contribute positively to societal development (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Tai & Chuang, 2014). Furthermore, Community Engagement (CE) originates as a concept to facilitate direct interaction and engagement among organisations, the government, and the local affected community (CDC, 2011; Bhinekawati, 2018; Moore et al., 2016). The association of CSR and CE has been receiving growing attention from the government, corporations, academics, and policy makers. Although CSR provides a strategic framework for functioning and deploying resources for social welfare, community engagement represents the tangible, often localized, manifestation of those commitments (Bhinekawati, 2018; Zainab & Pradhan, 2024). Similarly, despite the widespread recognition of interconnectedness, the dynamics of CSR initiatives that translate into meaningful community engagement remain obscure and complex across the commercial landscape. Additionally, most of the studies in this direction resort to a quantitative method, allowing a restricted, superficial, and vague understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Therefore, this study employed a review and conceptual framework analysis as the qualitative approach to address this gap and develop an understanding of the overlooked association and dimensions. The objective of this review paper is to explore the relationship between CSR and CE based on existing literature.

2. Review of the Literature

Theoretical Underpinnings of CSR

Quazi and O'Brien (2000) describe the shareholder approach, originally proposed by Friedman (1962), as the traditional perspective on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). This view argues that a company's main responsibility is to increase profits for its shareholders, and that social or environmental concerns should be handled by the government rather than by businesses. Foley (2000) reinforces this idea, stating that companies only engage in CSR when it aligns with their primary goal of creating long-term value for their owners. On the other hand, the stakeholder approach, introduced by Freeman (1984), maintains that businesses should consider not only shareholders but also other groups that are affected by or can influence the company's operations. This approach emphasizes the need to balance the interests of all stakeholders. Lastly, the societal approach provides a broader understanding of CSR by suggesting that companies have responsibilities to society as a whole. According to this perspective, businesses operate with the public's approval, often referred to as a "license to operate," and are expected to contribute positively to societal well-being.

Elucidating CSR and its dimensions

A notable trend in contemporary management practices is the increased focus on corporate social responsibility (Belesiotti & Glykas, 2022). This shift is largely driven by rising public demands, which now extend beyond the simple delivery of products to encompass meaningful contributions to social and economic development, as well as environmental protection efforts (Chishty, 2023; Zu et al., 2024). In recent years, CSR has become a crucial component of contemporary business strategies, particularly in advancing sustainable development. According to Koleva (2021), CSR initiatives make a positive contribution to sustainability by addressing key areas such as environmental protection, social responsibility, and economic stability. Koleva (2021) emphasizes the importance of embedding CSR into a company's core strategic framework, noting that businesses that do so are more likely to achieve long-term profitability and build stronger relationships with their stakeholders. This viewpoint aligns with the research of Jaaron et al. (2023), who found that CSR efforts are associated with a stronger corporate reputation and increased customer loyalty. These benefits, in turn, support the long-term viability and success of businesses.

The concept of CSR has been interpreted in various ways, often emphasizing a company's obligations to different stakeholder groups. Hang et al. (2022) define CSR as a voluntary commitment by businesses to integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations into their operations to foster stronger relationships with their stakeholders. This perspective highlights three main areas of responsibility: economic, ecological, and social. One of the most frequently referenced definitions comes from Carroll (1979), who describes CSR as encompassing society's expectations of businesses in four areas: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic.

These categories outline the multidimensional obligations organizations have toward society at any given time. Building on this stakeholder-focused view, Farooq et al. (2014) identify four specific areas where companies are expected to act responsibly: toward the community (CSRCOM), consumers (CSRCON), employees (CSREM), and the environment (CSREN). These categorizations underscore the broad spectrum of social responsibilities companies must consider in their strategies and operations. Furthermore, CSR has emerged as a multifaceted concept that encompasses social, economic, and environmental concerns, thereby depicting a broad range of a company's obligations that extend beyond profit maximization (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). These three dimensions create the basis for the "triple bottom line," an approach to sustainable practices (Elkington, 1997).

