

Corporate Social Responsibility and Community Engagement: A Conceptual Review of Strategic Integration

Lokesh Tomar^{1*} , Salil Seth² 



Journal of Emerging Management
Studies

Volume 3 Issue 2
©2025 DAV Research Management Cell
<https://doi.org/10.3126/jems.v3i2.86036>
nepjol.info/index.php/jems

Abstract

Purpose – This paper explores how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can move beyond philanthropic and compliance-based practices to become a driver of meaningful community engagement. It highlights the under-theorized relationship between CSR and community engagement, emphasizing the importance of participatory, localized, and culturally embedded approaches for sustainable socio-economic development.

Design/methodology/approach - A review-based method was employed, synthesizing insights from recent scholarly literature and theoretical frameworks, including Carroll's Pyramid of CSR, stakeholder theory, and legitimacy theory. The study integrated perspectives on social capital, sustainability, and inclusivity to assess how CSR practices are conceptualized and operationalized across contexts.

Findings - The review demonstrates that while CSR is increasingly positioned as a strategic necessity, community engagement remains fragmented and often symbolic. The findings of the study reveal that the CSR models, which are rooted in Western perspectives, ignore the social and cultural conditions of developing economies, reducing their impact. Through the adoption of jointly developed inclusive strategies, firms can generate social value, promote trust, and develop sustained authority.

Conclusion - The Research indicates that CSR initiatives generate stronger outcomes when they are purposefully coordinated with community engagement, surpassing communication to become deeply integrated practices. This coordination not only gives strength to stakeholder relationships but also promotes corporate adaptability and equality.

Originality/value - The paper helps us to understand CSR by rethinking community engagement as a key element of CSR, bringing clarity to the concept, and identifying new ways for empirical research in developing economies. It raises doubts about existing ways of practicing CSR and provides a base for developing culturally responsive, participatory models that bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Keywords - Community engagement, Corporate social responsibility, Emerging markets, Social capital, Sustainability

¹Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University), Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University), Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India.
salil100seth@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author:
Email: lokeshptomargood123@gmail.com

Received: May 10, 2025
Revised: August 03, 2025
Accepted: September 15, 2025
Published: October 2025

License

Copyright©2025 by
Authors and *Journal of Emerging
Management Studies*



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

How to cite this paper:

Tomar, L., & Seth, S. (2025). Corporate social responsibility and community engagement: A conceptual review of strategic integration. *Journal of Emerging Management Studies*, 3(2), 33-47. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jems.v3i2.86036>

1. Introduction

Over the years that have passed, CSR has grown from a philanthropic practice to an essential component of strategic organizational operations. As social and economic issues around the world increase, covering inequality and climate change to community displacement and the digital gaps affecting communities, corporations are increasingly expected to go beyond profit-making and contribute meaningfully to societal engagement (Hahn et al., 2018; Barauskaite & Streimikiene, 2021). Recent research highlights that CSR has become a multidimensional concept, focusing on the needs of people, communities, and the planet while supporting the goals of the United Nations for a better and sustainable future (Abbas, 2024; Fu et al., 2023; Al Frijat et al., 2024; Aguinis et al., 2024). This change over time makes CSR an important approach for integrating communities and environmental welfare into everyday business practices. Across many aspects of CSR, community engagement has developed as an essential yet underexplored domain, especially in countries like India, which is a developing economy. Businesses today are making efforts to establish sustainable practices that meet the expectations of employees, customers, and local communities (Deb et al., 2024). CSR initiatives help to build stronger community engagement by promoting eco-friendly behavior, encouraging participation of employees in socially responsible projects, and supporting local programs that promote environmental awareness (Rahman et al., 2024). These types of initiatives promote stakeholder relationships, simultaneously integrating organizational objectives with bigger sustainability goals. The relationship between CSR and community engagement is dynamic and complex, connecting moral responsibilities with primary goals.

In the past, CSR practices focused on rules and charitable efforts, while today's CSR models support stakeholder engagement, collaborative value creation, and inclusive growth. Even with all this discussion, there is still a gap between CSR theory and practices, especially in transforming strong commitments into sustainable community efforts (Deigh et al., 2016; Celik et al., 2019). This gap is most evident in emerging markets, where CSR strategies lack local empowerment and meaningful engagement in many cases (Oduro et al., 2024; Pillai et al., 2022; Nicoara & Kadile, 2024). Addressing this gap is essential as much of the CSR literature remains rooted in Western perspectives, commonly neglecting the contextual realities of developing economies. This study contributes to the literature by integrating recent research to demonstrate that localized, cooperative, and culturally aligned approaches to community engagement can enhance the CSR discourse. To support this objective, the study undertakes a qualitative review of existing literature, focusing on how CSR is conceptualized, operationalized, and aligned with community engagement goals. Based on established frameworks such as Carroll's Pyramid of CSR, stakeholder theory, and legitimacy theory, the review explores how businesses can promote social capital, encourage collaborative engagement, and contribute to inclusive social and economic outcomes. Recent research highlights that CSR practices have gradually adapted corporate values to public interests and to integrate stakeholder-driven innovation through community participation. Based on these insights, the discussion not only highlights the strategic importance of community engagement within CSR but also the need for culturally rooted, collaboratively designed, and guided by established theoretical framework practices that connect with the lived experiences of communities.

