

## Evaluating the impact of CSR initiatives on the achievement of SDGs in developing economies

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**Abstract:** This study explores the integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in developing economies, focusing on identifying best practices from leading Asian nations and their applicability to India. The research examines socio-economic and environmental outcomes, key success factors, and barriers to CSR adoption in India. A qualitative research approach is employed, including an extensive review of CSR practices in Japan, South Korea, and China. Data has been collected from corporate reports, scholarly articles, and government documents to evaluate the alignment of CSR initiatives with specific SDGs. Comparative analysis has been used to identify best practices and develop actionable recommendations for India. The study highlights that Asian countries effectively leverage socio-cultural and policy frameworks to promote impactful CSR initiatives. Notable practices include technological innovation in South Korea and community-driven models in Japan, both of which significantly contribute to achieving SDGs. In India, while CSR regulations have increased corporate engagement, challenges such as fragmented policy implementation and limited stakeholder participation persist. Policy recommendations proposed by the study include enhancing regulatory clarity, aligning CSR activities with SDG targets, and strengthening public-private partnerships to scale sustainable development efforts. This research aims to bridge the gap in understanding the integration of CSR and SDGs in developing economies by providing a comprehensive framework to improve CSR effectiveness in India.

**Keywords:** CSR (Corporate social responsibility), Developing Economies, ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance), SDGs (Sustainable development goals), Socio-economic.

### 1. Introduction

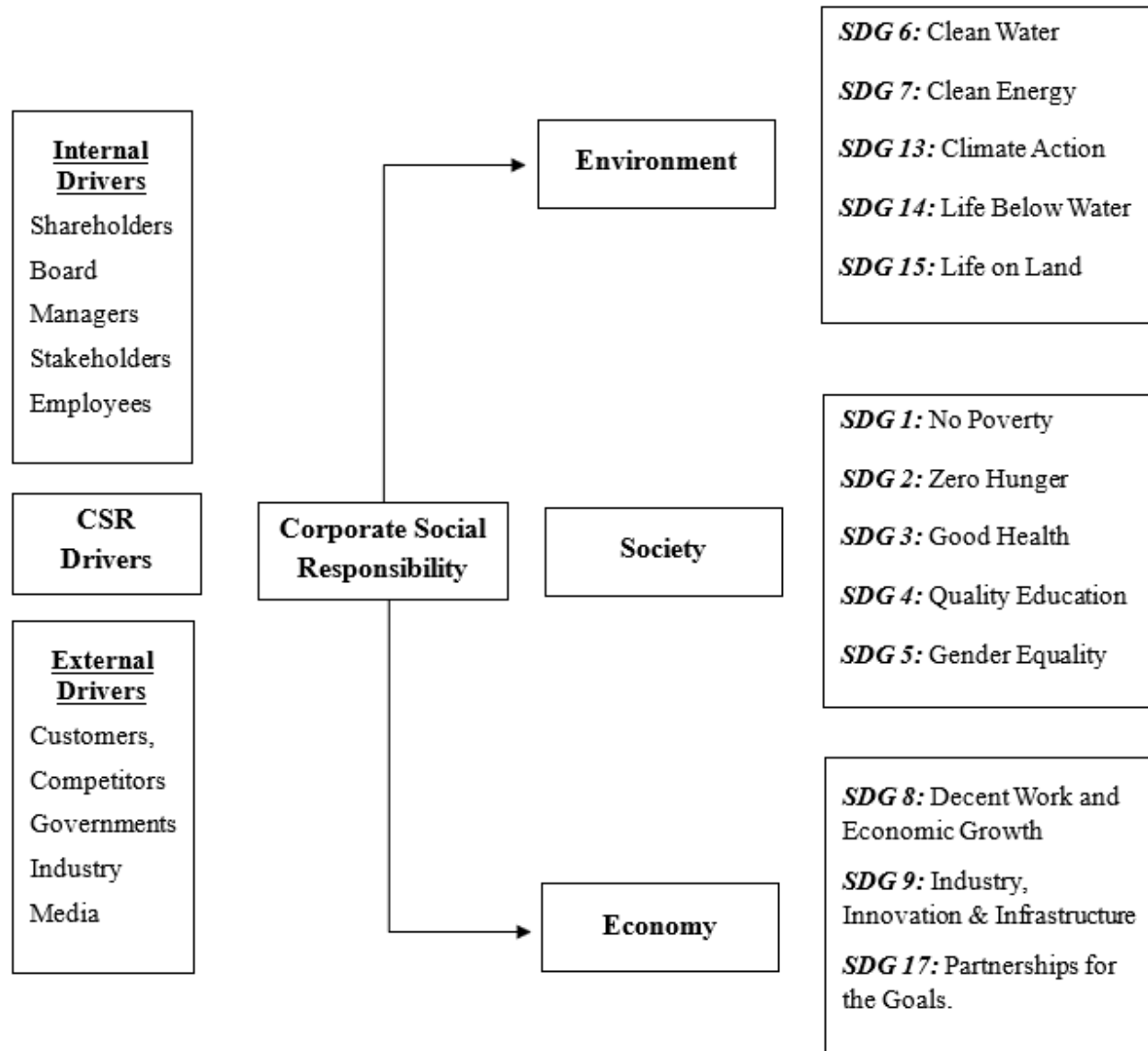
Today, Corporate Social Responsibility often identified with pretty benefaction of the business coverage line has expanded into position a strategic manner for embedding sustainable practices in doing business operations [1]. Corporations initially were limited to the philanthropic discharge but today, include the majority of companies in developing countries that have been emerging of late with a high level of focus on social welfare and the environment (ESG) agendas, as defined by the part that businesses can give in addressing structural issues such as poverty and inequality [2]. This growth entails the interdependence of CSR with the SDGs at a global level. Thus, companies will increasingly harmonize their CSR strategies with the SDGs in an endeavor to enhance economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection through intervention within a comprehensive development paradigm. Indeed, these links must be forged to make the world more resilient and able to thrive in the future [3].