The social aspect of CSR aims to deliver the company's responsibility by providing human welfare both within and outside the organization. This involves employee welfare, community development, fair labor practices, and respect for human rights (Farooq et al., 2014). According to Dahlsrud (2008), the social aspect is acknowledged as a core component in stakeholder relationships; hence, it is one of the most documented dimensions in CSR definitions. Companies are likely to enjoy a stronger reputation and significant consumer trust by stressing social responsibility (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). This dimension of CSR focuses on a firm's responsibility to gain profitability, create employment, build value for shareholders, and deliver economic development (Carroll, 1979). In this regard, CSR is an economic responsibility as a notion that values sustainable financial performance accomplished by pursuing ethical practices and stakeholder-oriented governance (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Hang et al. (2002) contend that new market opportunities, less risk, and more competitiveness can be achieved by incorporating CSR into core business practices.

The environmental aspect endeavors to minimize the ecological footprint of the organization's operations. It considers efforts that reduce waste, preserve natural resources, decrease pollution, and advance the sustainable supply chain (Hart, 1995). Organizations are compelled to adopt greener practices, as they are increasingly confronted with pressure from consumers and regulators to embrace an eco-friendly business model. Similarly, Bansal and Roth (2000) highlight that proactive environmental strategies derive long-term productivity advantages and enhanced stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, this aspect exclusively emphasizes compliance with ecological laws and voluntary initiatives such as recycling programs, carbon neutrality, and eco-friendly product design (Farooq et al., 2014).

Regulatory framework of CSR in India

The Company Act 2013 has changed the landscape and transformed CSR from a voluntary contribution to a mandatory 2% average profit allocation for CSR activities in large companies, making India the first nation to establish such a legal obligation. Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013 mandates CSR if any of the conditions are satisfied, such as (i) Net worth more than or equal to Rupees 500 crores, (ii) Turnover more than or equal to Rupees 1000 crores, and (c) Net profit more than or equal to Rupees 5 crores.

Community Engagement

A concept to foster holistic development

Big movements such as public health reforms, the civil rights revolution, and participatory development were considered as the genesis of community engagement in the 1960s and 1970s (Campbell & Jovchelovitch, 2000). Domains like inclusive governance, education, urban planning, development, and health promotion are recognized as central tenets of community engagement. It depicts a significant exchange between the organization, government, and the served communities. The core objective is rooted in empowering citizens, promoting shared decision-making, and ensuring that policies and practices are aligned with the community's needs and values (CDS, 2011; Head, 2007). Community engagement has various definitions according to the context. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2011) defined it as the process of working collaboratively with groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting their well-being. Similarly, Butterfoss (2006) highlights community engagement as a sequential transformation from passive information exchange to active alliance and mutual decision making.

Empirical studies confirmed that effective community engagement has the potential to execute more sustainable, culturally respectful, and widely acknowledged outcomes (Cargo & Mercer, 2008). Community engagement strategies have been used as an instrument in the public health sector to enhance health outcomes, improve trust in institutions, and increase use of services (O'Mara-Eves et al., 2013). Moreover, community engagement endeavors to support social capital through gaining trust, building networks, and encouraging shared expectations of helping each other in the community (Putnam, 2000). This reflects in enhanced resilience, more social cohesion, and improved collective efficacy to confront social or ecological problems (Chaskin, 2011).

The community broadly understood as individuals sharing social well-being (Bowen et al., 2010) is recognized as one of a company's primary stakeholders (Freeman, 2010). As such, community engagement, which involves a company working collaboratively with local communities to tackle social and economic challenges (Scantlebury, 2003), serves as a vital component of a broader CSR strategy (Bowen, 2007). Similarly, Hallahan (2004) defines community-building as the process of bringing together individuals and the organizations they belong to a unified group that works toward shared or complementary objectives. From an organizational perspective, Hallahan (2004) outlines three tiers of community-building: *community involvement*, *community nurturing*, and *community organizing*. Through this process, both individuals and organizations work together to achieve common goals. Community involvement refers to an organization's engagement with existing initiatives or groups, such as participating in local events. Community nurturing focuses on enhancing the economic, political, social, and cultural strength of local communities through initiatives such as sponsorship and volunteer activities. Meanwhile, community organizing involves forming new grassroots movements and working to improve local economic and social conditions, similar to the development of social movements.