2. Review of Literature

Evolving Paradigms of CSR: From Ethics to Strategic Integration

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been tested for its impact on societal well-being and organizational performance (Abbas, 2025). Around the world, organizations are obligated to adopt environmentally responsible practices (Al Frijat et al., 2024), although promoting public welfare and human growth (Aguinis et al., 2024). With this understanding, many firms are matching their

strategies with the United Nations' sustainable development agenda, where CSR plays a key role. As a very diverse concept, CSR deals with economic, Social, and environmental priorities (Abbas, 2024). It highlights that businesses can fulfil their objectives while also keeping a hand on ethical values, safeguarding the environment, and ensuring benefits for the wider society to meet sustainable goals (Fu et al., 2023).

CSR constitutes a fundamental component of corporate operations, functioning as a critical interface between business entities and the broader community. Corporate Social Responsibility is increasingly gaining prominence as businesses adopt sustainable practices that respond to the expectations of employees, customers, and local communities (Deb et al., 2024). The imperative for organizations to engage in socially responsible behavior commands substantial scholarly and societal attention (Seth, 2014). Kotler and Lee (2005) described CSR as a company's voluntary commitment to enhance community well-being through its business operations and initiatives. It is important to note that people tend to give extra effort when they feel that they are benefited in some ways, leading to a willingness to engage and fulfil the responsibilities of the company (Shilpakar et al., 2024). Three key components outline the principles guiding how companies should conduct their business responsibly (Vidaver-Cohen & Brønn, 2015). Firstly, a company can engage in honest and transparent business operations. Secondly, it should demonstrate genuine concern for the well-being of its stakeholders. Thirdly, the organization should aim to generate value for the broader community. Rather than limiting its focus to a particular stakeholder group, such as customers, it should consider the interests of all its stakeholders.

Lantos (2001) identified three distinct forms of corporate social responsibility: ethical, altruistic, and strategic. CSR based on moral values gives importance to the fact that a company is obligated to operate responsibly, and it should ensure that its activities do not cause harm or detrimental consequences. CSR shows a firm's real concern for the welfare of others, where selfless objectives guide efforts. As ecological problems and environmental-related risks persist, businesses are continuing to adopt the methods that keep a balance between economic performance, social responsibility, and ecological responsibility. CSR has evolved to be a key instrument for companies to address these challenges, incorporating environmental, social, and economic values in daily business practices. CSR initiatives are crucial in strengthening community engagement by integrating sustainability into organizational practices. Encouraging eco-friendly behavior among members, supporting employee participation in socially responsible projects, and advancing local environmental awareness campaigns are the initiatives that help businesses to strengthen their ties with stakeholders. These types of activities not only embrace the community welfare but also synchronize organizational goals with expanded sustainability plans (Rahman et al., 2024). No longer considered a willing effort, we can view CSR as a strategic necessity that upgrades corporate reputation, builds stakeholder trust, and promotes long-term sustainable growth.

The increasing force of environmental and climate challenges has led stakeholders to focus on sustainability and the efficient use of resources. Since its early recognition in 1924, CSR has directed corporate behavior by embedding social, environmental, and economic priorities into strategic planning. Businesses nowadays are expected to fulfil a dual mandate- achieving economic success while contributing positively to society and promoting development that aligns with environmental sustainability (Tomar et al., 2024). Identifying and handling the expectations of stakeholders enables companies to achieve a competitive edge (Chaudhary et al., 2024) by developing collaboration with customers and other partners, as well as encouraging interaction across different groups (Lusch et al., 2007; Brodie et al., 2006). Every investor in the group brings a different set of experiences to their interrelation with the main organization, advancing greater interest and collaboration (Antonacopoulou & Meric, 2005). The initiatives that have been taken in this mindset cover the production of goods and services that attract customers, creating job opportunities that engage

potential employees, and fostering strong relationships with firms that value and contribute financially to the community as responsible citizens (Freeman et al., 2004).