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has indeed gained significance in the Asian context as rapid economic growth has heightened concerns given the environment and society. CSR activity is argued as a strategic way to sustainable development in countries such as Japan, Korea, and China because companies have known the long-term returns obtainable from socially responsible management

practices [4]. Japan is assumed that Toyota and other corporate giants have traditionally placed the commitments in sustainable growth as their priorities, especially in their leading role by inventing hybrid vehicles in the effort to lower carbon footprints in harmony with international environmental goals that address global problems constrained by sustainability impediments. Another good example is Samsung from South Korea, which requires environmentally beneficent actions alongside company image building. Supply of quality education and digital connectivity have also been identified as targets [5]. The contribution of companies like Alibaba and Tencent in addressing poverty has been through CSR that also supports other areas such as education and rural development, proving their commitment to the goals of the state [6]. CSR policies contribute to the primary objectives regarding the corporate strategy by encouraging organizations to adapt these policies in their business endeavors. Thus, the idea of CSR has shifted from the term of specific philanthropy to broader systemic changes in or by corporates towards more generalized social issues.

CSR in India as merely an obligation for business. In fact, it has tended to be instrumental by integrating social and environmental issues into sustainability. India enforced its CSR legislation in 2013, which directs a particular schedule of companies located within the Companies Act, 2013 to make certain mandatory investments in CSR. Approximately 15,000 crores were incurred among 20,000 companies due to the financial year 2017-2018. The money went into causing starvation, employment training, health, education, environment, rural development, and arts, culture, and sports promotion [7]. CSR focus should primarily be on India to help the country strike the U.N. building sustainable development goals in its national response to the United Nations' SDGs. Section 135 of the 2013 Companies Act makes a provision that imposes on firms with either a specified profit or a prescribed size to give at least 2 percent of their net profits for CSR activities over the past three years. This provision is typical for the provisions of the Act, which means that it fails to take into full account the all-encompassing, ethical moral force of the Profitability norm that simply leads to external reporting. The above criteria municipalize corporate values. And with the passage of time and the effecting of specific constitutive changes in the 2013 Act, there can be change. The net worth threshold has been set at INR 5 billion, the sales threshold at INR 10 billion, and the net profit threshold at INR 50 million [8].

The expanding significance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a new driving force in the realization of development that is capable of world-wide effects [9]. Nevertheless, huge gaps persist in comparative studies linking CSR programs to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals within developing economies, especially the Indian context. Though there are vast studies in CSR in developed countries, less effort has been devoted to researching contributions of such programs toward Sustainable Development Goals in emerging markets. There is a lack of holistic insights into replicable best practices in the successful Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and China where CSR has been successfully integrated into business strategies with good results. Such gaps prevent businesses from implementing CSR practices in developing economies that might drive the attainment of SDGs, and these business entities may become constrained further from sustainable development in these regions. This study intends to bridge the gaps by examining the effects of CSR programs on SDG outcomes in India and exploring Asian models that are working well to be adapted for developing similar economies.



**Figure 1.**  
CSR and Important SDGs.

The study is important to find out gaps that exist since CSR policies and practices need to be improved for the gap in Sustainable Development Goals of India to be achieved. There is a lot of growth yet much to be reached through CSR in current times, especially in concerns relating to environmental sustainability, educational development, and poverty-reduction efforts. This study seeks to highlight effective strategies and best practices that can drive the meaningful progress for SDGs with the evaluation impact of CSR initiatives. The impact findings further pose implications for development economies worldwide that CSR can use as a means for sustainable development. The study will provide insights into how CSR can be integrated into corporate strategies to align with SDG targets and contribute to long-term socio-economic development. This will be critical for policymakers and businesses striving to enhance CSR effectiveness and foster inclusive growth in developing economies.

The paper is divided into seven sections. Section 1 contains the introduction of the paper. Section 2 presents a summary of the studies about CSR Initiatives & SDGs in Developing Economies. Section 3

presents the goals and theories of the investigation. Section 4 evaluated the data and techniques, which include variables and a model. The empirical results are detailed in Section 5. A summary of the results is provided in section 6. Conclusions, implications, limitations, and recommendations for more study are included in Section 7. References are also given at the end.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1. *Impact of CSR Initiatives on Advancing SDGs in Developing Economies*

The mining and telecommunication sectors are the ones recognized to hold the most prospects for private-sector CSR initiatives; however, these are limited by short-term interventions, as well as inadequate coordination and low participation by the communities [10]. CSR spending in Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprises has reflected responsible business leadership and has highlighted the importance of sustainable development of India by associating itself with top SDGs [11]. According to Khan, et al. [12] CSR positively influences sustainable innovation ambidexterity through sustainable supply chain management and second-order social capital in manufacturing businesses. Although CSR issues have gained more attention in the hotel industry lately, including communication and reporting, SDGs and environmental sustainability still are not at an appropriate level of attention and should be emphasized on stakeholders' influence over business practices and how to make CSR strategies more sustainable Moyeen and Mehjabeen [13]. Sudirman, et al. [14] have argued that CSR programs can enhance the achievement of SDGs by aligning with government goals and addressing social and environmental inequalities. The influence of United Nations SDGs on CSR research has resulted in greater consideration for strategic inputs from communities, companies, consumers, investors, and employees, with the potential to optimize long-term financial performance [9].