Ismail et al. (2015), building on the frameworks developed by Alkire and Santos (2010) and the United Nations Development Program (2010), proposed a model that classifies community development initiatives into three key areas: enhancing living standards, improving health, and promoting education. Their research found that among Malaysian companies, education-related programs were the most common. Additionally, several studies have highlighted the importance of involving local communities throughout different stages of project implementation to better align with their needs and priorities (Degie & Kebede, 2019; Gilberthorpe & Banks, 2012; Idemudia, 2011). Researchers have explored how community participation contributes to development projects, and Maconachie and Hilson (2013) emphasized that actively involved local residents can help address some of the difficulties encountered during project execution.

An inclusive model like Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) inherits the fundamentals of community engagement and involves community members as co-researchers throughout the research process. As a result, such model adoption becomes influential, particularly in oppressed communities, where traditional centralized approaches frequently fail to handle systemic inequities (Mijar & Giri, 2025). Although recent advancements as digital platforms and other participatory technologies, create noble pathways to engagement, they carry challenges like the digital divide and information overload (Chadwick, 2011). Nevertheless, more accessibility and wider collaboration can be achieved if its implementation emphasizes inclusivity and the ethical aspect. Past studies have highlighted several challenges associated with communities' engagement, such as tokenism, lack of representativeness, and power inequality between institutions and the community (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Mijar & Giri, 2025). Critics argue that the engagement process is often misused to legalize pre-decided outcomes instead of true representation of shared decision-making (Cornwall, 2008). Moreover, resource limitation, community fatigue, and lack of institutional support pose challenges to sustaining engagement over time (Head, 2007). Similarly, adequate funding, potential to support inclusive & respectful dialogue oriented to communities' priorities, helps in pursuing effective community engagement.

Delving into the Nexus of CSR and Community Engagement

Over time, the concept of CSR has evolved, as highlighted in various studies on the subject. Davis and Frederick (1985) asserted that businesses are inherently part of society and cannot operate in isolation. Similarly, Levy (1999) emphasized that engaging in social initiatives and corporations' donations lies at the heart of business responsibilities. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reflects the relationship between businesses and the broader society, based on the idea that "business and society are interconnected rather than separate entities" (Wood, 1991). This concept of interconnectedness is a recurring theme across the various interpretations of CSR. The most current view of CSR highlights the importance of innovative, stakeholder-focused strategies that actively involve communities to promote inclusive and socially meaningful development (Lee, 2008). Ismail (2009) further explained that the fundamental aim of CSR is to enhance the social, environmental, and economic conditions of the community. These interpretations underscore that CSR encompasses ethical, moral, and financial dimensions. Nonetheless, as Birch and Moon (2004) pointed out, there is no universal model for CSR. It can take many forms, shaped by the unique characteristics of each company and its engagement with the surrounding community.

CSR and community engagement are strongly interconnected, and companies often engage directly with local communities by fulfilling their responsibility through addressing social and environmental challenges. This association is framed in stakeholder theory, which asserts that businesses seek legitimacy by responding to community needs (Guillen-Godoy, 2025). CSR programs are often implemented through community empowerment initiatives, typically in the form of community development, which plays a key role in

driving social progress and positive change within communities (Trivedi, 2022). In developing countries, this community development-oriented approach to CSR is widely viewed as a more effective alternative to traditional charitable efforts. According to Philips and Pittman (2008), community development is an educational process that encourages community members to engage in dialogue, identify problems, and work together to find solutions. This approach involves deliberate efforts to enhance specific aspects of community life, ultimately reinforcing both institutional structures and social relationships. In essence, community development emphasizes equipping individuals with the skills to collaborate and tackle common issues collectively (Muthuri et al., 2012).