The focal firm can enhance its reputation by demonstrating an engagement in community-oriented actions and can view these behaviors as integral components of its marketing strategies (Sen et al., 2006). The positive impact of community-oriented actions and the negative consequences of violating CSR principles motivate most companies to not only focus on CSR concerns but also to diligently engage in social initiatives (Lai et al., 2010). One of the central themes that emerges from the CSR literature is the idea of representing a responsibility toward society (Clarkson, 1995); it is composed of organizational procedures driven by managerial oversight (Wood, 1991); it represents a responsibility toward stakeholders (Crane & Matten, 2004); and it is rooted in ethical considerations (Carroll, 1979). Given the business's access to resources, management capabilities, and financial assets, it is believed that it should play a role in addressing social problems (Davis, 1973). The economic environment also shapes the kinds of obligations businesses are expected to meet. Much of the existing CSR literature has been dedicated to conceptualizing this responsibility (Carroll, 1979), along with modern research on its practical application (Porter & Kramer, 2006), particularly in advanced nations. The concept of CSR, most frequently discussed and applied in developed nations, is of Carroll's pyramid (Crane & Matten, 2004). This model assesses the prominence of four functions – (1) economic, (2) legal, (3) ethical, and (4) philanthropic – that must be addressed sequentially. The legal and economic functions are grounded in the traditional social contract, making them “required” expectations of society. Meanwhile, the philanthropic and ethical functions represent the new social contract, with ethical responsibilities being “expected” and philanthropic responsibilities being “desired” (Carroll, 1999). According to Carroll (1991), corporate social responsibility comprises four interrelated dimensions: 1) Economic – the responsibility to be Profitable; 2) Legal – the obligation to comply with laws and regulations; 3) Ethical – the duty to conduct business in a morally acceptable manner; and 4) Philanthropic – the expectation to contribute to society and be a good corporate citizen.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a set of responsibilities organized in a hierarchical order of decreasing importance. The most essential and foundational accountability is economic, which emphasizes the necessity for a business to be profitable and financially sustainable. This serves as the basis upon which all other responsibilities rest. Legal responsibilities come next, requiring businesses to adhere to laws and regulations, as these reflect society's codified standards of right and wrong. Following this, ethical responsibilities involve actions and practices that, while not legally mandated, are expected by society as morally appropriate. At the highest level are philanthropic responsibilities, which are voluntary. These encourage organizations to act as good corporate citizens by contributing to community engagement and enhancing the overall quality of life. Collectively, this framework implies that businesses committed to CSR should aim to fulfill all these responsibilities concurrently, while recognizing the differing levels of societal expectation and obligation attached to each. Corporate philanthropy refers to the voluntary provision of resources, such as financial contributions, in-kind services, or employee involvement, by an organization to support charitable causes or initiatives to enhance community well-being (Kotler & Lee, 2008). Kotler and Lee (2008) note that community relations, community giving, corporate citizenship, and community affairs are often associated with philanthropy. While corporate philanthropy traditionally reflects charitable intent, it is increasingly being leveraged as a promotional strategy through cause-related marketing to enhance a company's brand or public image.

Despite this strategic use, such initiatives still represent only a small portion of corporate charitable contributions. Philanthropy, therefore, encompasses a wide range of philanthropic actions that follow a discernible strategy. In the corporate context, it typically implies a strategic alignment between the charitable initiative, the firm's core business operations, and its engagement with

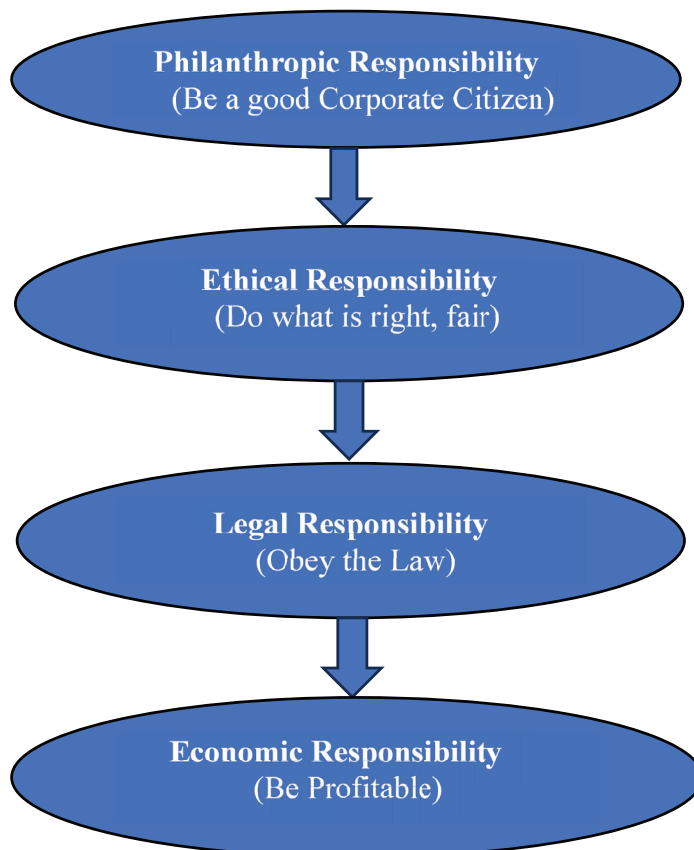
various stakeholder communities (Porter & Kramer, 2002). At its core, corporate social responsibility recognizes that businesses and society are closely connected, not separate. As a result, society places specific expectations on how businesses should act and what outcomes they should deliver (Wood, 1991, p. 695). The interconnection between business and society is a recurring theme across various CSR frameworks. Contemporary approaches to CSR increasingly focus on stakeholder-driven innovation that actively incorporates community participation to promote socially inclusive engagement (Lee, 2007).

The CSR's role in shaping business practices is growing and indicates a wider change in the perception of organizations regarding their stakes in society. In modern times, firms are not independent in operating their business, but they are obligated to follow rules and satisfy other bodies, such as society, government, communities, the global market, and the environment. With shifting expectations, CSR practices are progressively tailored to align corporate values with public interest, covering long-term stakeholder bonds. In addition, the incorporation of sustainability and ethical governance into strategic agendas reinforces the concept that responsible behavior contributes to both societal welfare and business sustainability. These efforts indicate that CSR not only functions as a reactive mechanism but also as a proactive approach to managing change, risk, and opportunity in an evolving global landscape.

