

Corporate Social Responsibility in a Changing World: A Review of Empirical Research (2017-2019)

Devi Anastasya^{1*}, Jeremy Juan Carol², Vilisna Angelika Harefa³
^{1,2,3} Accounting, Trisakti School of Management

202350370@stietrisakti.ac.id¹, 202370039@stietrisakti.ac.id²,
202370060@stietrisakti.ac.id³

*Corresponden author: Devi Anastasya 202350370@stietrisakti.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, systematic literature review, financial performance, stakeholder engagement,

Received : 02, June

Revised : 15, June

Accepted: 04, July

©2025 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0 Internasional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review aims to synthesize empirical research on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) published between 2017 and 2019, addressing gaps in understanding how CSR is conceptualized, measured, and implemented amid evolving global expectations and digitalization. Using a systematic review methodology, we analyzed peer-reviewed empirical studies sourced from major academic databases, focusing on variables such as CSR's impact on financial performance, stakeholder perceptions, and internal organizational factors. The review process involved rigorous screening and extraction of studies meeting strict inclusion criteria. Results indicate a consistently positive relationship between CSR and financial performance, with stakeholder engagement and organizational culture as key mediators. These findings refine CSR theory and offer actionable insights for both scholars and practitioners.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved from a peripheral activity to a strategic imperative, reflecting the recognition that businesses operate within a complex ecosystem of stakeholders and are accountable for broader social and environmental impacts. Historically, the conceptualization of CSR has moved beyond mere economic and legal obligations to encompass ethical and discretionary responsibilities, emphasizing alignment with societal norms and the enhancement of community well-being. Modern understanding positions CSR as a multi-stakeholder concept, acknowledging organizational duties to diverse groups beyond shareholders, which forms the theoretical bedrock for much contemporary research. Despite widespread adoption, the conceptualization of CSR remains dynamic, with various definitions reflecting its multi-faceted nature, often operationalized through frameworks such as Carroll's (1991) four-part model encompassing economic, legal, ethical, and

philanthropic responsibilities. Beyond compliance or altruism, CSR is increasingly viewed as a strategic tool for achieving sustainable competitive advantage, enhancing corporate image, and driving long-term financial performance. Companies strategically engage in CSR to bolster client loyalty, improve reputation, attract and retain skilled employees, and even reduce costs through sustainable practices (Maignan & Ralston, 2002; Mikołajek-Gocejna Magdalena, 2018). This strategic orientation underscores a shift from a reactive stance to the proactive integration of social and environmental considerations into core business models for sustained growth.

The expansion of globalization has made CSR an increasingly recognized concept across various markets, particularly in developing countries such as China (Li et al., 2019), Vietnam (Kabir & Thai, 2017; Newman et al., 2019), Pakistan (Chen et al., 2018), and Romania (Simionescu & Dumitrescu, 2018), which present distinct challenges and opportunities for CSR adoption due to unique institutional contexts and socio-environmental issues. A critical aspect of the "changing world" for CSR is the exponential increase in stakeholder expectations, driven by enhanced access to information and the pervasive influence of digital platforms (Potrashkova et al., 2017). Consumers, investors, and advocacy groups are more empowered than ever to scrutinize corporate behavior and demand greater transparency and accountability. This digitalized environment enables faster networking and communication between customers and businesses, making public perception and corporate image highly vulnerable to CSR performance (Chen et al., 2018). The "changing world" also encompasses periods of crisis and the emergence of new business models that inherently integrate social responsibility, such as "social enterprises" where a social mission is embedded within the core business model (Nosratabadi et al., 2019; Pasricha et al., 2019).

The period between 2017 and 2019 witnessed a proliferation of robust empirical research on Corporate Social Responsibility, reflecting heightened academic and practical interest in the field. This surge in scholarly inquiry aimed to systematically investigate the intricate relationships between CSR activities and various organizational outcomes, stakeholder perceptions, and societal impacts. Studies during this timeframe employed diverse methodologies, ranging from large-scale quantitative analyses of listed companies to surveys exploring consumer intentions and organizational culture, providing a rich tapestry of insights into the multi-faceted manifestations of CSR. A prominent area of empirical investigation during 2017–2019 concerned the relationship between CSR practices and various measures of organizational performance, particularly financial performance. Studies from this period consistently indicated a positive and statistically significant link between CSR activities and corporate financial performance (Simionescu & Dumitrescu, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2019). These positive effects were often observed when CSR policies were directed towards key stakeholders such as employees, environmental protection, and ethical conduct. However, the relationship was not always straightforward, with some findings suggesting that financial biases could still prevail in internal

performance evaluations, potentially leading to the de-prioritization of CSR measures.