### 2.2. *Successful CSR practices in leading Asian countries*

"The success of CSR and sustainability development in Asia is observed to rely on its ability to be acculturated into the Asian environment and values, considering the distinctiveness of the Asian context compared to Western practices [15]. Improvements in policy instruments for sustainable development in China are noted as necessary, with social sustainability identified as the most important aspect, while ecological sustainability has fewer policy instruments than in South Korea and Japan [16]. CSR practices in South Korea exhibit a normative orientation and short-termism, reflecting complex institutional interactions that pose challenges to the global approach to CSR [17]. The positive effect of knowledge absorptive capacity on the corporate sustainability performance of Asian multinational corporations is significantly moderated by CSR [18]. Effective implementation of local CSR strategies requires multinational enterprises to understand the differences between Chinese and Japanese consumers in terms of stakeholder, self-interest, and strategy-driven motivations [19]. CSR practices are reported to positively affect business performance in East Asian firms, with environmental CSR exerting a stronger impact compared to social CSR, and operational performance showing stronger positive effects compared to financial performance [20].

### 2.3. *Alignment of CSR Initiatives with SDG Targets*

The integration of CSR and SDGs within the new framework reflects a balanced approach to corporate social responsibility, benefiting both fields while yielding measurable outcomes Fallah Shayan, et al. [3]. ElAlfy, et al. [9] noted that the UN SDGs have shaped the CSR domain, fostering greater attention on strategic aspects related to community, company, consumers, investors, and employees, thereby enhancing long-term financial performance. Social responsibility and climate change initiatives are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals to address global sustainability challenges effectively [21]. In India, CSR activities broadly align with the Sustainable Development Goals, though their scope should be expanded to encompass more environmental goals under SDGs Panda, et al. [22]. Jangir and Meena [23] observed that approximately 70% of Indian companies have adopted ESG criteria, marking a shift in corporate governance. Positive impacts of ESG scores on company

contributions to achieving SDGs are significant, with a focus on clean air and water quality, while CSR committees effectively moderate asset utilization and debt control [24].

#### *2.4. The challenges and barriers to CSR implementation in India*

CSR implementation in Indian service organizations has been hindered by significant barriers, including a lack of financial resources, inadequate support from top management, and insufficient skills and knowledge [25]. Challenges associated with CSR implementation in India encompass the organizational structuring required to shoulder responsibility, difficulties in finding credible partners, and ensuring the qualifications of those involved in CSR activities [26]. In Indian service industries, sustainable CSR initiatives have been obstructed by the absence of top management commitment, perceived lack of significant benefits, and financial limitations [27]. CSR in India presents both challenges and opportunities, and with appropriate policies and support, businesses can fulfill societal obligations while thriving in a dynamic business environment [28]. Barriers to CSR in India include the slow transition from philanthropic approaches to a more strategic understanding of managing business impacts [29]. In Indian manufacturing companies, major obstacles to CSR implementation are financial constraints and a passive attitude among consumers toward CSR.

Existing research has already shown the contribution of CSR towards sustainable development in developed economies. However, not much evaluation of CSR's role in advancing the SDGs is done in the developing regions. Socio-economic and environmental results of CSR in these contexts remain under-explored and thus warrant a focused assessment. Often, studies fail to identify the socio-cultural, institutional, and policy factors which contribute to the success of CSR in countries such as Japan, South Korea, and China. This leaves an important gap in understanding strategic lessons that can benefit India. In fact, even though many companies declare their CSR activities in alignment with the SDG goals, there are no systematic strategies for mapping the CSR initiatives toward specific SDG targets. Further, despite India's mandatory CSR legislation, there are barriers in the form of regulatory ambiguities, fragmented policy frameworks, and limited stakeholder engagement that hinder effective implementation. Existing literature lacks actionable solutions to bridge the gaps between policy and practice. Hence, this study aims to assess the impact of CSR on SDGs, analyze successful Asian practices, explore CSR alignment strategies, and propose solutions for strengthening India's CSR framework toward better achievement of sustainable development goals.

#### *2.5. Research Question & Objectives*

- Obj1 To evaluate the impact of CSR initiatives on advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in developing economies, focusing on socio-economic and environmental outcomes.
- Q.1. How do CSR initiatives in developing economies influence progress toward achieving specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in socio-economic and environmental contexts?
- Obj2 To analyze successful CSR practices in leading Asian countries (Japan, South Korea, and China) and identify strategic lessons applicable to other developing economies.
- Q.2. What socio-cultural, institutional, and policy factors contribute to the success of CSR practices in leading Asian economies such as Japan, South Korea, and China?
- Obj3 To explore the alignment of CSR initiatives with SDG targets and assess their effectiveness in driving sustainable development.
- Q.3. In what ways can CSR initiatives be aligned with specific SDG targets to maximize their impact in developing economies?
- Obj4 To identify the challenges and barriers to CSR implementation in India and propose actionable recommendations to bridge gaps between policy and practice.
- Q.4. What best practices from CSR frameworks in Asian countries can be adapted to strengthen India's approach to achieving SDGs?

### 3. Research Methodology

The study employs a comparative analysis approach to investigate the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in developing economies, with a particular emphasis on Asian countries. By focusing on sectoral differences across industries like technology, manufacturing, and healthcare, the study in question provides an insight into CSR activities that help realize the SDG agenda in different contexts. The technique is mostly based on secondary data sourced from worldwide publications, governmental or corporate CSR policy papers, peer-reviewed academic articles, and industry-specific insights. This implies that such data sources provide a solid platform for evaluating alignment with the SDGs and its concrete implications. Benchmarking analysis would be a key component of the methodology as it seeks to evaluate India's CSR performance vis-à-vis others in Asia. The countries, vis-à-vis Asia are considered together with Japan, South Korea, and China. The benchmarking method highlights areas of strength, weaknesses, and replicable practices across nations, providing practical insights for improving CSR policy and implementation in various socioeconomic circumstances. To support this process, the study effort involves qualitative approaches that assist in understanding the socio-cultural and institutional aspects leading to the realisation of CSR objectives. Combining this with benchmarking, the methodology provided a holistic view of how CSR initiatives contribute towards the realization of SDGs. The study aims to highlight best practices, address challenges, and propose strategies for replicating successful models across different contexts in developing economies.