Carroll (1991) CSR Pyramid

Figure 1

Carroll (1991) CSR Pyramid



Understanding Community: Dimensions, Social Capital, and Organizational Engagement

The idea of community includes several features depending on the condition and viewpoint. There are researchers Podnar and Jancic (2006), Harting et al. (2006), and Putnam (2000) who highlight the parameters such as geographical affiliation, national identity, shared activities, interests, and participation in digital networks. The definition of community can vary across disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science, and urban planning. However, for analytical clarity, it is useful to establish basic parameters, typically involving interaction, shared identity, and geographic location (Lee & Newby, 2012). Dunham and colleagues (2006) broaden the concept of community by categorizing it into various forms, including geographical communities, shared-interest groups, online advocacy networks, and professional or practice-based communities. Recognizing these various forms of community enables organizations to better manage their relationships with strategic stakeholders (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010; Vos & Schoemaker, 2011). A community, defined by various forms of interaction (either in-person or online), consists of individuals who form social connections, regardless of whether they live in the same location (Godwin, 2018). The significance of a community lies in its social capital, which includes a rational aspect that shapes shared standards and principles (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Failing to follow the social norms that guide relationship-building can harm a corporation's chances of establishing ongoing credibility (Anderson & Jack, 2002).

Cooke (2002) defines social capital as the expression of standards of reciprocity and trust between individuals and organizations that are incorporated in a structure of cooperation. Social capital contributes positively to community engagement and is often rooted in shared aspects such as cultural background, religious beliefs, or geographical closeness. Elements like trust, shared norms, and networks often strengthen one another over time, creating cycles that promote cooperation, social participation, mutual trust, and overall communal well-being. When businesses actively engage with communities, they can increase the existing levels of social capital.

Examining community in organizational contexts highlights its important role in stimulating innovation, strengthening employee involvement, and advancing CSR. Within contemporary organizations, communities serve as vital structures built on shared values and reciprocal support (Dziedzic, 2024). Organizations must be mindful of how their actions impact these communities and, in turn, the social capital present. They may also aim to strengthen this capital while simultaneously leveraging its benefits (Deigh et al., 2016). Therefore, for companies to engage meaningfully and establish themselves within the community, three main strategies of engagement are often considered suitable: collaboration, cooperation, and containment. Each approach serves distinct purposes and relies on varying methods, tools, and types of engagement. Efforts related to community relations such as financial donations, employee volunteering, locally focused programs, and partnerships with civic, professional, or nonprofit organizations tend to share several common features (Altman, 1997), including a commitment to the firm's moral and ethical responsibilities, delivering tangible economic advantages, fostering alignment and shared objectives between the organization and the community, acknowledging and fulfilling responsibilities toward various stakeholders, taking initiative through forward-looking and preventive measures, building collaborative partnerships that span different sectors, demonstrating strong, engaged leadership.

Hallahan (2004) explains that building a community involves bringing together individuals and the organizations they are part of into a working group that shares common or aligned objectives. From an organizational viewpoint, he outlines three stages in fostering community: engaging with the community, supporting its growth, and actively structuring or organizing it. In this framework, individuals and organizations collaborate to achieve

shared objectives. In contemporary organizations, collaborative communities are viewed as a strategic necessity for strengthening innovation, adaptability, and long-term resilience. Community involvement refers to an organization's engagement with existing causes or events, such as participating in local initiatives. Community nurturing focuses on enhancing the economic, social, political, and cultural strength of local areas through actions like sponsorships and volunteer efforts. Ultimately, managing the community involves creating local modern projects comparable to social movements, aimed at improving both the social and economic structure of communities.

Integrating CSR with Community Engagement: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Applications

Levy (1999) stated that social responsibility and corporate charity are positioned at the center of business practices. Ismail (2009) put forward the idea that the objective of CSR is to improve the social, environmental, and economic wellness of communities. CSR definitions commonly underscore their moral, ethical, and financial dimensions. The idea that business and society are interconnected rather than different is a repetitive focus in these definitions. However, as Birch and Moon (2004) point out, there is no universal approach to CSR. It covers a range of initiatives and policies that vary across corporations and their bonds with the communities they engage with. The main principle of CSR supports various theoretical approaches, including legitimacy theory. This theory suggests that a firm's actions are seen as valid within the framework of socially constructed norms. According to Campbell (2000), legitimacy theory proposes that organizations function in society following a validated or accepted social agreement. Stakeholder theory is broadly seen as one of the most important frameworks for understanding corporate social responsibility. (Moir, 2001). Stakeholder theory maintains that organizations have a responsibility to serve the welfare of individuals or groups who influence, or are influenced by, the organization's actions and results. These stakeholders can include shareholders, employees, consumers, and the broader society. Porter and Kramer (2002) emphasized that businesses should craft a corporate social agenda that aligns social priorities with strategic goals, allowing them to generate both societal and economic value by focusing on relevant social issues and key stakeholders. Wilson (1996) stated that beyond pursuing profits and upholding organizational values such as trust, respect, and human dignity, companies must demonstrate a genuine dedication to serving the community to effectively foster their development. Galloway and Lynn (2007) suggest that corporate community relations and CSR, often referred to as corporate citizenship, are key avenues through which public relations connect with communities. Within a company, public relations professionals are expected to play a central role in fostering communities around the organization's offerings. Since both CSR and public relations focus on strengthening an organization's image among key stakeholders, Clark (2000) argued that the two share similar objectives. Leeper and Leeper (2001) suggest a communitarian perspective, focusing on values like social cohesion, citizen empowerment, and shared responsibility to create a better society. Hahn et al. (2018) point out that examining CSR from the viewpoint of the community offers insights into how sustainability issues might be integrated into CSR, a topic that is frequently overlooked in CSR research.