Empirical research in this period also delved into the internal and external dimensions of CSR. Internally, studies examined the role of ethical leadership and organizational culture in driving CSR adoption (Nguyen et al., 2019; Pasricha et al., 2019), as well as the evolving relationship between CSR and Human Resources Management (HRM), with themes such as environmental management, sustainable HRM, and employee commitment gaining prominence (Santana et al., 2019). Externally, the focus extended to consumer perceptions, revealing a high willingness among consumers to support socially responsible companies, yet a significant gap existed between intentions and actual behavior, largely due to a lack of awareness (Potrashkova et al., 2017).

This review, titled "Corporate Social Responsibility in a Changing World: A Review of Empirical Research (2017–2019)," aims to synthesize and critically analyze the empirical literature from this period, providing a comprehensive overview of how CSR is conceptualized, researched, and implemented in response to global shifts and increasing expectations, which is crucial for informed decision-making and future research. While the theoretical and conceptual literature on CSR is extensive, sources consistently highlight the persistent need for empirical evidence to understand how CSR policies manifest in practice, the urgent need for more rigorous research in specific contexts like Vietnam (Kabir & Thai, 2017), and ongoing confusion regarding consistent measurement instruments (Mikołajek-Gocejna Magdalena, 2018). This review, by systematically synthesizing empirical findings from a critical and recent period (2017-2019), aims to directly address these identified gaps. By providing evidence-based insights, this review contributes not only to scientific advancement by refining existing theories but also offers actionable guidance for practitioners.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Understanding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Core Theories and Their Application (2017-2019)

This section delves into various theories that form the bedrock of understanding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and how these concepts were applied in empirical research, particularly relevant to the 2017-2019 period. These theories offer insights into why companies engage in CSR, its impact on different stakeholders, and the factors influencing CSR implementation.

Defining Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved from a peripheral activity to a strategic imperative. This shift reflects a growing acknowledgment that businesses operate within a complex ecosystem of stakeholders and bear responsibility for their broader social and environmental impact. Historically,

CSR has moved beyond mere economic and legal obligations to encompass ethical and discretionary responsibilities, emphasizing alignment with societal norms and contributing to community well-being. A modern understanding positions CSR as a multi-stakeholder concept, recognizing an organization's duties to various groups beyond just shareholders – a foundational theoretical premise for much contemporary research.

Despite its widespread adoption, the conceptualization of CSR remains dynamic, with diverse definitions reflecting its multifaceted nature. It's often operationalized through frameworks like Carroll's (1991) four-part model, which includes economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. Beyond simple compliance or altruism, CSR is increasingly viewed as a strategic tool for achieving sustainable competitive advantage, enhancing corporate image, and driving long-term financial performance. Companies strategically engage in CSR to strengthen client loyalty, improve their reputation, attract and retain skilled employees, and even reduce costs through sustainable practices. This strategic orientation underscores a shift from reactive postures to the proactive integration of social and environmental considerations into core business models for sustained growth.

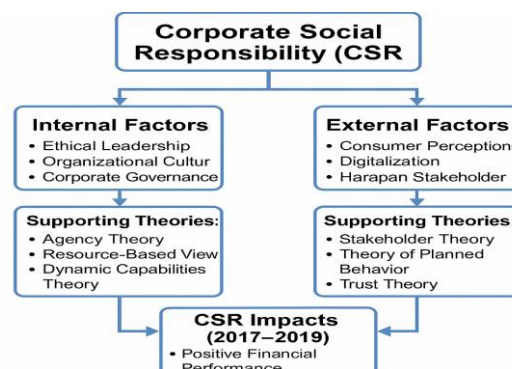
Foundational Theories Supporting CSR

Several key theories underpin our understanding and analysis of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):

