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CSR For Women Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

This paper has discussed how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives impact the empowerment of women based on four dimensions of the initiative that included education, economic support, health and well-being programmes and leadership development through an analysis of data of 300 women through an online survey. Regression analysis indicated that, despite the positive relationship between all the variables CSR and empowerment, the health and well-being programmes and leadership development initiatives were the only two variables that significantly predicted women empowerment when the two variables were taken in combination. Correlation outcomes indicated that all variables have strong positive relationships with each other with the strongest relationship being between leadership development and empowerment. These results indicate the significance of developing CSR programmes that focus on leadership prospects, capacity-building exercises, and full body wellness support to women. The paper indicates that cohesive CSR practices have the capacity to develop greater and enduring impact of empowerment. Future research recommendations should be longitudinal studies, increased samples, and extended qualitative research to enhance the knowledge on the effect of CSR on gender empowerment.

Keywords CSR, women empowerment, leadership development, health programmes, regression analysis, gender equality

1. INTRODUCTION:

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a necessary strategic instrument for organisations aiming at making positive contributions to the growth and development of the society, but one of the most urgent and unrelenting challenges that require corporate actions is the inequality experienced by women in the economic, social and cultural arenas. Although the world has made significant steps in gender rights and recognising the contribution of women towards the development of a nation and organisations, there still exist discriminatory mechanisms that deny women access to education, employment, high-ranking positions, financial gains and social security. These gaps have been especially high in the developing and emerging economies where systemic constraints; cultural norms and the lack of institutional support limit the full participation of women in the society. Although governments and non-governmental organisations strive to close these disparities, they do not always succeed and do not have enough resources to do so without the participation of the private sector.

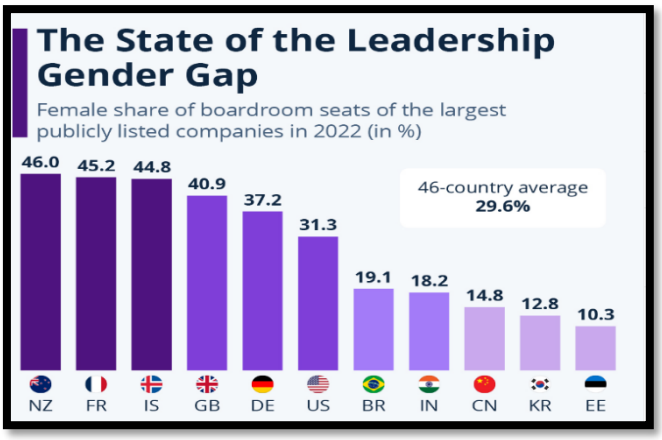

Figure 1: Women empowerment in different countries

(Source: Statista, 2024)

Statista asserts that in the largest publicly listed companies (46 major economies) in 2022, only slightly less than 30% of boardroom seats were occupied by females. This chart visualises the percentage of women holding boardroom seats in major publicly listed companies across 11

countries in 2022. According to CSRCares, CSR spending on *women empowerment* in India was ₹206 crore in FY 2020–2021, increasing to ₹253.86 crore in FY 2021–2022. The global benchmark included is the 46-country average of 29.6%, showing where each country stands relative to this global standard (Sabir and Majid, 2023).

The CSR programs related to women empowerment are therefore seen as a mandatory complement to the policies of the government since it can utilise corporate resources, innovation and impact to generate long-term change.

An example is that a report by UNDP shows that only approximately 4 per cent of all CSR expenditure was spent on economic empowerment of women (WEE) among BSE 100 firms. In an analysis of the 100 leading companies listed in BSE, 72% of companies indicated that they have CSR initiatives targeting women empowerment (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India, 2019). Visa committed USD 1 million to empower women entrepreneurs in 170 villages in Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Maharashtra and Karnataka to initiate and execute entrepreneurship and financial inclusion programs to train more than 8,500 women. Ultra Tech Cement (Arakkonam plant) has empowered 2202 rural females (CSR) in tailoring and embroidering (CSR Cares. (2024). According to UN Women, the *global cost of failing to invest in women and gender equality* is around **US$ 10 trillion per year**. Investing in gender equality is not just social justice — it's economically smart: UN Women estimates that closing the gender gap could boost the global economy by **US$ 4 trillion by 2030**. The *Global Gender Gap Report* (WEF) also estimates that achieving gender equality in developing economies may require investments of **US$ 7.8 trillion per year** for SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) related to gender (OECD, 2019).