Current systematic review highlights the growing emphasis of academicians on how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) align CSR practices with their communities (Oduro et al., 2024). SMEs working in less controlled sectors probably integrate CSR practices into their business models to create shared value, whereas firms in highly controlled industries, such as manufacturing, usually implement CSR mainly to follow legal requirements (Pillai et al., 2022). It indicates that a firm's contribution to social issues is naturally shaped by its specific

context (Nicoara & Kadile, 2024). Community engagement is progressively acknowledged as a fundamental part of CSR scholarship. Community engagement is highly integrated in the study of CSR initiatives (Barauskaite & Streimikiene, 2021). Community engagement can be seen as an important part of a firm's CSR journey, assisting shared value creation (Rudito et al., 2022).

Many dimensions of CSR have been investigated by previous studies. These studies also highlighted the impact of CSR on community development, indicating that CSR efforts positively contribute to the well-being and progress of communities. For example, there is a study conducted by Oppong (2016) that examined CSR practices in Ghana mentioning the widespread presence of CSR activities in several sectors such as telecommunication, banking, and extractive industries, particularly among foreign enterprises. These efforts mainly focus on education, healthcare, conservation of the environment, social entrepreneurship, and development of sports. It can be noted that CSR efforts were mainly visible in educational programs, mining, communities, athletic initiatives, and coastal areas adjacent to offshore oil and gas stations. A literature review has been conducted by Celik et al. (2019) on the contribution of CSR initiatives to community development. It revealed that the companies studied were involved in various CSR activities such as education, healthcare, and empowerment, which positively influence community development. Masum et al. (2020) employed an integrated literature review approach to test the impact of CSR on community development. Their studies highlighted a change from a profit-centered business model toward CSR practices that involve economic, environmental, and social dimensions. The impact of CSR on community development was visible across multiple areas, including the protection of the environment. Studies which have been conducted by Oppong (2016), Celik et al. (2019), and Masum et al. (2020) collectively indicate that CSR initiatives play a supportive role in fostering community development.

3. Method

In this study, a review-based methodology has been adopted based on secondary sources. This study explores the relationship between CSR and community engagement. This paper is formatted as a conceptual and narrative review. The focus of the paper is to synthesize observations from existing literature rather than conducting empirical investigation or thematic analysis. The base of this study includes a wide range of academic sources, including journal articles, academic books, theoretical papers, and reputed institutional publications. These sources were selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of CSR evolution, theoretical foundations, and its integration with community engagement practices. The literature reviewed involves key theories such as Carroll's pyramid of CSR, Stakeholder theory, legitimacy theory, and socially grounded perspectives, which offer multiple angles on how businesses engage with communities through socially responsible initiatives. This approach brings together insights from various contexts and fields of study, underscoring the moral, ethical, and strategic dimensions of CSR. The literature covers discussions on environmental responsibility, social capital, corporate charity, and the rising expectations placed on organizations by society. By synthesizing these insights, the study aims to present a clear picture of how CSR contributes to social development, mainly through community engagement and collaborative practices.

As the nature of this study is review-based, the methodology is naturally interpretative, aiming to integrate and frame the existing knowledge rather than generate new empirical data. This method supports the development of conceptual clarity and provides a foundation for future research and practice in the field of CSR and community relations.

4. Findings

This study derives meaning from a wide range of existing knowledge, uncovers several important findings into the evolving relationship between CSR and community engagement:

- CSR in evolving markets cannot be entirely explained through Western-framed models; instead, it requires approaches that are rooted in local traditions and cultural practices that integrate community values, traditions, and social and economic realities.
- Engaging with communities is central to CSR, as it ensures that initiatives are accepted, trusted, and capable of creating long-lasting positive change.
- CSR planning overlooks the importance of social capital, which includes trust, reciprocity, and shared norms. Making social capital a central part of CSR efforts can transform symbolic projects into sustainable and collaborative partnerships.
- Findings suggest that a company should not perform CSR practices that are inconsistent, random, and not connected to the objectives of the firm. This may result in the distrust of communities towards the company. This shows that CSR efforts need to be planned carefully and aligned with the company's main mission.
- CSR is shifting from just following the rules or doing the minimum to actively involving the community, which is found to be essential for companies to be more flexible, innovative, and continue growing in the future.
- This review points out a new area for research. It looks at CSR practices that are adapted to local communities and developed together with them in countries like India. These practices can expand current CSR theories and new opportunities for research in the global understandings of CSR.