1. **Stakeholder Theory** Stakeholder Theory served as a primary foundation for much empirical CSR research between 2017 and 2019. This theory posits that a company's long-term success is intrinsically linked to its ability to manage relationships with all its stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, communities, the environment, and the government – not solely shareholders. Within the CSR context, this theory highlights the importance of companies balancing the interests of these diverse groups to achieve social and operational legitimacy.
2. **Agency Theory** Complementing Stakeholder Theory, Agency Theory is frequently applied to understand how corporate governance mechanisms, such as board size, independent directors, and gender diversity, might moderate the effect of CSR on financial performance. This theory helps analyze potential conflicts of interest between management (agents) and shareholders (principals), and how CSR can be an area where such conflicts or alignment of interests might occur.
3. **Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT)** Dynamic Capabilities Theory asserts that companies need dynamic capabilities to adapt to ever-changing environments and develop sustainable competitive advantages. In CSR research, DCT is used to investigate how these capabilities – a firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external

competencies – influence the strategic adoption of CSR and the company's capacity to respond to evolving CSR demands.

4. **Resource-Based View (RBV)** The Resource-Based View (RBV) emphasizes that intangible assets, such as corporate reputation and brand equity, built through CSR practices, can serve as sources of sustainable competitive advantage. This theory explains how investments in CSR can create valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) internal resources that provide a market edge.
5. **Trust Theory** Trust Theory is crucial for examining the mediating role of customer trust in the relationship between CSR, corporate image, and brand equity. This theory underscores that genuine and transparent CSR actions can build and maintain trust with stakeholders, which in turn can strengthen a company's positive image and enhance brand value, especially during times of crisis.
6. **Theory of Planned Behavior** The Theory of Planned Behavior is employed to understand the gap between consumer intentions and actual socially responsible purchasing behavior. This theory helps explain that even though consumers might have positive intentions toward socially responsible products or companies, other factors such as lack of information, price barriers, or product availability can prevent those intentions from translating into real action.
7. **Shareholder Value Maximization vs. CSR Debate** The ongoing debate between Shareholder Value Maximization and CSR also continues to form the basis of studies, revealing persistent internal tension in assessing CSR relative to financial metrics. This debate centers on the question of whether a company's primary objective is to maximize profits for shareholders or if it holds broader responsibilities to other stakeholders and society.



Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework aims to visualize the relationships between various concepts examined in empirical CSR research (2017-2019) and how these factors influence each other. Drawing upon the theories we've discussed, this framework outlines how CSR implementation can interact with internal factors (such as corporate governance and ethical leadership) and external factors (like stakeholder expectations and digitalization) to produce various outcomes. These outcomes include financial performance, corporate reputation, and consumer

perception. The framework will also illustrate how the consumer intention-behavior gap can occur within the CSR context.

METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodological approach used in this research to conduct a systematic review of empirical Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) literature from the period 2017 to 2019 (Tranfield et al., 2017). The methods described include the process of identifying data sources, inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study population, sample selection for the research, and the analytical steps applied to the collected data.

Data Sources

This study utilizes secondary data derived from various relevant academic publications. The primary data sources are scholarly journals, conference proceedings, and academic databases that published empirical research in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) during the 2017-2019 period. Commonly used databases for similar research include Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, and other prominent academic journal databases covering fields such as management, business, accounting, and ethics (Tranfield et al., 2017).

Population

According to Sujarweni (2019), population refers to the total number of objects or subjects with characteristics and qualities predefined by the researcher that will be used in the study. In this research, the population consists of all empirical studies focusing on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) published in scholarly journals or proceedings between 2017 and 2019. This population encompasses a diverse range of studies employing quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodologies, and examining various aspects of CSR across different geographical and industrial contexts.

Sample

Sample Criteria:

- Studies must be empirical research (not purely conceptual or theoretical).
- The primary focus of the study must be Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or a closely related topic (e.g., corporate sustainability, business ethics directly linked to CSR practices).
- Studies must be published in peer-reviewed academic journals or reputable conference proceedings.
- The publication period of the studies must be between 2017 and 2019.
- Studies must be available in full text and accessible for analysis.
- Studies must be presented in English or Indonesian.

Based on the criteria above, the sample for this research consists of empirical CSR studies that meet the inclusion criteria and were identified through a systematic search in academic databases. The sample selection process was carried out in stages, starting with initial identification based on keywords (e.g., "Corporate Social Responsibility", "CSR", "corporate ethics", "sustainability"), followed by screening based on titles and abstracts, and finally, verification of eligibility through full-text reading (Hunjra et al., 2020; Sun & Yu, 2019; Yang et al., 2017).