### 4. Result

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives have emerged as crucial drivers in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in developing economies where socio-economic challenges persist. By aligning corporate efforts with global development priorities, businesses not only foster positive societal impact but also enhance their operational sustainability. Various CSR programs have demonstrated significant contributions to improving livelihoods, reducing inequalities, and enhancing educational access. The table below presents a summary of selected CSR initiatives and their alignment with specific SDGs, highlighting their socio-economic outcomes and supporting case examples.

**Table 1.**  
Impact of CSR Initiatives on Advancing SDGs in Developing Economies.

CSR Initiative	SDG Alignment	Socio-economic Outcome	Case Example	Source
Employment Generation Programs	SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)	Increased job creation, skill development	Tata Group's rural skill-building	Sharma, et al. [30]
Microfinance and Entrepreneurship Support	SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)	Empowered marginalized communities, reduced income disparity	Grameen Bank's support for women entrepreneurs	Zhao, et al. [31]
Corporate Educational Initiatives	SDG 4 (Quality Education)	Improved access to primary and secondary education	Infosys Foundation's digital education programs	Kumar [32]

#### 4.1. CSR Initiatives' Effect on SDG Advancement in Developing Economies

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives play a critical role in advancing global sustainability and addressing societal challenges. By aligning their efforts with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), companies can create meaningful impact. Below are examples of CSR initiatives and their alignment with specific SDGs:

This table indicates how CSR initiatives are able to push for socio-economic development through solving burning social issues and supporting sustainable economic growth in developing economies. For instance, the Tata Group's skill development program supports SDG 8: decent work and economic growth, because it gives jobs and creates a skilled workforce. In the same way, programs offered by

Grameen Bank for microfinance are directed to target populations. SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) reduces income gaps and raises the level of financial inclusion. Educational activities, such as Infosys Foundation's digital education projects, enhance access to quality education and achieve SDG 4 (Quality Education). This paper shows Objective 1 by proving how strategic CSR programs improve socio-economic SDGs in developing countries. As far as the alignment with global development objectives is concerned, these activities clearly show CSR's integral importance in sustainable growth in the economic system.

#### 4.2. Environmental Contributions of CSR Programs

Environmental sustainability is a key focus of many Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, with companies striving to reduce their ecological footprint. These programs are often designed to address critical global environmental challenges while aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The table below highlights some notable CSR efforts aimed at environmental conservation:

**Table 2.**  
Environmental Contributions of CSR Programs.

CSR Initiative	SDG Alignment	Environmental Impact	Company Example	Source
Renewable Energy Projects	SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)	Decreased dependency on fossil fuels	NTPC Solar Plant Projects	Reddy, et al. [33]
Waste Management Programs	SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)	Reduced landfill waste and promoted recycling	Hindustan Unilever's "Project Green Feet"	Chatterjee [34]
Water Conservation Initiatives	SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)	Enhanced water accessibility in rural areas	Coca-Cola India's Rainwater Harvesting Projects	Mishra and Sinha [35]

The table elaborates on the environmental impact of CSR initiatives in terms of resource conservation, adoption of renewable energy, and waste management practices. NTPC's solar plant projects are an excellent example of commitment to SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) as they reduce dependency on fossil fuels. "Project Green Feet" by Hindustan Unilever is a good example of efforts toward SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by minimizing landfill waste and promoting recycling practices. Coca-Cola India's rainwater harvesting projects improve SDG 6, or Clean Water and Sanitation. This table achieves Objective 1, focusing on the environmental element of CSR and its contribution toward SDGs in terms of corporates' essential role in responding to ecological concerns through innovative solutions.

#### 4.3. Comparison of Socio-cultural and Institutional Factors

The success of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives is often influenced by a combination of socio-cultural norms and institutional factors within a given country. These elements shape how companies approach their CSR efforts, adapting to local expectations and regulations. The following table presents a comparative analysis of these influences across different nations:

**Table 3.**  
Comparative Analysis of Socio-cultural and Institutional Factors.

Country	Socio-cultural Influence	Institutional Drivers	Examples of CSR Success
Japan	Community-focused CSR strategies, cultural emphasis on harmony	Strong regulatory incentives	Toyota's hybrid technology innovation
South Korea	Corporate citizenship as a cultural value	National CSR strategy frameworks	Samsung's environmental sustainability programs
China	Alignment of CSR with national development goals	Government mandates on CSR reporting	Alibaba's rural development initiatives

The table above demonstrates the contribution of socio-cultural, institutional, and policy factors to CSR practices in Asian economies. The Toyota hybrid technology innovation in Japan represents community-oriented CSR strategies that have been amplified by a strong culture of harmony, with an additional push by robust regulatory incentives. In South Korea, national frameworks for CSR strategies have emphasized corporate citizenship as a cultural value and driven the success of the firm, as illustrated by Samsung's environmental sustainability programs. In China, CSR aligns with national development goals, where government mandates on CSR reporting are a significant enabler, as seen in the case of Alibaba's rural development initiatives. Such examples serve to address the research objectives by illustrating the socio-cultural and institutional drivers that shape successful CSR practices and offer lessons for other developing economies.

