

Enhancing Corporate Social Responsibility (Csr) Communication and Stakeholder Engagement: Strategies for Building Trust and Fostering Social Impact

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ABSTRACT

This concept paper examines the challenges and opportunities associated with corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication and stakeholder engagement in contemporary business environments. As organizations face increasing expectations to address social and environmental concerns, effective CSR communication has become a strategic priority. However, its implementation remains constrained by several factors, including limited knowledge of CSR sustainability practices, inadequate public relations competencies, low levels of employee commitment, and growing public skepticism toward corporate motives. This paper proposes a conceptual framework that integrates key dimensions influencing the effectiveness of CSR communication. It highlights social media as a strategic platform for disseminating CSR messages and engaging stakeholders, while emphasizing the relationship between CSR initiatives and organizational citizenship behavior. In addition, the framework underscores the importance of transparent, consistent, and credible communication channels in building trust and reducing skepticism among stakeholders. By synthesizing existing literature, this paper provides a structured understanding of how organizations can enhance CSR communication strategies to foster meaningful stakeholder engagement and positive social impact. The proposed framework contributes to the CSR literature by identifying key variables and relationships that warrant further empirical investigation. It also offers practical insights for organizations seeking to strengthen trust, improve communication effectiveness, and align CSR practices with stakeholder expectations.

Keywords: *Corporate Social Responsibilities, Stakeholder engagement*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to a company's voluntary efforts to operate sustainably while considering economic, social, and environmental responsibilities. CSR includes activities that go beyond legal requirements, such as community service, environmental protection, and ethical business practices. According to Schaefer, Terlutter, and Diehl (2019), CSR has become an important business strategy, as organizations are expected to respond to the needs of various stakeholder groups. Similarly, Carroll (1991) describes CSR as a framework encompassing economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities toward society. This shows that CSR is no longer optional but has become an essential part of modern business operations.

In today's global environment, organisations face increasing pressure from stakeholders such as customers, employees, governments, and communities to behave responsibly. Stakeholder theory suggests that organisations must consider the interests of all stakeholders in their decision-making processes (Freeman, 1984). Many companies now integrate CSR into their core strategies to improve reputation, gain a competitive advantage, and ensure long-term sustainability (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). CSR is also closely related to corporate image and brand value, as stakeholders are more likely to support organisations that demonstrate ethical and responsible behaviour (Fatma et al., 2015). Therefore, CSR is not only about social contribution but also about creating value for both businesses and society.

CSR programs commonly involve charitable donations, employee volunteerism, and environmental sustainability initiatives. These activities allow individuals to contribute to society either through direct participation or indirect support, such as donating money or goods (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004). For example, organisations may organise community outreach programs, support educational activities, or adopt environmentally friendly practices to reduce their environmental impact. This flexibility shows that CSR offers various ways for organisations and individuals to support social causes while strengthening stakeholder relationships.

Furthermore, CSR plays an important role in shaping social values, especially among younger generations. When individuals observe positive actions such as charity work and environmental care, they are more likely to develop similar attitudes and behaviours. CSR activities can influence public perception and encourage pro-social behaviour among stakeholders (Lee et al., 2013). In addition, CSR initiatives that are communicated effectively can enhance trust and improve stakeholder relationships (Du et al., 2010). This is particularly relevant in the digital era, where information is widely shared through social media platforms. As a result, CSR not only benefits organisations but also contributes to building a more responsible and caring society.

Despite its importance, the implementation of CSR still faces several challenges. Some organisations lack sufficient knowledge and expertise in managing CSR initiatives effectively. In certain cases, CSR is used mainly as a marketing tool rather than a genuine effort to create social impact, which may lead to public scepticism (Kim & Ferguson, 2014). In addition, limited skills within public relations teams may affect how CSR messages are communicated to stakeholders (Schaefer et al., 2019). Poor communication can reduce the effectiveness of CSR initiatives and weaken stakeholder trust.

