ABSTRACT

Objectives: The study aims to analyze the evolution and regulatory mandates of CSR in India, explore stakeholder engagement dynamics, highlight leading organizations driving sustainability and address challenges like transparency and accountability within the CSR landscape.

Methods: The study employed a descriptive and analytical method, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources.

Result: The study reveals India’s diverse CSR landscape shaped by regulatory mandates, cultural values, and stakeholder expectations, showcasing a shift towards strategic initiatives addressing social and environmental challenges. While challenges like transparency and impact measurement persist, opportunities for improvement exist, emphasizing the need for integrating CSR into business strategies and fostering stakeholder engagement. Successful CSR practices underscore businesses’ potential to drive inclusive growth and sustainable development while bolstering their reputation and competitiveness.

Conclusion: India’s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) landscape is characterized by a complex interplay of regulatory mandates, cultural values, and stakeholder engagement, all aimed at fostering inclusive growth and sustainable development. Despite notable progress driven by legislative requirements like the Companies Act 2013, challenges such as effective implementation and transparency persist. However, through enhanced accountability, regulatory reforms, and a focus on aligning CSR strategies with local needs and global sustainability goals, India can further strengthen its CSR framework. By leveraging insights from the study, policymakers, businesses, and civil society organizations can collaboratively address these challenges and unlock the full potential of CSR to drive positive societal impact and contribute to a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable future for all.

Keywords: Evolution of CSR, Regulatory Mandates, Models, Stakeholder, Challenges.

RESUMO

Objetivos: O estudo tem como objetivo analisar a evolução e os mandatos regulatórios da RSE na Índia, explorar a dinâmica de engajamento das partes interessadas, destacar as principais organizações que impulsionam a sustentabilidade e enfrentar desafios como a transparência e a prestação de contas no cenário da RSE.

Métodos: O estudo empregou um método descritivo e analítico, utilizando fontes de dados primárias e secundárias.
Resultado: o estudo revela o cenário diversificado de RSE da Índia moldado por mandatos regulatórios, valores culturais e expectativas das partes interessadas, demonstrando uma mudança para iniciativas estratégicas que abordam desafios sociais e ambientais. Embora persistam desafios como a transparência e a medição do impacto, existem oportunidades de melhoria, salientando a necessidade de integrar a RSE nas estratégias empresariais e de promover o envolvimento das partes interessadas. As práticas de RSE bem-sucedidas sublinham o potencial das empresas para impulsionar o crescimento inclusivo e o desenvolvimento sustentável, reforçando simultaneamente a sua reputação e competitividade.

Conclusão: O cenário de Responsabilidade Social Corporativa (RSE) da Índia é caracterizado por uma interação complexa de mandatos regulatórios, valores culturais e envolvimento das partes interessadas, todos visando promover o crescimento inclusivo e o desenvolvimento sustentável. Apesar dos notáveis progressos impulsionados pelos requisitos legislativos, como a Lei das Empresas de 2013, persistem desafios como a implementação efetiva e a transparência. No entanto, através de uma maior responsabilização, de reformas regulamentares e da ênfase no alinhamento das estratégias de RSE com as necessidades locais e os objetivos de sustentabilidade global, a Índia pode reforçar ainda mais o seu quadro de RSE. Aproveitando os insights do estudo, os formuladores de políticas, as empresas e as organizações da sociedade civil podem enfrentar esses desafios de forma colaborativa e desbloquear todo o potencial da RSE para gerar impacto social positivo e contribuir para um futuro mais equitativo, inclusivo e sustentável para todos.

Palavras-chave: Evolução da RSE, Mandatos Regulatórios, Modelos, Participante, Desafios.

DECODIFICACIÓN DE LAS PRÁCTICAS DE RESPONSABILIDAD SOCIAL CORPORATIVA: EL MARCO ÚNICO DE LA INDIA

RESUMEN

Objetivos: El estudio tiene como objetivo analizar la evolución y los mandatos regulatorios de la RSE en la India, explorar la dinámica de participación de las partes interesadas, destacar las principales organizaciones que impulsan la sostenibilidad y abordan desafíos como la transparencia y la rendición de cuentas dentro del panorama de la RSE.

Métodos: El estudio empleó un método descriptivo y analítico, utilizando fuentes de datos primarias y secundarias.