#### 4.4. Significant CSR Projects with SDG Objectives

To maximize the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, it is crucial to align them directly with the specific targets of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This ensures that companies contribute to global progress while addressing local and global challenges. The table below demonstrates how CSR initiatives can be effectively aligned with SDG targets for greater societal benefit:

**Table 4.**  
Aligning CSR Initiatives with SDG Targets for Maximum Impact.

SDG Target	Aligned CSR Initiative	Effectiveness Assessment	Source
SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)	Corporate-funded mobile health clinics	Improved rural healthcare access and preventive care	Khatri and Singh [36]
SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)	Community water filtration systems	Enhanced access to safe drinking water in underserved regions	Das, et al. [15]
SDG 13 (Climate Action)	Afforestation and carbon footprint reduction projects	Increased green cover and reduced emissions	Shukla, et al. [37]

The table shows the CSR activities that fall in line with certain SDG targets and the effectiveness of the activities in developing economies. Under SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), corporate-sponsored mobile health clinics have been enhancing access to healthcare in rural areas and preventive care. For SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), community water filtration systems have enhanced safe drinking water accessibility in underserved regions. Third, as regards SDG 13-Climate Action-the afforestation, and carbon footprint reduction projects in addition to increasing green cover have ensured the reduction in emissions. By using these cases, the above research objective aimed at investigating the alignment of CSR practices with SDG targets and, consequently, efficiency in promoting SDG.

#### 4.5. Suggestions to Improve India's CSR Strategy

In India, while CSR efforts have made significant strides, several challenges remain that hinder the full potential of these initiatives. Identifying and addressing these barriers is essential for strengthening the country's CSR approach and ensuring sustainable impact. The table below outlines key challenges, their descriptions, and recommended strategies for improvement:

**Table 5.**  
Adapting Best Practices for Strengthening India's CSR Approach.

Identified Challenge	Barrier Description	Recommendation	Source
Policy Gaps	Ambiguities in CSR regulatory frameworks	Streamlined, clear policy guidelines for corporate accountability	Bhat, et al. [11]
Financial Constraints	Limited budgets for CSR investments	Public-private partnerships for funding CSR	Gupta, et al. [38]
Community Engagement	Low stakeholder participation	Community-centered CSR models to drive engagement	Jha and Aggrawal [39]



The table provides an outline of major issues in the implementation of CSR in developing economies, including suggestions to overcome these barriers. For instance, policy gaps in CSR regulatory frameworks may be improved by streamlining and clarifying guidelines on corporate accountability in policies. Financial constraints, like a lack of available budgets to invest in CSR, can be overcome by having public-private partnerships facilitate funding sources for CSR programs. In addressing the problems, adopting community-centered CSR models that enhance the driving force for increased engagement by the stakeholders would help in this. The research was to find the barriers to CSR implementation and also propose strategies that can be adopted and used in making CSR effective towards SDGs.

#### 4.6. Success Factors for Corporate Social Responsibility in Leading Asian Economies

Leading Asian economies have pioneered CSR initiatives that align closely with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), contributing to both environmental sustainability and socio-economic development. These countries have implemented various policies and frameworks to support CSR efforts, fostering innovation and responsible business practices. The table below highlights successful CSR initiatives in these economies, offering valuable insights for India:

**Table 6.**  
Success Factors of CSR in Leading Asian Economies.

Country	Industry/Company	CSR Initiative	Aligned SDG(s)	Policy/Framework Supporting CSR-SDG Mapping	Learnings for India	Reference
Japan	Toyota	Hybrid Vehicle Technology for Reducing Carbon Footprint	SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) & SDG 13 (Climate Action)	Environmental Voluntary Action Plan by Keidanren	Prioritization of R&D for sustainable technologies	Zhao, et al. [31].
South Korea	Samsung Electronics	Digital Inclusion for Remote Learning	SDG 4 (Quality Education)	Korea's Green New Deal for Corporate Sustainability	Investment in technology to bridge digital gaps	Costa, et al. [40]
China	Alibaba Group	Poverty Alleviation through E-commerce Development	SDG 1 (No Poverty) & SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)	Government CSR Mandates and Reporting Requirements	Integration of digital platforms for socio-economic development	Li, et al. [41]
India	Tata Group	Rural Development and Education Projects	SDG 4 (Quality Education) & SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)	Section 135 of Companies Act, 2013	Targeted local engagement for community upliftment	Upreti and Malhotra [42]
Singapore	DBS Bank	Sustainable Finance for Green Energy Projects	SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) & SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)	Sustainability Reporting Framework	Emphasis on sustainable investments and green bonds	Sinha, et al. [43]

This table outlines the critical socio-cultural, institutional, and policy drivers for CSR success in countries such as Japan, South Korea, and China, from which India could draw valuable lessons. In Japan, Toyota has been a trendsetter in innovative hybrid vehicles, an area aligned with SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). This is backed by its Environmental Voluntary Action Plan, emphasizing sustainable technologies. The South Korean CSR of Samsung through its digital inclusion programs promotes SDG 4: Quality Education through technology as a way to diminish disparities in educational levels. In China, Alibaba's e-commerce poverty reduction initiative integrates with SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), combining rural development with the nation's overall socio-economic goals. It directly responds to Objective 2, elucidating strategic CSR practices emanating from these countries, and offering critical insights for informing and inspiring CSR initiatives in developing economies like India.