Another important issue is employee involvement in CSR programs. Employees play a key role in the success of CSR activities, as their participation can influence the outcomes of such initiatives. However, not all employees are motivated to engage in CSR activities, especially when there is a lack of awareness or alignment with personal values. Employee perception of CSR has been shown to influence organisational citizenship behaviour and engagement (Lee et al., 2013). Therefore, organisations need to create a supportive environment that encourages employee participation and promotes shared responsibility.

In addition, the rise of social media has changed the way CSR information is communicated and received. While social media provides opportunities for organisations to share CSR activities, it also exposes them to public criticism if their actions are not consistent with their messages. Transparency and consistency are important factors in maintaining stakeholder trust (Du et al., 2010). This highlights the need for effective CSR communication strategies that are honest and credible.

Although previous studies have discussed CSR practices and their benefits, there remains limited understanding of how CSR communication influences stakeholder trust and engagement, particularly in developing countries. This indicates a research gap that requires further investigation. Therefore, this study aims to examine how CSR communication can enhance stakeholder engagement and reduce public scepticism. It also explores the role of social media, employee involvement, and communication transparency in improving CSR effectiveness. The findings are expected to provide useful insights to help organisations strengthen their CSR strategies and contribute positively to society.

In recent years, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become increasingly important due to global challenges such as globalisation, labour exploitation, environmental issues, and unethical business practices (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Governments alone are often unable to address all social and environmental problems, thereby increasing expectations for businesses to contribute positively to society. As a result, organisations are expected to adopt CSR practices that go beyond profit-making and support sustainable development. However, despite this growing importance, many organisations still face difficulties in effectively implementing CSR initiatives.

One major issue is the lack of knowledge and experience in CSR sustainability practices. Some organisations do not fully understand how to design and manage CSR activities in a meaningful way, which may lead to unethical behaviour or superficial CSR efforts. This situation can reduce the overall impact of CSR and create negative perceptions among stakeholders. In addition, the role of communication in CSR implementation is often overlooked. Social media has become an important platform for sharing CSR information and engaging stakeholders (Du et al., 2010). However, many organisations, particularly their public relations (PR) teams, lack the necessary skills to communicate CSR activities effectively. The relationship between PR practices and CSR communication remains poorly understood, limiting organisations' ability to build strong connections with the public (Schaefer et al., 2019).

Another challenge relates to employee involvement in CSR activities. Employees play an important role in supporting CSR initiatives, but not all employees show high levels of commitment and engagement. Previous studies have found a positive relationship between CSR and organisational citizenship behaviour (Lee et al., 2013). However, some employees remain unclear about their roles in CSR activities, which reduces their motivation and participation. This can weaken the effectiveness of CSR programs within organisations.

Furthermore, increasing public scepticism toward CSR initiatives presents another major challenge. Many stakeholders question whether CSR activities are genuine or merely used for marketing purposes, a phenomenon often referred to as “greenwashing” (Du et al., 2010). This scepticism makes it more difficult for organisations to gain public trust and support. Although CSR communication is important for building trust, there is still a limited understanding of the most effective communication strategies to reduce scepticism and improve stakeholder engagement.

Therefore, there is a need to examine how organisations can improve CSR communication, strengthen employee involvement, and build trust among stakeholders. Addressing these issues is important to ensure that CSR initiatives are not only implemented effectively but also contribute to meaningful social impact and organisational sustainability.

1.3 Research Question

RQ1: What is the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices and employees’ organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour?

RQ2: How does corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication influence stakeholder trust and reduce public scepticism?

RQ3: What is the role of public relations and social media in enhancing the effectiveness of CSR communication?

1.4 Research Objective

RO1: To examine the relationship between CSR practices and employees’ organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour.

RO2: To investigate the effect of CSR communication on stakeholder trust and public scepticism.

RO3: To analyse the role of public relations and social media in improving CSR communication effectiveness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Organisational Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an increasingly important concept in contemporary business practices, particularly in the context of sustainable development and stakeholder engagement. CSR is generally understood as voluntary corporate activities that integrate economic, social, and environmental concerns into business operations beyond mere compliance with legal obligations (Carroll, 1991; Hamid et al., 2022). Carroll's (1991) CSR pyramid remains one of the most widely accepted frameworks, outlining four key dimensions of responsibility: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic. This framework suggests that firms are expected not only to generate profits but also to operate ethically and contribute positively to society.