Existing literature illustrates the importance of CSR in terms of community building or organisational image, but works concentrating specifically on how the practice can empower women have been splintered as either individual programmes, general gender policies or narrow case studies as opposed to providing a comprehensive picture of the effect. In addition, a lot of the current literature lays more emphasis on economic empowerment by creating job opportunities, but ignores other important aspects of empowerment which include education, health, safety, entrepreneurial support and leadership development. This shows a distinct failure to understand CSRs as a strategic design, implementation, and evaluation exercise, that can lead to sustainable empowerment effects on women in various areas of life (Gupta *et al.* 2024). The absence of comprehensive frameworks also implies that most corporations have superficial programs that create awareness but cannot break down the systematic issues women still have to deal with. That is why the current study is required to address this gap and offer a detailed analysis of how CSR can actually contribute to women empowerment, define best practices, obstacles, and groundbreaking models that will bypass the commonplace giving-away types of charity (Singh and Singh, 2020).

The study will add to the theoretical and practical knowledge of CSR as an operating mechanism of gender equality by examining actual CSR practices, the way organisations operate, and the effects on communities. Another objective of the research is to understand how organisations can integrate their CSR efforts with international frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals with Goal 5 focusing on the achievement of gender equality and empowering women and girls as a whole.

The hypothesis that the study puts forward is that properly planned, long term CSR programs can produce a significant positive factor in the economic independence of women, educational opportunities, leadership roles and the overall social empowerment of women. Besides, it speculates that gender-oriented CSR policies incorporated into company business strategies increase the organisational performance via boosting trust, reputation, innovation, and workforce diversity.

By filling the gaps in the body of existing literature and providing an evidenced-based investigation of CSR as the driver of women empowerment, the study will enhance the body of literature and assist organisations in developing more effective CSR programmes that can result in fair and inclusive development of society.

2. METHOD

Research Design

It utilized a quantitative research design to investigate the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts in addressing the empowerment of women. The research design was developed based on a cross-sectional survey design that enabled the researcher to gather data on a large population of respondents at one time. A web-based survey was created to retrieve quantitative information concerning the opinion of CSR activities, empowerment, and demographic factors.

Population and Sample

This study population was the adult women living in both urban and semi-urban locations, who had some exposure to CSR programmes undertaken by either a private or a public organisation. Out of this population, a sample of 300 respondents was decided by the use of non-probability purposive sampling method with the aim of making sure that the sample had an experience of relevance in CSR initiatives. The sampling strategy facilitated the representation of various age groups, employment statuses as well as education levels.

Data Collection Procedure

The information was gathered by use of an online survey sent out by email as well as social media. The respondents were given a link that led to the survey instrument that provided closed-ended questions on a five-point Likert scale. The online mode made it accessible, minimized administrative expenses and automatic recording of responses in a digital database.

Data Analysis

Data obtained in this way were coded and introduced in the SPSS to be analysed statistically. Demographic characteristics and key variables were summarised by using descriptive statistics. Regression analysis was

applied in inferential analysis in order to test the hypothesised relationships between CSR initiatives and various dimensions of women empowerment. Internal consistency was tested by conducting reliability tests such as Cronbach's alpha. The research procedural ethics were observed.

Independent Variables (IVs):

CSR Education Initiatives

CSR Economic Support

CSR Health and Well-being Programmes

CSR Leadership Development Initiative

Dependent Variable (DV):

Women Empowerment

Questionnaire design

What is your age?

What is your gender?

What is your education?

What is your occupation?

Independent Variable 1: CSR Education Initiatives

CSR education programmes provided by organisations have improved my knowledge and skills.

I have access to training or educational sessions supported through CSR initiatives.

The CSR educational activities I participated in were relevant to my personal or professional growth.

CSR-funded educational programmes have increased my confidence in learning new things.

Independent Variable 2: CSR Economic Support

CSR initiatives have provided me with financial support or opportunities to enhance my income.

CSR programmes have helped me develop skills needed for better employment or business opportunities.

I feel that CSR economic support has improved my financial stability.