Resultado: El estudio revela el panorama diverso de la RSC de la India moldeado por los mandatos regulatorios, los valores culturales y las expectativas de las partes interesadas, mostrando un cambio hacia iniciativas estratégicas que abordan los desafíos sociales y ambientales. Si bien persisten desafios como la transparencia y la mediación del impacto, existen oportunidades de mejora, haciendo hincapié en la necesidad de integrar la RSE en las estrategias empresariales y fomentar la participación de las partes interesadas. Las prácticas de RSE exitosas subrayan el potencial de las empresas para impulsar el crecimiento inclusivo y el desarrollo sostenible, al tiempo que fortalecen su reputación y competitividad.

Conclusión: El panorama de la Responsabilidad Social Corporativa (RSC) de la India se caracteriza por una compleja interacción de mandatos regulatorios, valores culturales y participación de las partes interesadas, todo dirigido a fomentar el crecimiento inclusivo y el desarrollo sostenible. A pesar de los notables avances impulsionados por requisitos legislativos como la Ley de Empresas de 2013, persisten desafios como la implementación efectiva y la transparencia. Sin embargo, a través de una mayor rendición de cuentas, reformas regulatorias y un enfoque en alinear las estrategias de RSE con las necesidades locales y los objetivos de sostenibilidad global, la India puede fortalecer aún más su marco de RSE. Al aprovechar los conocimientos del estudio, los responsables de las políticas, las empresas y las organizaciones de la sociedad civil pueden abordar en colaboración estos desafíos y liberar todo el potencial de la RSE para impulsar un impacto social positivo y contribuir a un futuro más equitativo, inclusivo y sostenible para todos.

Palabras clave: Evolución de la RSE, Mandatos Reguladores, Modelos, Stakeholder, Retos.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In today's business landscape, companies recognize the intertwined nature of fostering success and contributing to societal well-being, echoing sentiments expressed by William Clay Ford. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become integral to corporations’ core objectives, serving as a strategic differentiator in competitive markets. By investing in CSR initiatives, businesses aim to enhance their brand image, reputation, and customer loyalty, ultimately driving sustained growth while assuming responsibility for the impact of their actions on various stakeholders and society at large.

In India, the evolution of CSR mirrors historical shifts, from ancient charitable traditions influenced by religious beliefs to modern legislative mandates like the Companies Act 2013. The economic liberalization of the 1990s empowered Indian companies to engage in CSR initiatives, catalyzing collaborations with NGOs and governmental entities. Despite obstacles such as transparency and accountability issues, ongoing cooperation presents significant potential for meaningful transformation. By aligning CSR projects with national development objectives, India can enhance its CSR framework and contribute to a fair, enduring future for all stakeholders.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

India's unique theoretical framework for decoding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices encompasses a blend of legal mandates, cultural ethos, and stakeholder engagement. Rooted in legislative requirements such as the Companies Act 2013, which mandates certain companies to allocate funds for CSR activities, India's approach to CSR is characterized by a multi-dimensional perspective (Gatti et al., 2019). Emphasizing the alignment of business objectives with societal welfare, the framework prioritizes inclusive growth, environmental sustainability, and ethical business conduct (Fernando & Lawrence, 2014). Cultural imperatives underscore the importance of community engagement and philanthropy, shaping CSR initiatives towards addressing local needs and fostering long-term sustainable development (Das, 2017). Integrated reporting mechanisms further enhance transparency and accountability, ensuring the effective implementation and impact assessment of CSR initiatives (Vlachos et al., 2017). India's distinctive theoretical framework for CSR decoding underscores the holistic integration of legal, cultural, and stakeholder dimensions to drive meaningful corporate contributions to social progress.
2.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities in India rest in its capacity to generate beneficial effects on society, foster sustainable development, and strengthen corporate responsibility. The study can provide significant insights for governments, enterprises, and civil society organizations by examining the implementation, obstacles, and effects of CSR projects. Gaining insight into the effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) frameworks can provide valuable information for legislative reforms aimed at enhancing enforcement mechanisms, enhancing transparency, and promoting responsible business behavior. The findings of the study can provide valuable guidance to firms in creating CSR strategies that are both effective and sustainable, while also being in line with local requirements and global sustainability objectives. The research adds to the creation of a corporate culture that promotes ethical business practices and eventually advances India's socio-economic development agenda by addressing current gaps in practices. The results of the study can be used as a foundation for comparing CSR frameworks in different countries, which would facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices to improve global corporate responsibility initiatives. The study's significance rests in its capacity to stimulate positive transformation, foster sustainable development, and propel inclusive progress in India.