Analytical Steps

The analytical steps performed in this systematic review research are as follows (e.g., Cross et al., 2021; Faccini et al., 2021):

1. **Study Identification:** Conduct a systematic literature search using relevant keywords across various academic databases to identify empirical studies on CSR published between 2017 and 2019.
2. **Study Screening:** Perform an initial screening based on titles and abstracts to exclude irrelevant studies.
3. **Eligibility Evaluation:** Download the full text of studies that passed the screening and evaluate them against the inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure their relevance to the research topic and period.
4. **Data Extraction:** Extract key data from each eligible study. The extracted data includes:
 - Study title and author(s).
 - Publication year.
 - Research objectives.
 - Methodology used (research type, design, sample, instruments, data analysis techniques).
 - Underlying theories.
 - Main findings.
 - Unique contributions or differences of the study.
5. **Synthesis and Analysis of Findings:** Conduct a narrative and thematic synthesis of the extracted study findings. This involves identifying patterns, trends, discrepancies, and gaps in the literature. The analysis will focus on:
 - The relationship between CSR and corporate performance (financial, reputation).

- The role of internal factors (governance, leadership, organizational culture).
- Stakeholder perceptions and behaviors (consumers, employees).
- The influence of context (developing countries, digitalization).
- Dominant methodologies and frequently used theories.

6. **Drawing Conclusions and Recommendations:** Formulate conclusions based on the synthesis of findings and provide recommendations for future research as well as practical implications for management and policymakers regarding CSR in an era of change.

RESULTS

This section presents the key findings obtained from the systematic review of empirical Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) literature during the 2017-2019 period, in accordance with the methodology described. The main result of this research is a summary of the identified studies, presented in tabular form. This table contains important information from each study, including unique contributions and similarities in themes, methods, or theories used.

No.	Title	Author(s)	Differences (Focus/Unique Contributions)	Similarities (Theme/Method/Theory)
1	Methodological provisions for conducting empirical research of the availability and implementation of the consumers' socially responsible intentions	Lyudmyla Potrashkova, Diana Raiko, Leonid Tseitlin, Olga Savchenko, Szabolcs Nagy	Unique focus on the intersection between intention and implementation of socially responsible consumer behavior; development of methodological guidelines for empirical studies; case study in Ukraine (Kharkiv); identifies consumer awareness deficit as a primary cause.	Based on the concept of social responsibility (specifically quantitative); utilizes surveys to measure consumer awareness; highlights the importance of consumer awareness; discusses the prospects of socially responsible business.
2	Dynamic Capability and Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility Adoption:	Claire J. Li, Abdelhafid Benamraoui, Neeta Shah, Sudha Mathew	Investigates the impact of dynamic capabilities on the adoption of strategic Corporate Social	Focuses on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and firm performance; employs stakeholder theory; utilizes a quantitative methodology (multilinear

	Evidence from China		Responsibility (CSR); reveals a negative relationship for firms with dynamic capabilities exceeding the industry average; focuses on publicly listed companies in China; utilizes data from 2017-2019.	regression, Granger Causality); acknowledges the complexity of the CSR-performance relationship.
3	Corporate Social Responsibility: An Empirical Investigation of U.S. Organizations	Adam Lindgreen, Valérie Swaen, Wesley J. Johnston	This study presents an empirical investigation of actual Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices, examining their relevance across five distinct stakeholder groups. It details the development of a novel instrument for measuring CSR practices and identifies four differing organizational clusters based on their respective CSR practice foci. The research was conducted within organizations located in the United States.	Focuses on CSR practices and their impacts; employs quantitative surveys; discusses the relationship between CSR and performance (though acknowledging its complexity); recognizes the diverse conceptualizations of CSR.
4	Empirical Study towards Corporate Social Responsibility Practices and Company Financial Performance. Evidence for Companies Listed on the	Liliana Nicoleta Simionescu, Dalina Dumitrescu	Analyzes the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and financial performance on the Bucharest Stock Exchange (an emerging market);	Focuses on the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and financial performance; employs quantitative methodologies (surveys, OLS regression); acknowledges CSR as an evolving concept; highlights the role of stakeholders.