Over time, the concept of CSR has evolved from a primarily philanthropic orientation to a more strategic and integrated business approach. Contemporary studies indicate that CSR plays a significant role in enhancing stakeholder relationships, strengthening corporate reputation, and supporting sustainable competitive advantage (Fernández-Gago & Cabeza-García, 2020; Cuervo-Carabel & Repiso, 2023). In addition, empirical and review-based evidence suggests that CSR practices can positively influence organisational performance and firm value, particularly in environments characterised by intense competition and increased stakeholder awareness (Nustini et al., 2024; Lysenko & Musa, 2022). Consequently, CSR is now widely regarded as a critical component of modern business strategy and long-term organisational sustainability.

2.2 CSR Communication

CSR communication refers to the processes through which organisations convey information about their social responsibility initiatives to various stakeholders. It plays a crucial role in enhancing transparency, building awareness, and shaping stakeholder perceptions of organisational legitimacy (Kim, 2019; Jiang et al., 2022). Effective CSR communication enables organisations to maximise the outcomes of CSR activities by strengthening stakeholder engagement, trust, and relational quality.

In recent years, digital platforms, particularly social media, have become essential tools for CSR communication. These platforms allow organisations to disseminate real-time information and engage interactively with stakeholders. However, research indicates that ineffective or inconsistent communication can lead to stakeholder scepticism and reduced credibility (Saputra & Hanutama, 2025; Jiang et al., 2022). Furthermore, internal CSR communication is equally important, as employees' perceptions of communicated CSR messages significantly influence their attitudes and engagement with the organisation (Jiang & Luo, 2024). Therefore, the effectiveness of CSR communication depends not only on message content but also on clarity, consistency, and perceived authenticity.

2.3 Stakeholder Trust and Public Scepticism

Stakeholder trust represents a critical outcome of effective CSR practices and communication. It reflects stakeholders' confidence in an organisation's integrity, transparency, and commitment to social responsibility. Empirical studies demonstrate that well-communicated CSR initiatives can enhance trust by improving organisational reputation and fostering positive stakeholder relationships (Lee et al., 2019; Luo et al., 2023). High levels of trust are associated with increased loyalty, engagement, and long-term organisational success.

Despite these benefits, public scepticism toward CSR remains a significant challenge. Stakeholders often question the authenticity of CSR initiatives, particularly when communication appears exaggerated or inconsistent with actual practices. This scepticism, commonly linked to perceptions of "greenwashing," can negatively impact corporate reputation (Kim,

2019; Roy, 2024). Research suggests that unclear, one-sided, or overly promotional CSR messages tend to increase scepticism among stakeholders. Therefore, organisations must ensure that CSR communication is transparent, fact-based, and aligned with genuine organisational practices to reduce scepticism and enhance credibility.

2.4 Employee Commitment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

Employees are key internal stakeholders whose attitudes and behaviours significantly influence the success of CSR initiatives. Organisational commitment refers to the emotional attachment and loyalty employees feel toward their organisation. Studies show that when employees perceive CSR activities as genuine and meaningful, they are more likely to develop stronger commitment and organisational identification (George et al., 2021; Chatzopoulou & Manolopoulos, 2022).

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) involves voluntary actions that go beyond formal job requirements, such as assisting colleagues and supporting organisational goals. CSR initiatives have been found to positively influence OCB by fostering shared values and a sense of purpose among employees (Servaes et al., 2023; Carlini & Grace, 2021). Moreover, authentic CSR practices and effective internal communication further strengthen these outcomes by enhancing employees' trust and engagement. Thus, CSR contributes not only to external reputation but also to improved internal organisational performance.

2.5 Role of Public Relations and Social Media

Public relations (PR) plays a vital role in managing and delivering CSR communication. PR strategies are responsible for ensuring that CSR messages are clear, accurate, and aligned with organisational values. Effective PR practices contribute to building strong relationships with stakeholders and enhancing corporate reputation (Lee et al., 2019; Ashraf et al., 2022).