I have benefited from CSR initiatives that offer resources such as equipment, funding, or job placement.

Independent Variable 3: CSR Health and Well-being Programmes

CSR health programmes have improved my access to healthcare services.

I have participated in health or wellness activities supported by CSR initiatives.

CSR health interventions have positively influenced my physical or mental well-being.

I believe CSR health programmes contribute to creating a healthier lifestyle for women.

Independent Variable 4: CSR Leadership Development Initiatives

CSR programmes have provided opportunities for me to take part in leadership training.

I feel more confident taking leadership roles due to CSR development initiatives.

CSR leadership initiatives have helped me improve my decision-making or problem-solving skills.

I have been encouraged to participate in community or organisational leadership activities through CSR support.

Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment

I feel more confident in making important decisions about my personal or professional life.

I believe I have more opportunities to grow and progress because of empowerment initiatives.

I feel that my ability to participate actively in society has improved.

I believe I have more control and independence over aspects of my life.

Result

Regression Analysis

Table 1: Regression testing and Anova

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.923[a]	.852	.850	1.70195

a. Predictors: (Constant), IV4, IV1, IV2, IV3

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4864.064	4	1216.016	419.801	.000[b]
	Residual	845.821	292	2.897		
	Total	5709.886	296			

a. Dependent Variable: DV

b. Predictors: (Constant), IV4, IV1, IV2, IV3

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.035	.407		.085	.933
	IV1	.012	.032	.012	.362	.718

	IV2	.076	.050	.074	1.536	.126
	IV3	.273	.060	.261	4.578	.000
	IV4	.633	.053	.611	12.024	.000
a. Dependent Variable: DV						

To establish the level at which the four independent variables explained the dependent variable, the outcomes of the multiple regression analysis were provided. The summary of the model revealed that the regression model generated a very high R value of.923 that proved a very strong correlation between the group of independent variables and the dependent variable. The coefficient of determination, R square, stood at.852, which depicted that 85.2 percent of the variation of the dependent variable was explained by the four predictors used to calculate the coefficient of determination. The adjusted R square was found to be.850, with a slight decrease on the adjusted R Square when it had the number of predictors and sample size, which confirms the stability of the model. The standard error of the estimate was 1.70195, which denotes the mean distance of the predicted values and the actual values. Table 1, which is labelled as Model Summary, presented these values.

The ANOVA table indicated that there was a statistically significant regression model. The regression sum of squares was 4864.064, and the residual sum of squares was 845.821, which gave the sum of squares as 5709.886. In the model, the F-value obtained was 419.801 with a degree of freedom of 4 and 292 and the significance level of the value was 0.000. This implied that the overall regression model was found to significantly predict the dependent variable. Table 2 with the title ANOVA was used to present the ANOVA table.

The table of coefficients revealed unstandardized and standardized coefficients of each independent variable. It had a coefficient of the constant (B) that was unstandardized (.035) with a standard error of .407 resulting in a t-value of.085 having a standard significance value of.933, showing that the constant was not significant to the model. In the first independent variable (IV1), the unstandardized coefficient was.012 with a standard error of.032. The standardized coefficient (Beta) was.012. The t-value of IV1 was .362, and the level of significance was.718, which means that IV1 did not have a significant effect on the dependent variable.

The second independent variable (IV2) had a coefficient of .076 which was not standardized, and its standard error was.050. IV2 had a standardized coefficient of.074. The t-value of IV2 was 1.536 with the significance level of.126, and it implied that IV2 was also not a practical predictor of the dependent variable at the.05 significant level. The unstandardized coefficient of the third independent variable (IV3) was.273 with a standard error of.060. The t-test coefficient was.261. The t-value of this variable was 4.578 and the level of significance was 0.000 indicating that IV3 was a significant predictor of the dependent variable. The fourth independent variable (IV4) had a coefficient of un standardized value of.633 with a standard error of.053. The coefficient was standardized and it was.611. The t-value of IV4 was 12.024 and the significance value was.000, which implies that IV4 was a significant predictor of the dependent variable.