Every community development initiative should strive to promote positive social change, with a primary focus on improving quality of life and alleviating local poverty (Gaither et al., 2018; Tkac, 2006). Strengthening community resilience has become a central objective in the current practice of CSR (Kumar et al., 2022; Rela et al., 2020). Among the pressing issues that companies are increasingly expected to address through their CSR efforts are climate change and various environmental challenges (Sodano & Hingley, 2013). For example, it would be in a company's strategic interest to contribute to resolving clean water and sanitation problems in drought-affected and economically disadvantaged areas, demonstrating how climate change is severely affecting agricultural regions (Aimar, 2019). This is especially relevant given the growing expectation for businesses to support sustainable development and to report their contributions toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (ElAlfy et al., 2020).

Today, numerous companies have embraced a shared value approach (Porter & Kramer, 2011), which anticipates that CSR can deliver social improvements to the intended community while also benefiting the business. In essence, CSR serves as an investment tool that helps strengthen a company's role within society (Coombs & Holladay, 2015). As a result, numerous companies in developing countries engage in a wide range of social programs, such as healthcare, education, economic development, infrastructure improvement, and environmental conservation to enhance their public image and establish legitimacy within the communities where they operate (Famiola & Adiwongso, 2016; Muthuri et al., 2012). As a result, capital allocation should be carefully considered to achieve meaningful and positive outcomes.

Scholars argue that community engagement not only benefits society but also brings advantages to businesses, such as earning a social license to operate, strengthening brand reputation, and enhancing employee engagement and morale (Davis & Frederick, 1985; Epstein & Roy, 2001; Levy, 1999; Mishra & Suar, 2010; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Shilpakar et al., 2024; Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2005). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) also plays a vital role in encouraging community involvement. Zhang et al. (2023) highlight that CSR efforts focused on community development help build stronger and more collaborative relationships between companies and the communities they serve. Research carried out in rural settings demonstrates that CSR activities in sectors, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure significantly improve residents' quality of life, which in turn enhances a company's public image (Soelton et al., 2023). Similarly, Atzmanstorfer et al. (2023) found that businesses engaged in urban CSR projects, such as urban renewal initiatives and local employment programs often receive greater backing and involvement from local communities. This indicates a mutually beneficial relationship between such companies and the people in their surrounding areas.

3. Research Method

This study utilized a qualitative conceptual framework approach to explore the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Community Engagement. Conceptual framework analysis helps to identify and organize the patterns within the data (Jabareen, 2009). Together, these methods supported a comprehensive literature review, aiding in theory exploration and the identification of research gaps (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Ridley, 2012). The objective of this paper is to explore relationships between CSR and community engagement.

Secondary information was obtained through relevant literature sourced from academic journals, government publications, and industry reports. The focus was on understanding how the association of CSR and Community Engagement contributes to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Databases such as Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Scopus were used to collect relevant studies using keywords like "Corporate Social Responsibility," "Community Engagement," "Community Development," and "Community Empowerment." The concepts of commonality and homogeneity were used to deduce the findings of the paper.

4. Findings

The analysis of the literature has identified the following probable findings based on the chosen variables and their relationships. The findings revealed that CSR plays a vital role in strengthening community engagement through its carefully planned strategies and practices. Its integration by stakeholders in the future can foster a strong, more authentic relationship with communities, leading to ease in businesses, tackling problems, and enabling social and holistic development. CSR is recognized and viewed differently as per the concerned theories, including the literature highlighted that the shareholder approach mainly emphasizes shareholders' profit maximization and ignores social and environmental challenges until pursuing CSR, intending to create long-term value for owners. The study showed that the stakeholder approach has a broad spectrum and endeavors to fulfil the company's commitment towards all stakeholders by integrating CSR into its core operations and decision-making. Similarly, it demonstrates that a societal approach is the widest and is based on the philosophy that an organization is part of society, and it must serve its obligation by proactively engaging in CSR, resulting in the public's approval and legitimacy.

A notable escalation in focus can be assessed for CSR in the contemporary management landscape because consumers have been demanding beyond a simple exchange of products, additionally expecting a valuable contribution to social and economic development, while safeguarding the environment. This research identified that CSR is acknowledged as a vital element of current business strategies, especially in promoting sustainable development by contributing towards ecological conservation, social responsibility, and economic stability.