#### 4.7. Socio-Economic and Cultural Drivers of CSR Success

Cultural and socioeconomic factors play a significant role in shaping the effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives across different countries. These factors influence how companies approach CSR, engage with communities, and align with government policies. The table below presents an analysis of these cultural and socioeconomic influences in key Asian economies:

**Table 7.**  
Cultural and Socioeconomic Factors Affecting CSR Performance.

Factor	Japan	South Korea	China	India	Singapore	Reference
Community Engagement	High due to traditional values of harmony	Strong corporate culture of inclusivity	National pride and rural development focus	Growing interest in post-CSR legislation	Moderate with policy-driven incentives	Moon and Lee [44]
Government Regulation	Environmental plans and incentives	Green New Deal and national CSR guidelines	Stringent CSR mandates	Mandatory CSR expenditure and reporting	Strong sustainability policies	Ortas, et al. [45]
Corporate Strategy	CSR integrated with long-term business goals	Focus on technological innovation and responsibility	National goal alignment with CSR efforts	Still evolving with community-centered models	CSR for sustainable investments	Porter and Kramer [46]

The table depicts significant community engagement, government regulations, and corporate strategy in shaping CSR practices among various nations. In Japan and South Korea, strong community engagement, based on deeply ingrained cultural values, fosters more inclusive CSR that aligns well with societal needs. India is still evolving the CSR landscape and there is now a growing recognition of corporate responsibility since the regulation of CSR. This comparison underlines Objective 2 by bringing into view how the socio-cultural and policy environments take precedence in shaping the effectiveness of CSR strategies in these countries.

#### 4.8. India's CSR Advantages and Disadvantages

India has made significant progress in integrating CSR into its corporate sector, particularly through mandatory expenditure and a focus on social development. However, challenges remain in measuring the long-term impact of these initiatives and aligning them with global sustainability goals. The table below outlines India's key CSR strengths and weaknesses:

**Table 8.**  
India's CSR Strengths and Weaknesses.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Reference
Mandatory CSR expenditure has led to increased corporate engagement in social development.	Lack of clear measurement models linking CSR to SDGs.	Ramakrishna and Eunice [28]
Strong emphasis on rural development and education.	CSR is often seen as philanthropic rather than strategic investment.	KRA and Bhat [47]
Statutory disclosures provide insight into CSR practices.	Sparse data availability and limited integration with SDG-specific indicators.	Bhatia and Dhawan [48]

The following table assesses the CSR scenario in India with both positive and negative points. A significant positive point is that the mandatory expenditure on CSR led to the serious engagement of most corporations in various social initiatives. Weaknesses include sparse data and the inadequate integration of SDGs into the strategies of CSR pose challenges for proper assessment of impact and outcomes in CSR efforts. This analysis answers Objective 4 by identifying challenges in India's CSR practices and pinpointing areas for improvement, offering valuable insights for enhancing the effectiveness of CSR initiatives in the country.

#### 4.9. CSR's Effect on India's SDGs.

In India, the integration of CSR activities with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an evolving process. While there is increasing alignment between corporate initiatives and SDGs, challenges remain in effectively measuring and documenting the impact. The table below outlines the current state of CSR's contribution to SDGs in India:

**Table 9.**  
CSR Impact on SDGs in India.

Aspect	Details	Reference
Basis for CSR-SDG Statements	Corporates claim CSR contributions to SDGs based on alignment with Section 135 of the Companies Act, mandating CSR investments in key sectors.	Sharma, et al. [30]
Documentation	Annual reports highlight CSR initiatives; however, systematic mapping to SDG targets remains limited.	ElAlfy, et al. [9]
Performance Metrics	Qualitative indicators often emphasized over quantitative metrics for CSR contributions to SDGs.	Fraisl, et al. [49]

Corporates in India claim contribution towards SDGs as they report that they contribute toward the said goals under the aegis of compliance with Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, whereby it is made compulsory for a company to dedicate some part of the profit for CSR activities. According to this, the legislative provision identifies specific areas like health, education, environment, and rural development. While companies consistently mention alignment with SDGs in CSR disclosures, those claims are hardly ever mapped and linked to appropriate SDG targets [50]. This leaves a gap open for the need to have systematic frameworks that connect investments by corporations with measurable global outcomes on sustainability directly.

#### 4.10. Integration of CSR and Sustainable Development Goals

The integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is crucial for maximizing the impact of corporate initiatives. It requires a systematic approach that includes mapping, implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement. The table below outlines the key components for effective CSR-SDG integration, offering strategies and examples of best practices:

**Table 10.**  
CSR-SDG Integration.

Component	Description	Key Actions	Example Practice	Reference
Mapping Framework	Systematic alignment of CSR initiatives with specific SDG goals.	Identify CSR activities that directly contribute to measurable SDG targets.	Linking renewable energy initiatives to SDG 7 (Affordable Clean Energy).	Shayan, et al. [51].
Implementation Strategies	Developing and executing CSR plans with defined outcomes.	Establish SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals for CSR projects.	Setting clear targets for water conservation initiatives under SDG 6.	Kapoor, et al. [52].
Monitoring & Evaluation	Regular assessment of CSR outcomes through data-driven metrics.	Implement KPI tracking systems to measure socio-economic and environmental impact.	Use of sustainability dashboards for reporting CSR results.	Singh, et al. [53].
Stakeholder Engagement	Active participation of local communities, government, and partners.	Conduct community consultations and involve stakeholders in CSR planning.	Co-creation of educational programs in rural areas with local NGOs.	Ghezal [54]
Performance Metrics	Core indicators to assess CSR effectiveness in achieving SDGs.	Track metrics like employment generation, educational outcomes, emission reductions.	Monitoring job creation impact linked to SDG 8 (Decent Work).	Lamichhane, et al. [55].
Data Sources	Reliable sources for evaluating CSR performance and SDG alignment.	Collect data from CSR reports, governmental dashboards, and community feedback.	Leveraging NITI Aayog's performance indicators for SDG evaluation.	Chen, et al. [56]
Continuous Improvement	Adaptive approach to enhance CSR practices based on results and feedback.	Periodically review and refine CSR strategies to address emerging challenges.	Annual CSR report evaluations to realign goals with evolving SDG needs.	Shayan, et al. [51].