These results indicated that only IV3 and IV4 had significant predictive value on the dependent variable at p <.05. The table 3 which was named Coefficients contained the regression results.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Correlation testing

Correlations

		IV1	IV2	IV3	IV4	DV
IV1	Pearson Correlation	1	.685**	.667**	.637**	.632**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	300	297	300	300	300
IV2	Pearson Correlation	.685**	1	.865**	.829**	.814**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	297	297	297	297	297
IV3	Pearson Correlation	.667**	.865**	1	.888**	.875**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	300	297	300	300	300
IV4	Pearson Correlation	.637**	.829**	.888**	1	.910**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	300	297	300	300	300
DV	Pearson Correlation	.632**	.814**	.875**	.910**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	300	297	300	300	300

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation matrix of Pearson involved the correlations of all independent variables and dependent variables and all the correlations were tested at the significance level of 0.01 (two-tailed). The findings showed that the first independent variable (IV1) had a positive correlation with IV2 (r =.685, p <.01), IV3 (r =.667, p <.01), and IV4 (r =.637, p <.01). IV1 too exhibited a positive relationship with the dependent variable (r = .632, p < .01). These results proved that there were moderate and strong correlations between IV1 and

the other independent variables as well as the dependent variable.

The second independent variable (IV2) was very strongly correlated with the rest of the variables. IV2 and IV3 were positively correlated (.865 ($p < .01$)) with each other. IV4 was also strongly related to IV2 ($r =. 829$, $p <.01$). The value of IV2 and the dependent variable was $r =.814$ ($p < .01$) indicating a strong positive relationship. The correlation of all IV2 with all IV2 was significant at the.01 level.

The fourth independent variable (IV4) had a high correlation with the third independent variable (IV3) with a Pearson correlation of .888 ($p <.01$). IV3 was also found to have a strong relationship with the dependent variable ($r =.875$, $p =.01$). Also, the associations between IV3 and the other independent variables (IV1 and IV2) were high with the coefficients of .667 and.865 respectively, which are significant at the.01 level. These findings indicated that IV3 had long-term high relationships between it and all other variables.

The correlation between the fourth independent variable (IV4) and the dependent variable was the strongest with a Pearson coefficient of.910 ($p <.01$), which is a very strong positive association. Strong correlations between IV4 and IV2 ($r = .829$, $p < .01$) and IV3 ($r =.888$, $p <.01$) and moderate-strong correlation between IV4 and IV1 ($r =.637$, $p <.01$) were also observed. All the correlations were significant at the.01 level.

All independent variables had significant positive relationships with the dependent variable (DV). The correlation with IV1 was.632 ($p <.01$), IV2 was.814 ($p <.01$), IV3 was.875 ($p <.01$) and IV4 was.910 ($p <.01$). These values demonstrated that all the independent variables had a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable, IV4 had the strongest correlation and IV1 the lowest. Correlations Table 4 titled Correlations showed the correlation matrix.

All statistical tests were done based on the Pearson correlation coefficient and all variables measured in the interval or ratio level that would be appropriate in doing correlation and regression analysis. Each correlation had a slight variation in the sample sizes given that a few data were missing and most of the correlations were done at $N =300$ sample size. The table denoted all the significant correlations with double asterisks.

3. DISCUSSION

This research has shown that the relationship between CSR initiatives and women empowerment is strong and meaningful, which provides valuable information about the ways in which organisational CSR policies could facilitate gender equality and help to develop societies. The regression analysis demonstrated that all the independent variables were positively related with women empowerment though only CSR Health and Well-being Programmes and CSR Leadership Development Initiatives significantly contributed when they were put together in the model. It implies that although access to education and economic support in the form of CSR initiatives does increase empowerment in a more fundamental level, its impact may be drowned out in cases where more and more transformative forms of CSR, especially leadership development, are experienced. This finding was supported by the correlation analysis because all four CSR variables were highly and significantly correlated with empowerment where leadership development had the strongest correlation (Uduji and Okolo-Obasi, 2020). The results are consistent with the current study in the CSR and gender empowerment literature that shows that training, leadership exposure, health security, and safe environments have a more decisive impact on the agency, confidence, independence, and long-term socio-economic mobility of women. Previous researchers have also established that women empowerment is multidimensional and structural support, including leadership training and wellness programmes, not only improves wellbeing but also allows women to take an active part in the decision-making process whether at home or in an organisational context.