The literature highlights that the most documented and referenced definition of CSR encompasses four aspects: communities, consumers, employees, and environment. Similarly, subsequent studies have identified and underscored three new areas, such as economic, social, and environmental, thus emphasizing multidimensional obligation for organizations. The Companies Act 2013 mandated CSR for eligible companies, and India achieved a remarkable milestone of becoming the first nation to ratify such a legal obligation.

The literature recognized that the social dimension of CSR involves community development, fair labor practices, employee welfare, and respect for human rights. This dimension is admitted as a core component in building robust stakeholder relationships, ensuring strong reputations, and achieving consumer trust. Study revealed that the economic dimension concentrates on a firm's responsibility to support economic development, provide value for shareholders, generate employment opportunities, and aid in gaining profitability. It believes in valuing economic success while pursuing ethical practices and stakeholder-oriented governance. As per the literature, the environmental dimension endeavors to minimize waste, reduce pollution, conserve natural resources, promote a sustainable supply chain, and curb the ecological footprint of the organization. Furthermore, its core principle lies in complying with environmental laws, curating eco-friendly products, and embracing an eco-conscious business model.

The literature asserts that historic revolutions, such as inclusive development, civil rights, and public health reform, are recognized as the genesis of community engagement. The crux of it revolves around empowering citizens, supporting participative decision-making, honoring communities' needs and values, and instilling a spirit of working collaboratively with local communities to address social and economic problems. The study found that community engagement has a widespread positive impact on society as well as on business, as it helps in earning social license to operate, improves employee morale, and promotes brand reputation. The study understood the concept of community as "individual sharing social well-being" and recognized it as a primary stakeholder. Furthermore, it denoted community building as a process to bring individuals together into groups for serving a common purpose and tackling local, recurring, and widespread problems. The literature has classified community development into three strata. They are - *Community Involvement*, *Community Nurturing*, and *Community Organizing*.

Decoding the nexus of CSR and Community Engagement

Literature has identified that businesses are naturally part of society and cannot operate in isolation. Similarly, CSR portrays the relationship between business and society, emphasizing the notion of interconnectedness rather than separation. The study highlighted that CSR exhibits flexibility and lacks a universal model, as it can be manifested in various ways, shaped by companies' attributes, and adapted to the immediate community's needs. The existing research revealed that CSR initiatives are often implemented through community empowerment practices, mainly represented by community development. Similarly, community

development is understood as an educational process that adopts an approach that motivates community members to engage in dialogue, identify challenges, and channelize the value of collaboration to find solutions. The literature found that CSR initiatives in sectors like healthcare, education, and infrastructure, especially in rural areas, substantially enhance people's quality of life and drive social progress and positive change within communities. CSR serves as an instrument that facilitates strengthening the company's objective to contribute to the community. Thus, it makes it possible for various companies to engage in a variety of social programs, such as economic development, infrastructure improvement, education, healthcare, and environmental conservation.

Process Model Based on Conceptual Framework Analysis

This research proposed a conceptual model that illustrates how CSR is crucial in promoting Community Engagement through a structured mechanism. The analysis drawn from review highlights that CSR serves a central role in mobilizing firms' resources toward community-focused practices. The model identifies three key stages: (1) *CSR Strategic Intent* – where organizations develop socially responsible policies aligned with stakeholder expectations; (2) *Implementation through Community Development Initiatives* – including education, healthcare, infrastructure, and environmental programs; (3) *Outcome in the form of Community Engagement* – reflected through trust-building, participation, empowerment, and social cohesion.

The framework further implies that CE functions as a mediating pathway, enhancing social benefits like quality of life and sustainable development by translating CSR efforts into tangible outcomes. Moreover, CSR strategies are improved by regular feedback from communities, resulting in the formation of a cycle of continuous improvement. Therefore, the study develops a CSR-CE integrated model, aiming to demonstrate a cyclical relationship where CSR intent encourages community engagement, and community feedback strengthens CSR usefulness.