CSR contributions toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in India can be purportedly aligned with Section 135 of the Companies Act that mandates corporate investments in health, education, and rural development. Although the connection is repeatedly laid to SDGs, mapping and linking are not adequately done at the target levels; instead, there seems to be a lack of structure. Qualitative rather than metrics in annual reports show what is happening qualitatively but do not make much structural sense. Anecdotal evidence rather than measurable outcomes is used to measure performance most of the time, which is why the use of KPIs is critical for tracking socio-economic and environmental impacts. A systematic mapping framework is needed to ensure CSR activities are in line with SDG goals, such as associating renewable energy projects with SDG 7 and promoting clean energy. Proper implementation of CSR needs SMART goals to ensure more accountability. CSR programs are kept relevant and impactful by continuous assessment through data-driven monitoring and stakeholder engagement. Collaboration with local communities helps in contextual relevance, while the use of performance indicators from government platforms such as NITI Aayog aligns with national development priorities. An adaptive approach to refine CSR strategies fosters sustainable development and long-term societal benefits.

The results confirm all the research objectives, as it has been found that CSR initiatives make a significant contribution to advancing SDGs across socio-economic and environmental dimensions in developing economies. Socio-cultural, institutional, and policy drivers in CSR effectiveness have been emphasized by the analysis of successful practices in leading Asian countries. The proposed model is expected to serve as a roadmap for aligning CSR efforts with SDG goals and ensuring measurable impacts and stakeholder engagement. For India, identified strengths and weaknesses indicate key gaps and areas for improvement in CSR implementation. These insights collectively underscore CSR's transformative role in driving sustainable development and achieving global sustainability targets.

## 5. Discussion

This integration of CSR with SDGs is fundamental to achieving the goals of sustainable and inclusive socio-economic and environmental growth in developing economies. Asia, with Japan, South Korea, and China, have vividly shown that the effective strategy to tackle such systemic problems of inequality, degradation of environment, and disparity in education can be achieved through strategic CSR practice. Through the use of such practices, India and other developing countries are uniquely positioned to incorporate scalable solutions in adjusting corporate contributions with national development goals.

The Tata Group's skill development programs for the rural population, and Grameen Bank's microfinance programs exemplify CSR practices that positively support the generation of employment, developing skills, and financial empowerment to help deliver Decent Work and Reduced Inequality-related SDGs [30]. Similarly, environmental CSR initiatives like the renewable energy scheme of NTPC and the waste management initiative of Hindustan Unilever show a positive contribution towards the achievement of environmental sustainability by supporting SDGs on Clean Energy and Responsible Consumption [33]. The examples suggest a transformative influence of CSR on sustainable development. Socio-cultural factors and the regulatory framework in the leading Asian economies have had critical roles to play in formulating CSR strategies. The community-led approach of CSR in Japan; the national policy on sustainability in South Korea; and alignment of CSR activities with socio-economic goals in China present models for India to learn from and thereby improve its CSR landscape [31]. These practice examples show why policy alignment is important, or how cultural engagements and institutional supports are necessary toward effective CSR end.

Out of the experiences drawn by Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea, and China, through successful CSR strategies, important lessons for India in pursuit of SDGs can be learnt. In the context of Japan, CSR efforts form an inherent part of corporate strategies developed with a sense of harmony with nature and its environment. Companies like Toyota have been at the forefront, investing in hybrid vehicle technology, thus meeting goals of SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy, and SDG 13: Climate Action [31]. South Korea has corporate citizenship, promoting CSR initiatives by having a structure like the Green New Deal, which challenges sustainable technological growth and digital inclusion [40]. This complements CSR efforts that align national socio-economic objectives, as demonstrated by Alibaba's rural development programs. It explicitly indicates that achieving SDG 1 No Poverty and SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth relies on whether the CSR programs align with government goals [41]. In that regard, it gets quite evident that India can adopt local policy measures based on effective policies developed by other Asian economies. India faces serious challenges despite the mandatory CSR regulations under Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013. The cultural issues relate to the perception of CSR as philanthropy and not strategic business investment [28]. Institutional factors include fragmented regulatory frameworks and ambiguities in policy interpretation that hinder streamlined CSR operations [11]. Financial constraints, especially for SMEs, limit the extent and scope of CSR investments [38]. Community engagement is also low due to inadequate stakeholder involvement and lack of contextual understanding of local needs [39].

CSR encourages responsible governance, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability and adds to the overall creation of fostering ethical business practices and community development. With SDGs being included in the CSR strategy, companies add to the long-term value creation by not only being part of societal value creation through societal well-being but also becoming a part of long-term value creation [9]. CSR's ethics practices generate confidence between the corporation and the communities, and trust is the only way to establish sustainable socio-economic development [54]. In addition, through CSR initiatives related to environmental sustainability, such as Coca-Cola India's water-saving projects and NTPC's renewable energy initiatives, national development priorities are directly promoted while innovation and resilience are stimulated [35]. Adaptation and continuous improvement in CSR strategies will ensure that companies will remain relevant and responsive to changes in societal needs and sustainability goals in the global scenario [51]. India can strengthen its CSR framework for

the growth and development of sustainable nature by adopting best practices from neighboring countries and overcoming existing barriers. Strategic collaboration between corporates, government, and communities will unlock the full potential of CSR as a transformation tool toward achieving SDGs.