The emergence of social media has transformed CSR communication by enabling interactive and immediate engagement with stakeholders. Organisations can use these platforms to share CSR initiatives, gather feedback, and address stakeholder concerns in real time. However, the increased transparency associated with social media also exposes organisations to greater public scrutiny. Any inconsistency between communicated CSR claims and actual practices can lead to reputational risks and stakeholder distrust (Sareen & Mahajan, 2025). Therefore, organisations must ensure that their CSR communication through social media is honest, consistent, and aligned with their actions.

2.6 Research Gap and Hypotheses Development

Despite extensive research on CSR, several gaps remain. First, few studies have simultaneously examined the dual effects of CSR communication on stakeholder trust and public scepticism, particularly in developing-country contexts (Saputra & Hanutama, 2025; Roy, 2024). Second, although employee-related outcomes such as organisational commitment and OCB have been widely studied, the combined influence of CSR practices and communication on these variables requires further investigation (George et al., 2021). Third, the role of public relations and social media as integrated mechanisms to enhance the effectiveness of CSR communication remains underexplored in the existing literature.

To address these gaps, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- **H1:** CSR practices have a positive relationship with employees' organisational commitment.
- **H2:** CSR practices have a positive relationship with organisational citizenship behaviour.
- **H3:** CSR communication has a positive effect on stakeholder trust.
- **H4:** CSR communication has a negative effect on public scepticism.
- **H5:** Public relations and social media positively influence the effectiveness of CSR communication.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships between corporate social responsibility (CSR), employee behaviour, and stakeholder outcomes. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, as it allows for data collection at a single point in time and is appropriate for testing relationships among variables in social science research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The target population consists of employees working in organisations that implement CSR activities. Employees were selected because they play a key role in supporting CSR initiatives and influencing organisational outcomes such as commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour (Lee et al., 2013). Due to accessibility and time constraints, a convenience sampling technique was applied, which is commonly used in business research (Saunders et al., 2019). A sample size of approximately 150 to 300 respondents was considered sufficient for statistical analysis and hypothesis testing.

Data may be collected using a structured questionnaire distributed via online platforms such as Google Forms and email. The questionnaire included demographic questions and measurement items for the study variables. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), a widely used format for measuring attitudes and perceptions in social research (Likert, 1932).

The variables examined in this study include CSR practices, CSR communication, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), stakeholder trust, public scepticism, and the role of public relations and social media. Measurement items were adapted from established studies to ensure validity and reliability (Du et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2013).

Future empirical testing may use the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and SmartPLS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise respondent characteristics, while reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). In addition, correlation and regression analyses, as well as structural equation modelling (SEM), were applied to test the proposed hypotheses and examine the relationships among variables.

To ensure data quality, a pilot test involving 20 to 30 respondents was conducted before the main data collection. Construct validity was assessed using factor analysis, and reliability values above 0.70 were considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2019).

Ethical considerations were also addressed in this study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research. All responses were kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

4. CONCLUSION

This concept paper proposed the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in modern business environments, with a particular focus on CSR communication, employee behaviour, and stakeholder outcomes. As organisations are increasingly expected to address social and environmental issues, CSR has become a strategic tool for achieving both business sustainability and positive societal impact. However, several challenges remain, including limited knowledge of CSR practices, ineffective communication strategies, low employee engagement, and growing public scepticism toward CSR initiatives.

The paper highlights the critical role of CSR communication in influencing stakeholder trust and reducing scepticism. It also emphasises the importance of employee commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) in supporting the success of CSR initiatives. In addition, public relations and social media are identified as important factors in enhancing the effectiveness of CSR communication. These elements are integrated into a conceptual framework that explains the relationships between CSR practices, communication strategies, and organisational outcomes.

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing a structured understanding of key variables that influence CSR effectiveness. It also identifies important research gaps, particularly in CSR communication and stakeholder perceptions in developing contexts. Future research is recommended to empirically test the proposed framework and examine these relationships in different organisational settings.

In conclusion, organisations need to adopt a more strategic and transparent approach to CSR to build trust, improve employee engagement, and achieve meaningful social impact. Effective CSR implementation and communication are essential for long-term organisational success and sustainable development.

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