5. Discussion

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a mechanism for sustainable business, but its integration with community engagement continues to vary across different contexts. Carroll's (1991, 1999) model says that companies have different levels of responsibility. First, to make money, which refers to the economic responsibility; second, to follow the rules, which is a legal responsibility; third, to do what is right, which is an ethical responsibility; and last, to give back to society, which is a philanthropic responsibility. On the other hand, Porter and Kramer (2002, 2006) view CSR as a way for companies to create benefits for both the business and society at the same time, which they call shared value. This study shows that CSR works best when it fits local culture and actively involves the community. Unlike Carroll's and Porter & Kramer's model, which focus mainly on Western contexts, this paper emphasizes that in countries like India, getting the community involved and building trust is what makes CSR initiatives credible and effective. Previous studies show unclear or inconsistent results about whether CSR really helps improve the well-being of communities. Oppong (2016) and Celik et al. (2019) found that CSR projects in education and healthcare actually improved social well-being, while Deigh et al. (2016) and Clark (2000) noted that many CSR programs are mostly for show and mainly help improve a company's image. This review agrees with Oppong and Celik and shows that CSR can truly help society when companies include the ideas and needs of the community while planning their programs. It also agrees with Deigh et al. (2016) that if CSR does not fit the local culture or involve the community, it can end up being shallow and not make a real difference. Oduro et al. (2024) and Pillai et al. (2022) found that how much a company does CSR activities depends on its size and the type of industry it belongs to. This paper shows that small

and medium-sized companies in developing countries include CSR naturally in how they work with local people, while big companies mostly do it to follow rules. So, how well CSR works depends on the situation, the company's purpose, and how much it involves the community. In short, CSR and community engagement help each other. When companies and communities work together, CSR is not just about giving money. It helps build trust, respect, and lasting development.

6. Conclusion

CSR is now an important way for companies to include sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility in their work. But many studies still see community engagement as a side issue, ignoring how it can make CSR more real and effective instead of just for show. This is especially important in developing countries, where global models do not always fit local needs. So, more thinking and research are needed to understand how CSR can become more inclusive and better suited to local situations.

This review demonstrates that CSR works best when companies listen to the community, build trust and cooperation, and meet local needs. When CSR is based on real communication and participation, it helps create trust, respect, and lasting growth that benefits everyone. Ideas like Carroll's Pyramid, stakeholder theory, and legitimacy theory help explain how companies can do well in business while also doing good for society. These theories say that profit and social responsibility can go hand in hand. This study adds to the discussion on CSR in three main ways: First, it shows that CSR should fit local cultures and be created together with communities, not just follow Western ideas. Second, it says that community engagement should be at the heart of CSR, not just an extra part. It is both smart and the right thing to do. Third, it encourages future research to explore how working with communities through CSR can build trust, cooperation, and long-term success in different places.

Companies are moving away from focusing only on profit to creating value that benefits both business and society. In this new way of thinking, community engagement is not just a duty, but it is a chance for companies to build stronger relationships, help communities grow, and shape a more responsible future for business.

7. Implications

Theoretically, Community engagement is an essential part of CSR, not just a side activity. Recognizing this helps make CSR research clearer and challenges ideas based on Western experiences. Practically, it highlights that managers should design participatory, context-sensitive initiatives to build trust and long-term value. Policymakers can encourage localized frameworks that reward authentic engagement, while investors and consumers can view such CSR as an indicator of accountability and resilience. Together, these insights underscore that CSR aligned with community engagement fosters not only corporate credibility but also inclusive development.

8. Limitations and Scope for Future Research

This study is conceptual and based on secondary sources, limiting empirical validation. Its focus on emerging markets, particularly India, may restrict broader generalizability. Future research should test these propositions using case studies, surveys, or structural equation modeling to capture community perspectives. Comparative cross-country analyses can reveal

how institutional and cultural contexts shape CSR-engagement linkages. Further, emerging forces such as digital transformation and circular economy practices merit exploration for their potential to deepen participatory CSR. Addressing these directions will enrich understanding of how CSR can evolve into a sustainable, co-created process.