	Bucharest Stock Exchange		develops a CSR index using Principal Component Analysis (PCA); and finds a positive correlation for employee-related, environmental, and ethical CSR initiatives.	
5	Sustainable business models: a review	Saeed Nosratabadi, Amir Mosavi, Shahaboddin Shamshirband, Edmundas Kazimieras Zavadskas, Andry Rakotonirainy, Kwok Wing Chau	Presents a comprehensive systematic review of sustainable business models (SBMs); classifies SBM applications into fourteen unique categories; discusses advancements, successes, and research gaps across various domains.	Acknowledges the significance of sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); highlights the strategic role of business models; discusses the triple bottom line objectives (economic, social, environmental); identifies research gaps.
6	Ideology and the Balanced Scorecard: An Empirical Exploration of the Tension Between Shareholder Value Maximization and Corporate Social Responsibility	Regina F. Bento, Lasse Mertins, Lourdes F. White	Explores the tension between Shareholder Value Maximization (SVM) ideology and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) framework; identifies a financial bias in evaluation decisions; a case study of commercial banks in the US.	This study discusses Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within the context of strategic management and performance; it employs empirical studies to examine a conceptual framework; and highlights the challenges of CSR implementation.
7	Ethical leadership, corporate social responsibility, firm reputation, and firm	Nguyen Thi Thao Nguyen, Nguyen Phong Nguyen, Tu Thanh Hoai	Develops and tests a serial mediation model (ethical leadership → Corporate Social	Investigates the interrelationships among Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), reputation, and performance; employs

	performance: A serial mediation model		Responsibility (CSR) → corporate reputation → firm performance); focuses on large companies in Vietnam (an emerging market); employs stakeholder theory.	surveys of middle and upper-level managers; utilizes a quantitative methodology (PLS-SEM); highlights the significant role of leadership in CSR initiatives.
8	The Role of Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Image in Times of Crisis: The Mediating Role of Customer Trust	Chih-Cheng Chen, Asif Khan, Tanaporn Hongsuchon, Athapol Ruangkanjanases, Yen-Tzu Chen, Ornlatcha Sivarak, Shih-Chih Chen	Examines the relationship between multi-dimensional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), customer trust, and corporate image during times of crisis; focuses on the hospitality industry in Pakistan (an emerging market); identifies full/partial mediation of customer trust.	Investigates the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on image and trust; employs quantitative surveys (PLS-SEM); highlights the critical role of trust in firm-customer relationships; utilizes Carroll's CSR framework.
9	Ethical Leadership, Organic Organizational Cultures and Corporate Social Responsibility: An Empirical Study in Social Enterprises	Palvi Pasricha, Bindu Singh, Pratibha Verma	Examines the interplay between ethical leadership and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); investigates the mediating role of organic organizational culture (clan, adhocracy); focuses on healthcare social enterprises in India.	Investigates the relationship between leadership and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); employs a quantitative methodology (Structural Equation Modeling - SEM); emphasizes the significance of organizational culture; focuses on a specific context (social enterprises).
10	CSR Performance and the Readability of CSR Reports: Too Good to be True?	Zhihong Wang, Tien-Shih Hsieh, Joseph Sarkis	Examines the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) performance and	Focuses on CSR disclosure and its impact; utilizes public company data; employs a quantitative methodology; highlights the significance of CSR communication.

			the readability of CSR reports; employs three readability indices (Fog, Kincaid, Flesch); focuses on U.S. public companies; reveals a stronger positive correlation for social performance.	
11	Impact of corporate social responsibility on employee loyalty: Mediating role of person-organization fit and employee trust	Hebo Jin, Xuexiao Li, Guangsen Li, María del Carmen Valls Martínez	Explores the impact of employees' perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on employee loyalty; investigates the mediating roles of person-organization fit and employee trust; focuses on CPEC projects in Pakistan (project sector).	Investigates the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and employee outcomes (loyalty); applies stakeholder theory and social identity theory; employs a quantitative survey method (SmartPLS-3); highlights the significance of CSR for employees.
12	The Relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Financial Performance – Evidence from Empirical Studies	Mikołajek-Gocejna Magdalena	Provides a systematic literature review on the Corporate Social Responsibility-Corporate Financial Performance (CSR-CFP) relationship; highlights conflicting findings (positive, negative, neutral, and non-linear); and discusses various theoretical hypotheses to explain this complexity.	Focuses on the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and financial performance; acknowledges the growth of Socially Responsible Investment (SRI); addresses challenges in measuring both CSR and Corporate Financial Performance (CFP).
13	Corporate social responsibility	Maria-Gaia Soana	Investigates the relationship	Focuses on the relationship between