**Table 11.**  
Gap Identification.

Authors	Title	Examination	Gap Identified	How present Study Fills the Gap
ElAlfy, et al. [9]	Scoping the Evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Research in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Era	This study explores the evolution of CSR research post-SDG adoption, analyzing how companies integrate SDG goals into CSR strategies.	The study lacks a comprehensive exploration of sector-specific CSR practices in developing economies, particularly in India.	The present study provides a detailed examination of CSR contributions across various sectors in India and evaluates their effectiveness in advancing specific SDGs.
Zhao, et al. [31]	The Technological Innovation of Hybrid and Plug-in Electric Vehicles for Environmental Carbon Pollution Control	This research focuses on Japan's CSR-driven technological innovations aimed at reducing carbon emissions.	The study primarily focuses on environmental sustainability and lacks insights into socio-economic dimensions of CSR practices.	The present study provide a balanced evaluation of both socio-economic and environmental impacts of CSR initiatives in developing economies, offering a more holistic view of CSR contributions to sustainable development.
Costa, et al. [40]	Toward Quality Education: Contributions of EdTech to the Achievement of the Fourth United Nations Sustainable Development Goal	This study examines how digital education initiatives supported by CSR programs in South Korea contribute to reducing educational disparities and achieving SDG 4 (Quality Education).	The research focuses narrowly on the technology sector and South Korea, limiting its broader applicability to developing countries like India.	The present study expands the focus by evaluating CSR initiatives across multiple sectors and countries, including India, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of CSR strategies for educational development
Li, et al. [41]	Poverty Alleviation through Government-Led E-Commerce Development in Rural China	The authors analyze how China's government and large corporates like Alibaba use e-commerce development as part of their CSR strategies to combat rural poverty and promote economic inclusion.	The study overlooks the regulatory challenges and stakeholder engagement strategies necessary for CSR success in complex socio-economic environments.	The present study investigates the regulatory and community engagement barriers to CSR implementation in India, offering actionable recommendations to overcome these obstacles.
Ramakrishna and Eunice [28]	The Landscape of CSR in India: Challenges and Prospects Ahead	This study explores the evolution of CSR practices in India following the introduction of mandatory CSR legislation under Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013.	The research does not examine the alignment of CSR activities with specific SDG goals or evaluate their measurable impacts.	The present study systematically maps CSR initiatives to SDGs, providing a framework for evaluating their effectiveness and suggesting improvements for enhanced impact on national development goals.

## 6. Conclusion

This study centers the critical role CSR initiatives play in realizing SDGs for developing economies through effective CSR strategy, best practice socio-economic empowerment, and sustainable

environment that brings best practice countries into view-including Asia-leading nations of Japan, South Korea, and China. It incorporates CSR in its business operations through the emphasis of carbon-emitting reduction in firms like Toyota as it endeavors to manufacture its hybrid vehicle; thereby, contributing to the development of innovations in clean energy [31]. South Korea's embracing digital inclusion exhibits technology-based CSR that counterbalances educational imbalance to meet SDG 4-Quality Education [40]. Similarly, China's alignment of CSR initiatives with national development objectives reveals the role of digital platforms in reducing poverty and promoting economic growth [41]. These models can be a lesson for India in strengthening its CSR landscape and achieving global sustainability goals.

### 6.1. Policy Recommendations

Necessary are clear and simplified regulatory frameworks on CSR to raise further contributions toward attainment of SDG in India. Simplification in compliance procedures through sector-specific guidance will increase corporates' interest and accountability participation. Further making the contribution identifiable with the given systemic approach with mapping of SDG towards individual CSR initiatives in the company system will make sustainability reporting standards assist companies in clearly showing their part in contributing towards global development. It's the key characteristic of community-driven models involving planning and action with the local stakeholders under CSR. There'll be much power and innovation involved in public-private partnerships that amplify resources to uplift sustainable development goals. Sector-focused CSR strategies of information technology, manufacturing, health care will attempt to nullify the disadvantageous nature and overcome the pitfalls of each of these sectors as they look toward maximizing contributions in national development. Training programs towards raising awareness as well as building capabilities for corporate leadership and CSR experts would make strategic investments that aligned with business-oriented objectives and socially as well as environmentally necessary exigencies.

### 6.2. Future Research Directions

Longitudinal studies monitoring the impacts over time will help better elucidate how the role of CSR has evolved with the passage of time as an important driving force for socio-economic and environmental sustainability. Sector level tailor-made research focused on best practice optimization for specific sectors could yield actionable strategy recommendations for states of affairs. Analyzing the role of CSR in developing partnerships around the world among corporations, governments, and civil society will provide scalable models to attempt to realize larger SDGs. Emerging technologies such as applying artificial intelligence for impact assessment and blockchain for transparency open new possibilities for improving the effectiveness of CSR.

Evaluating the international comparison with the best practices and impact of the CSR policies for sharpening India's regulatory framework and improving its strategies in implementation can be considered of utmost importance in this regard. In that manner, India will progress to a strong and effective CSR ecosystem perfectly in alignment with sustainability goals at national as well as at global levels. CSR now emerges as the business imperative by getting beyond pure philanthropy; instead, CSR now becomes an influential tool for sustainable development. India will be significantly favored in terms of its journey toward achieving commitment under SDG by strategically adopting successful Asian CSR models. The research can unlock the full potential of CSR as a catalyst in promoting inclusive growth, responsible environmental stewardship, and socio-economic empowerment through greater collaboration between businesses, governments, and communities. Therefore, adopting the most adaptive and forward-thinking strategies regarding CSR can guarantee responsiveness to developing needs in society, eventually resulting in a better sustainable future.

## Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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