Conflict of Interest

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

References

- Abbas, J. (2024). Does the nexus of corporate social responsibility and green dynamic capabilities drive firms toward green technological innovation? The moderating role of green transformational leadership. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 208, 123698.
- Abbas, J. (2025). From corporate social responsibility to human social responsibility: A pathway for a sustainable society. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 494, 144979.
- Aguinis, H., Rupp, D. E., & Glavas, A. (2024). Corporate social responsibility and individual behavior. *Nature Human Behavior*, 8(2), 219-227.
- Al Frijat, Y. S., Albawwat, I. E., & Elamer, A. A. (2024). Exploring the mediating role of corporate social responsibility in the connection between board competence and corporate financial performance amidst global uncertainties. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 31(2), 1079-1095.
- Altman, B. W. (1997). Corporation Community Relations in the 1990's: A study in Transformation. *Unpublished dissertation, Boston University School of Management, Boston, MA.*
- Anderson, A. R., & Jack, S. L. (2002). The articulation of social capital in entrepreneurial networks: a glue or a lubricant? *Entrepreneurship & regional development*, 14(3), 193-210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985620110112079>
- Antonacopoulou, E. P., & Méric, J. (2005). A critique of stake-holder theory: management science or a sophisticated ideology of control? *Corporate Governance: The international journal of business in society*, 5(2), 22-33. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14720700510562631>
- Barauskaite, G., & Streimikiene, D. (2021). Corporate social responsibility and financial performance of companies: The puzzle of concepts, definitions and assessment methods. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 28(1), 278-287. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2048>
- Birch, D., & Moon, J. (2004). Introduction: JCC theme issue: corporate social responsibility in Asia. *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, 13, 18-24.
- Brodie, R. J., Glynn, M. S., & Little, V. (2006). The service brand and the service-dominant logic: missing fundamental premise or the need for stronger theory? *Marketing theory*, 6(3), 363-379. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593106066797>
- Campbell, D. J. (2000, March). Legitimacy theory or managerial reality construction? Corporate social disclosure in Marks and Spencer Plc corporate reports, 1969–1997. In *Accounting forum*, 24(1), 80-100).

- Carroll, A. B. (1979). A three-dimensional conceptual model of corporate performance. *Academy of management review*, 4(4), 497-505. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1979.4498296>
- Carroll, A. B. (1991). The pyramid of corporate social responsibility: Toward the moral management of organizational stakeholders. *Business horizons*, 34(4), 39-48.
- Carroll, A. B. (1999). Corporate social responsibility: Evolution of a definitional construct. *Business & society*, 38(3), 268-295. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000765039903800303>
- Celik, A., Abdul-Kareem, A., & Yilmaz, H. U. (2019). The impact of corporate social responsibility on community development: Evidence from Ghana. *Global Journal of Business, Economics and Management: Current Issues*, 9(3), 122-133.
- Chaudhary, M. K., Neupane, K., Dhungana, M., & Giri, B. (2024). Emotional Intelligence as a Strategic Driver of Competitive Advantage and Service Quality in the Banking Industry. *International Research Journal of MMC (IRJMMC)*, 5(4), 134-146. <https://doi.org/10.3126/irjmmc.v5i4.70826>
- Clark, C. E. (2000). Differences between public relations and corporate social responsibility: An analysis. *Public relations review*, 26(3), 363-380. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(00\)00053-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(00)00053-9)
- Clarkson, M. E. (1995). A stakeholder framework for analyzing and evaluating corporate social performance. *Academy of management review*, 20(1), 92-117. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1995.9503271994>
- Cooke, P. (2002). *Knowledge economies: Clusters, learning and cooperative advantage*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203445402>
- Crane, A., & Matten, D. (2004). *Business ethics: a European perspective; managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. Oxford University Press.
- Davis, K. (1973). The case for and against business assumption of social responsibilities. *Academy of Management journal*, 16(2), 312-322. <https://doi.org/10.5465/255331>
- Deb, B. C., Rahman, M. M., & Haseeb, M. (2024). Unveiling the impact on corporate social responsibility through green tax and green financing: a PLS-SEM approach. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 31(1), 1543-1561.
- Deigh, L., Farquhar, J., Palazzo, M., & Siano, A. (2016). Corporate social responsibility: engaging the community. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 19(2), 225-240. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-02-2016-0010>
- Dunham, L., Freeman, R. E., & Liedtka, J. (2006). Enhancing stakeholder practice: A particularized exploration of community. *Business ethics quarterly*, 16(1), 23-42. <https://doi.org/10.5840/beq20061611>
- Dziedzic, J. J. (2024). Rethinking Community in Organizations: Dynamics and Identity. *Journal of Intercultural Management*, 16(4), 95-111. <https://doi-org.iimjlibrary.remotexs.in/10.2478/joim-2024-0015>.
- Freeman, R. E., Wicks, A. C., & Parmar, B. (2004). Stakeholder theory and the corporate objective revisited. *Organization science*, 15(3), 364-369. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1040.0066>
- Fu, Q., Abbas, J., Alarif, G. B., Sial, M. S., Brugni, T. V., & Adamwal, N. (2023). I act in an environmentally responsible fashion since my firm is socially responsible: A pathway for transition to a responsible society. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 414, 137523.