The question of high correlation between the CSR variables can also be interpreted as a reflection of the existing theoretical frameworks that imply the outcomes of women empowerment seem to be the product of a complex set of resources, that is, economic, social, health-related, and psychological resources, and not the outcome of a single initiative. This network is the reason that education-based and economic-based CSR initiatives could not independently predict empowerment with the introduction of leadership and health factors: women with leadership opportunities and health assistance might be already enjoying the benefits of the base education and economic interventions that might have occurred before or in parallel (Skaf *et al.* 2024). These findings thus suggest that the strategies of CSR can be layered with some of the simplest levels of interventions having the highest stability and participation rates, with more sophisticated plans having the greatest empirical power to yield the most significant outcomes of empowerment. The results imply a lot to the organisations that intend to design CSR programmes to empower women. The findings indicate that the interventions that need to be given priority by companies aiming at generating tangible and impactful empowerment effects is one that leads to development of leadership competencies, confidence, and the ability of women to take up influential roles in societies, workplaces and institutions. The leadership-oriented CSR, including mentoring programs, skills training sessions, networking and opportunities to become a manager or board member, can potentially be the most effective change in the long-term. Also, CSR investments in health and well-being programmes, such as physical health services, mental health support, wellness workshops, as well as safety-related initiatives, seem to be essential pillars of empowerment. Women are also able to portray a higher ability to be actively involved in economic, social and leadership positions when they are able to access health security. This supports international conventions like the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) that highlight the need to have integrated interventions in the empowerment of women.

The observation that, though positively related with empowerment, education and economic support did not

uniquely predict empowerment in the multivariate model indicates the possibility that such types of CSR should be more specific, specialised, or long-term in order to distinguish themselves in terms of influences compared to the impacts of leadership and health programmes (Kumar *et al.* 2022). Organisations might thus be required to make the quality, delivery, and scope of educational and economic CSR interventions stronger, non- generic short-term programmes, but long-term, skills-based, development-oriented, and gender-specific CSR initiatives. The high interrelationships between all CSR variables also suggest that organisations ought to consider empowerment as a cumulative process rather than a one-step process that needs to be reinforced based on several areas. Despite the fact that the findings are meaningful, there are a number of limitations to the study, which must be admitted. Firstly, the survey design involves cross-sectional design due to which it is impossible to establish a causal relationship since the information only reflects the perception at one moment. Longitudinal research would enable the researchers to follow the change in empowerment with time and see the effect of particular CSR programmes on the long-term results on women.

Second, self-reporting puts forward subjective bias, since the respondents perceptions might have been contaminated by their own experiences or social desirability. Future research should use mixed methods such as interviews or focus groups to offer more information on the interpretation and experience of CSR interventions by women. Third, the correlations between the independent variables are relatively strong, which contributes to the possibility of multicollinearity because the CSR constructs might overlap conceptually or respondents might view them as elements of the general empowerment model. Research that is to be conducted in the future ought to include a factor analysis as to whether the four CSR variables are differentiated dimensions or should be re-modelled into fewer elements that represent wider CSR themes. Moreover, there was only a sample of women in some geographic or social forerunners, which restricted the generalisability. Future research would be able to look across other geographical areas, socio-economic levels, or cultural conditions to understand the impact of CSR on empowerment among other people. International comparative research might also be used to understand how the different CSR policies and organisational cultures influence the results of gender empowerment. Irrespective of these shortcomings, the study offers solid evidence that CSR is relevant to promote women empowerment particularly when it is aimed at leadership development and health-related programs (Dempere and Abdalla, 2023). Any organisation that aims at developing transformative and sustainable empowerment results should thus take into account embracing integrated CSR strategies which extend far beyond simple economic assistance, education training, and focus on the long-term development, capacity building, and structural empowerment. Enhancing female leadership options, health support structures and offering safer and more inclusive working environments can be effective tools that can be used to change gender roles, raise the rate of involvement and promote equality (Al Hameli, Mertzanis and Kampouris, 2024).

Results indicate that the most effective way of empowering women is by having CSR interventions focus on both the lower-level needs and the upper-level capabilities of the women. Further studies especially those that are better structured in the methodology and have a more differentiated sample could further confirm these results and may lead to the creation of a more effective CSR model that can truly help women and help them to be a full-fledged member of society..

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