	and financial performance: Evidence from the financial sector		between Corporate Social Performance (CSP) and Corporate Financial Performance (CFP) specifically within the international financial sector; reveals no clear evidence of a significant relationship in this sector; acknowledges limitations regarding sample size and the brief time period.	Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and financial performance; employs quantitative methodology (OLS); discusses various hypotheses concerning the CSR-CFP relationship; emphasizes the importance of industry context.
14	Business ethics, corporate social responsibility, and brand attitudes: An exploratory study	O. C. Ferrell, Dana Harrison, Linda Ferrell, Joe F. Hair	Emphasizes the importance of differentiating business ethics from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in shaping brand attitudes; reveals that customers place higher value on business ethics as a critical factor; employs scenarios to evaluate customer attitudes.	Focuses on consumer perceptions of companies; employs a quantitative methodology (PLS-SEM); discusses the importance of reputation and brand; highlights the role of corporate behavior.
15	Mapping the Link between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Human Resource Management (HRM): How Is This Relationship Measured?	Mónica Santana, Rafael Morales-Sánchez, Susana Pasamar	Presents a systematic review mapping the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Human Resource Management (MSDM); identifies key themes (e.g., environmental management,	Acknowledges the relevance of human resources in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); highlights the evolution of the CSR concept; discusses challenges in CSR measurement; employs a literature review approach.

			sustainable HRM); and reviews measurement tools utilized within this domain.	
16	Corporate social responsibility in a competitive business environment	Carol Newman, John Rand, Finn Tarp, Neda Trifkovic	Examines the firm-level efficiency effects of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Vietnamese manufacturing companies; identifies a stronger positive relationship in non-competitive industries; highlights local community-focused CSR initiatives as key drivers; provides evidence of employee reciprocity.	Focuses on the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and firm performance (productivity); employs firm-level panel data; utilizes quantitative methodologies (OLS, GMM); discusses the role of industry competition.

DISCUSSION

This discussion interprets the findings presented in Table 1, connecting them with the theoretical review provided, and identifying patterns, gaps, and implications from empirical CSR research during the 2017-2019 period. This analysis will be structured based on the main themes emerging from the reviewed literature, consistent with the thematic synthesis methodology.

Relationship between CSR and Corporate Performance The reviewed studies consistently show a positive relationship between CSR practices and various measures of corporate performance. Research such as Simionescu & Dumitrescu (2018) on companies listed on the Bucharest Stock Exchange, and Nguyen et al. (2019) in Vietnam, found a positive correlation between CSR initiatives (especially those related to employees, environment, and ethics) and financial performance and corporate reputation. However, debate persists, as reviewed by Mikołajek-Gocejna (2018) and Soana (2019) who found mixed (positive, negative, neutral) or no significant relationship in the financial sector. This indicates that the CSR-performance relationship is complex and can be moderated by contextual or industry-specific factors.

Role of Internal Factors in CSR Internal corporate factors significantly influence CSR adoption and effectiveness. Ethical leadership, as highlighted by Nguyen et al. (2019) and Pasricha et al. (2019), is a key driver of CSR practices and positively affects corporate reputation and performance. Organic organizational culture was also identified as an important mediator in the relationship between ethical leadership and CSR. Nevertheless, a study by Bento et al. (2018) showed a persistent financial bias in internal performance evaluations, where financial metrics were often prioritized over CSR measures, even when there was explicit support for CSR from top management.

Stakeholder Perceptions and Behavior Research indicates that stakeholder perceptions, especially of consumers and employees, are strongly influenced by corporate CSR practices. Potrashkova et al. (2017) revealed that despite consumers' good intentions to support socially responsible companies, there is a significant "intention-behavior gap," often due to a lack of transparent information. A study by Chen et al. (2018) emphasized the mediating role of customer trust in the relationship between CSR and corporate image during times of crisis, particularly in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, Jin et al. (2018) found that employee perceptions of CSR positively affect employee loyalty, mediated by person-organization fit and employee trust. The importance of clear CSR communication and fundamental business ethics was also emphasized by Ferrell et al. (2018) in shaping consumer brand attitudes.