- Galloway, C., & Lynn, M. (2007). Public relations and climate change impacts: Developing a collaborative response.
- Godwin, R. K. (2018). Money, technology, and political interests: The direct marketing of politics. In *The politics of interests* (pp. 308-325). Routledge.
- Hahn, T., Figge, F., Pinkse, J., & Preuss, L. (2018). A paradox perspective on corporate sustainability: Descriptive, instrumental, and normative aspects. *Journal of business ethics*, 148, 235-248. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3587-2>
- Hallahan, K. (2004). "Community" as a foundation for public relations theory and practice. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 28(1), 233-279. DOI: [10.1080/23808985.2004.11679037](https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2004.11679037)
- Harting, T. R., Harmeling, S. S., & Venkataraman, S. (2006). Innovative stakeholder relations: When "ethics pays" (and when it doesn't). *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 16(1), 43-68. DOI: [10.5840/beq20061612](https://doi.org/10.5840/beq20061612)
- Ismail, M. (2009). Corporate social responsibility and its role in community development: An international perspective. *Journal of International Social Research*, 2(9).
- Kotler, P., & Lee, N. (2008). *Corporate social responsibility: Doing the most good for your company and your cause*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Lai, C. S., Chiu, C. J., Yang, C. F., & Pai, D. C. (2010). The effects of corporate social responsibility on brand performance: The mediating effect of industrial brand equity and corporate reputation. *Journal of business ethics*, 95, 457-469. DOI: 10.1007/s10551-010-0433-1
- Lantos, G. P. (2001). The boundaries of strategic corporate social responsibility. *Journal of consumer marketing*, 18(7), 595-632. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07363760110410281>
- Lee, D., & Newby, H. (2012). *The problem of sociology*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203993576>
- Lee, K. H. (2007). Corporate social responsiveness in the Korean electronics industry. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 14(4), 219-230. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.163>
- Leeper, R. V., & Leeper, K. A. (2001). Public relations as "practice:" applying the theory of Alasdair MacIntyre. *Public Relations Review*, 27(4), 461-473. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(01\)00101-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(01)00101-1)
- Levy, R. (1999). *Give and take*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Luoma-aho, V., & Vos, M. (2009). Monitoring the complexities: Nuclear power and public opinion. *Public Relations Review*, 35(2), 120-122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.01.013>
- Luoma-aho, V., & Vos, M. (2010). Towards a more dynamic stakeholder model: acknowledging multiple issue arenas. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 15(3), 315-331.
- Lusch, R. F., Vargo, S. L., & O'Brien, M. (2007). Competing through service: Insights from service-dominant logic. *Journal of retailing*, 83(1), 5-18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2006.10.002>
- Masum, A., Aziz, H. H. H. A. A., & Hassan, M. (2020). Corporate social responsibility and its effect on community development: An overview. *Journal of Accounting Science*, 22(1), 35-40.
- Moir, L. (2001). What do we mean by corporate social responsibility? *Corporate Governance: The international journal of business in society*, 1(2), 16-22. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM00000000005486>

- Nahapiet, J., & Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage. *Academy of management review*, 23(2), 242-266. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1998.533225>
- Nicoara, C., & Kadile, V. (2024). Drivers and outcomes of CSR engagement in UK SMES. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 62(6), 2806-2846.
- Odoro, S., Bruno, L., & Maccario, G. (2024). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in SMEs: what we know, what we don't know, and what we should know. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 36(2), 207-238.
- Oppong, S. (2016). Corporate social responsibility in the Ghanaian context. *Key initiatives in corporate social responsibility: Global dimensions of CSR in corporate entities*, 419-442.
- Pillai, R. D., Wang, P., & Kuah, A. T. (2022). Unlocking corporate social responsibility in smaller firms: Compliance, conviction, burden, or opportunity? *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 64(6), 627-646.
- Podnar, K., & Jancic, Z. (2006). Towards a categorization of stakeholder groups: an empirical verification of a three-level model. *Journal of marketing communications*, 12(4), 297-308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527260600720376>
- Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2002). The competitive advantage of corporate philanthropy. *Harvard business review*, 80(12), 56-68.
- Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2006). The link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility. *Harvard business review*, 84(12), 78-92.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and schuster.
- Rahman, M. M., Islam, M. F., Dyuti, T. I., & Hossain, M. E. (2024). Driving net zero emissions through green finance, green logistics, and corporate social responsibility: findings from PLS-SEM approach. *Discover Sustainability*, 5(1), 439.
- Rudito, B., Famiola, M., & Anggahegari, P. (2022). Corporate social responsibility and social capital: journey of community engagement toward community empowerment program in developing country. *Sustainability*, 15(1), 466. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15010466>.
- Sen, S., Bhattacharya, C. B., & Korschun, D. (2006). The role of corporate social responsibility in strengthening multiple stakeholder relationships: A field experiment. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing science*, 34(2), 158-166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070305284978>
- Seth, S. (2014). Equivocal advocacy of environmental ethics and sustainability via human resource management. *The Social ION*, 3(2), 88-99.
- Shilpakar, N., Giri, B., & Pokhrel, S. K. (2024). Flexible working arrangements and employee turnover intention: Mediating role of employee engagement. *SAIM Journal of Social Science and Technology*, 1(1), 27-39. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13576403>
- Tomar, L., Seth, S., Pathan, M. I., Yadav, P., & Mahato, M. K. (2024). Green Investments and Corporate Social Responsibility: Driving Forces for Sustainable Business Growth. *Economic Sciences*, 20(2), 329-337. <https://doi.org/10.69889/eh76b457>
- Vidaver-Cohen, D., & Brønn, P. S. (2015). Reputation, responsibility, and stakeholder support in Scandinavian firms: A comparative analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 127, 49-64.

- Vos, M., & Schoemaker, H. (2011). *Integrated communication: concern, internal and marketing communication*. Vos & Schoemaker.
- Wilson, P. A. (1996). Empowerment: Community economic development from the inside out. *Urban Studies*, 33(4-5), 617-630.
- Wood, D. J. (1991). Corporate social performance revisited. *Academy of management review*, 16(4), 691-718.