Figure 1: The proposed model visually summarizes the cyclical pathway through which CSR initiatives evolve into sustainable community engagement outcomes.

5. Discussion

The findings showed that the essence of CSR is embedded in various widely recognized theories (Stakeholder, Legitimacy, and Institutional), which collectively promote beyond-profit thoughts. This perspective is also identified by Kalra (2024), Rodrigues (2024), and Barney (1991). The literature also revealed that consumers increasingly admit choices in favor of businesses that lead impactful contributions to societal and environmental causes. This is confirmed by PWC (2024) and WinS Solutions (2024), who contend that 77% prefer a brand with a positive social impact, and 85% believe that climate change concerns influence their buying behavior. Similarly, the study recognized that pursuing effective community engagement manifests various advantages, such as enhancing employee morale, helping to achieve legitimacy, and strengthening brand reputation. This aligns with findings by Morsing and Schultz (2014), Du et al. (2011), Turker (2009), and Korschun et al. (2020). The study found that CSR initiatives must

be adaptable and consider the immediate community needs to drive visible transformation in society. This claim is strengthened by Jamali and Mirshak (2007) and Porter and Kramer (2019), who state that a flexible, community-tailored approach is needed in CSR practices to effectively tackle local challenges and achieve positive social impact. Moreover, the literature demonstrates that CSR emerges as a significant instrument to mobilize a company's resources to serve the community, and it is a mechanism for corporations to engage in a variety of social programs such as infrastructure development, education, healthcare, economic development, and environmental conservation; this resonates with the work by Carroll and Shabana (2010) and Porter and Kramer (2011).

6. Conclusion

This study attempts to highlight the substantial relationship between CSR and CE. As depicted by the past studies, an organization that emphasizes CSR initiatives is inclined to cultivate robust, sustainable, and meaningful associations with local communities. The effective integration of CSR is embedded with attributes serving multifaceted advantages, such as improving corporate reputation, earning stakeholder trust, and enabling long-term community development. The findings revealed that CSR plays a vital role in strengthening community engagement through its carefully planned strategies and practices. Similarly, when CSR initiatives and practices are transparent, authentic, and closely aligned with local needs, they can provide holistic development, promote community involvement, and build a sense of reciprocity. The companies can mobilize CSR resources towards community engagement and translate their notion of serving the community into a manifestation of community development and citizen empowerment by opening a venue for education, health, and employment. Moreover, effective community engagement magnifies the impact of CSR by designing an open feedback mechanism, allowing a timely exchange of information, and being better equipped with local societal needs and expectations. This makes their offering refined and precise to serve the best in favour of both the organisation and the community. In conclusion, CSR and CE mutually reinforce synergies for the organization to achieve both business sustainability and social responsibility. Future researchers need to thoroughly explore this relationship and assess its impact by combining various factors, including industry, culture, geography, and method. In this way, they will be able to verify the strength of the current method and can innovate a new one.

7. Implication

This study contributes meaningful theoretical, managerial, and policy insights. Theoretically, it enriches the literature by proposing an integrated CSR-CE framework, demonstrating how CSR attains value through community-focused practices. Managerially, the findings highlight that organizations should consider aspects like local needs assessment, regular dialogue, and community participation before designing CSR programs. From a policy perspective, the Companies Act 2013 of India needs to strengthen the monitoring mechanism to ensure that CSR funds are directed to community development outcomes.

8. Direction for Future Research

Like many qualitative and review studies, this research has limitations, including the absence of hypothesis testing and the exclusion of variables like environmental performance and climate finance. Future studies are encouraged to address these gaps for a more holistic understanding. Future research can utilize this study in multiple ways. First, the proposed CSR-CE model can be validated by empirical studies. Second, to offer deeper insight, future studies may review complementary variables such as climate finance, environmental performance, and organizational readiness. Third, to develop clear insights into contextual differences, comparative studies across industries and regions can be conducted subsequently. Lastly, to investigate how CSR and community engagement evolve and contribute to sustainable development across the time horizon, longitudinal research is required.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest while preparing this article.

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