CSR Disclosure and Communication The aspect of CSR disclosure and communication was also a focus. Wang et al. (2019) examined the relationship between CSR performance and the readability of CSR reports, finding a stronger positive correlation for social performance. This suggests that transparency and ease of understanding of CSR reports can strengthen public perception of a company's social commitment. This aligns with the need for credible communication as highlighted in the context of the consumer intention-behavior gap.

Geographical and Industry Contexts Research in this period also covered various geographical and industry contexts, especially in emerging markets such as China (Li et al., 2019), Vietnam (Kabir & Thai, 2017; Newman et al., 2019), Pakistan (Chen et al., 2018; Jin et al., 2018), Romania (Simionescu & Dumitrescu, 2018), and India (Pasricha et al., 2019). These studies revealed unique nuances in CSR implementation. For example, in Vietnam, the positive relationship between CSR and firm efficiency was stronger in non-competitive industries. Meanwhile, in China, average dynamic capabilities might be more conducive to strategic CSR adoption than very high capabilities. This confirms that CSR models cannot be universally applied and must be adapted to local environments, cultures, and stages of economic development.

Overall, the findings from this systematic review indicate that CSR has become an integral element of successful business strategy in a constantly changing world. However, successful implementation requires more than just

good intentions; it demands strong governance, ethical leadership, transparent communication, and a nuanced understanding of stakeholder expectations and contextual dynamics, particularly in developing economies. The persistent gap between consumer intentions and actions, as well as financial biases in performance evaluation, suggest that there is still work to be done to fully align corporate practices with the promise of CSR.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The empirical research from 2017–2019 affirmed that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an integral component of successful business strategy in a changing world. When effectively implemented, CSR consistently demonstrated a significant positive impact on corporate performance, both financially and in the market, often mediated by its ability to build strong stakeholder relationships, enhancing corporate image, reputation, and brand equity. Internal factors such as strong corporate governance and ethical leadership were crucial in driving CSR adoption and amplifying its positive effects. However, challenges persist, including financial biases in performance evaluations and a notable "intention-behavior gap" among consumers due to a lack of transparent information. This highlights the necessity for clear, credible CSR communication and an emphasis on fundamental business ethics. CSR models must also be adapted to local contexts, cultures, and stages of economic development, especially in emerging markets where CSR is often still perceived as philanthropy rather than strategic integration.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings and discussions, the following recommendations are put forth for both companies/practitioners and future researchers:

For Companies/Practitioners:

1. **Integrate CSR Strategically:** Companies should move beyond a philanthropic view of CSR and strategically integrate it into their core business models and decision-making processes. This includes aligning CSR objectives with internal incentive systems to overcome potential financial biases.
2. **Strengthen Governance and Ethical Leadership:** Prioritize strong corporate governance structures and cultivate ethical leadership. These internal factors are critical in driving genuine CSR implementation and enhancing its positive impact on firm performance and reputation.
3. **Enhance Transparent Communication:** To bridge the consumer "intention-behavior gap," companies must improve the clarity, credibility, and accessibility of their CSR information. This can be achieved through transparent reporting, robust communication campaigns, and ensuring that ethical business practices underpin all CSR initiatives.

4. **Adapt to Local Contexts:** Recognize that CSR effectiveness is highly dependent on contextual factors. Companies operating in diverse markets, especially emerging economies, should tailor their CSR strategies to align with local societal needs, cultural norms, and economic development stages, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

For Future Research:

1. **Develop Consistent Measurement Metrics:** Future research should aim to develop more consistent, standardized, and contextually relevant metrics for measuring CSR performance and its various impacts. This will help reduce definitional ambiguity and enhance comparability across studies.
2. **Explore Complex Mediating/Moderating Mechanisms:** Further investigation is needed into the intricate mediating and moderating mechanisms that influence the relationship between CSR and different outcomes, particularly how internal organizational factors and external stakeholder dynamics interact.
3. **Focus on Understudied Contexts:** There is an urgent need for more rigorous empirical research in specific understudied contexts, especially in various developing markets. Understanding how CSR is adopted, implemented, and impacts performance in diverse institutional and socio-economic environments will enrich the global CSR landscape.
4. **Bridge the Intention-Behavior Gap:** Future studies should delve deeper into the factors contributing to the consumer intention-behavior gap in CSR. Research on effective strategies for raising consumer awareness, building trust, and converting intentions into actual socially responsible purchasing behavior would be highly valuable.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, N., Scholz, M., Arshad, M. Z., & Ullah, Z. (2022). Corporate social responsibility at the micro-level and environmental performance: The mediating role of employee pro-environmental behavior and the moderating role of gender.¹ *Pacific Accounting Review*, 34(2), 277–294. <https://doi.org/10.1108/par-09-2021-0162>
- Ahmad, N., Ullah, Z., Arshad, M. Z., Kamran, H. W., Scholz, M., & Han, H. (2022).² Relationship between corporate social responsibility at the micro-level and environmental performance: The mediating role of employee pro-environmental behavior and the moderating role of gender. *Management Decision*, 60(11), 2776–2794. <https://doi.org/10.1108/md-11-2021-1515>
- Kabir, R., & Thai, H. M. (2017). Does corporate social responsibility improve financial performance? Evidence from Vietnam. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 142(4), 831–851. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3053-6>

- Khan, H., Serafeim, G., & Yoon, A. (2019). Corporate sustainability: First evidence on materiality. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 55(12), 2537–2555. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2019.1694144>
- Khan, M., Serafeim, G., & Yoon, A. (2018). Corporate sustainability: First evidence on materiality. *Sustainability*, 10(9), 3141. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10093141>
- Lăzăroiu, G., & Andronie, M. (2019). The role of corporate social responsibility in organizational sustainability. *Knowledge-Based Organization*, 25(1), 66–72. <https://doi.org/10.2478/kbo-2019-0045>
- Lee, M. T., & Raschke, R. L. (2021). Understanding employee motivation and organizational performance: Arguments for a set-theoretic approach. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 642688. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8060600/>
- Li, J., & Wang, Y. (2019). Corporate Social Responsibility and Firm Value: Evidence from China. *arXiv preprint arXiv:1907.10052*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/1907.10052>
- Maignan, I., & Ralston, D. A. (2002). Corporate Social Responsibility: An Empirical Investigation of U.S. Organizations. *ResearchGate*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226409791_Corporate_Social_Responsibility_An_Empirical_Investigation_of_US_Organizations
- Miras-Rodríguez, M. del M., Carrasco-Gallego, A., & Escobar-Pérez, B. (2018). Corporate social responsibility and performance: Evidence from listed companies in Spain. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 25(1), 66–79. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1447>
- Nadeem, M., Zaman, R., & Saleem, I. (2020). Boardroom gender diversity and corporate sustainability practices: Evidence from the UK. *Sustainability*, 12(4), 1678. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12041678>
- Nair, S. R., & Menon, C. (2021). Corporate social responsibility and firm performance: Evidence from India. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 704422. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8394849/>
- Park, B. I., & Lee, S. (2018). Corporate social responsibility, firm performance, and the moderating role of ownership type. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 151(4), 919–936. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3568-5>
- Salehi, M., Taghizadeh, M., & Bontis, N. (2019). Corporate social responsibility and financial performance: Evidence from Iran. *Journal of Business Research*, 95, 491–501. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.039>
- Suryana, I. P., & Sedana, I. B. P. (2021). Corporate governance moderate the effect of CSR on financial performance.³ *International Research Journal of*

Management, IT and Social Sciences, 8(5), 506–515.⁴
<https://doi.org/10.21744/irjmis.v8n5.19371>

- Wang, X., & Wang, J. (2021). Corporate social responsibility and firm innovation: Evidence from Chinese manufacturing firms. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 763506. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8631389/>
- Wang, Y., & Li, J. (2019). Corporate Social Responsibility and Financial Performance: Evidence from China. *arXiv preprint arXiv:1911.12582*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/1911.12582>
- Wang, Y., & Li, J. (2019). Corporate Social Responsibility and Firm Performance: Evidence from China. *arXiv preprint arXiv:1901.00191*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/1901.00191>
- Zhang, J., & Luo, X. (2021). Dynamic Capability and Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility Adoption: Evidence from China. *ResearchGate*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351495557_Dynamic_Capability_and_Strategic_Corporate_Social_Responsibility_Adoption_Evidence_from_China