2.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem statement regarding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices in India revolves around the need to ensure effective implementation, transparency, and accountability in corporate initiatives aimed at societal welfare. Despite legislative mandates and cultural imperatives promoting CSR activities, challenges persist in ensuring that businesses prioritize impactful and sustainable projects aligned with community needs. The issues arise concerning the measurement and evaluation of CSR outcomes, as well as concerns regarding green washing and tokenism. The lack of standardized reporting frameworks and inconsistent enforcement mechanisms further complicates the landscape, hindering the realization of CSR's full potential as a driver of inclusive growth and sustainable development. Thus, the problem statement necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the barriers and opportunities within India's CSR framework to enhance its efficacy and foster genuine corporate engagement in social responsibility.
2.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to comprehensively analyze the evolution, regulatory mandates, and diverse models of social responsibility in India, culminating in the examination of India's unique CSR framework and its influence on corporate practices. It seeks to explore stakeholder engagement dynamics in shaping CSR initiatives, highlighting leading organizations driving sustainability and their impact on national development goals. The study also address inherent challenges and opportunities within India's CSR landscape, including the crucial aspects of transparency, accountability, and sustainable impact measurement, thereby providing insights into the multifaceted nature of CSR in the Indian context.

3 MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study utilized a descriptive and analytical approach, combining primary data collected through surveys with secondary data from sources like the India CSR Outlook Report (ICOR) and other literature. Qualitative thematic analysis of primary data provided insights into CSR practices, while secondary data enriched the analysis with empirical evidence and statistical trends. Primary data was gathered via Google Forms, social media, and email surveys, focusing on inputs from HR representatives and NGO coordinators. Integration of primary insights with secondary analysis aimed to offer a comprehensive exploration of India's CSR framework, highlighting its evolution, current status, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 EVOLUTION OF CSR

The evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India reflects a rich historical trajectory. Rooted in ancient traditions, philanthropy was initially driven by religious principles, extending to merchants charity during pre-industrialization (Tripathi & Bains, 2013). From 1850 to 1914, cultural, religious, and familial values motivated substantial donations, aligning with industrialization efforts (Mosca & Civera, 2017). Gandhi's 'Trusteeship' philosophy during the independence movement catalyzed CSR's alignment with nation-building goals (Cochran, 2007). Post-independence, a shift from Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) to private sector
involvement occurred; with economic liberalization in the 1990s further propelling CSR engagement (Alfy et al., 2020). Legislative mandates like the Companies Act 2013 and New CSR Rules 2014 solidified CSR's legal framework, shaping its contemporary significance in India's socio-economic landscape (Tripathi & Bains, 2013).

4.2 REGULATORY MANDATES FOR CSR IN INDIA

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs, under the Government of India, introduced the Companies Act 2013, marking a significant milestone in global CSR implementation. This legislation made CSR a mandatory provision, requiring firms to engage in activities promoting societal welfare. Unique to India, this regulatory framework targets specific enterprises registered under the Act, emphasizing the alignment of business objectives with broader social goals. CSR efforts, mandated by Section 135 of the Act, aim to drive sustainable development and foster collaborations between public and private sectors, overseen by the Ministry to ensure compliance and accountability.

In addition to overseeing CSR regulations, the Ministry administers the Competition Act 2002 and supervises professional organizations such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). Ensuring adherence to regulatory frameworks, understanding tax implications, and complying with the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) are pivotal for successful CSR implementation in India. By embracing CSR, businesses contribute positively to society and the environment while navigating complex regulatory landscapes to drive meaningful change and uphold ethical standards.

4.3 MODELS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OPERATING IN INDIA

A report by The Energy and Resource Institute (TERI) outlines four models of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India. The Ethical Model, inspired by Gandhi's principle of Trusteeship, emphasizes utilizing resources for the welfare of the underprivileged, addressing structural issues like poverty and inequality through ethical business practices. The Statist Model, influenced by Nehru's socialist ideology, focuses on state ownership and legal requirements in corporate responsibility, particularly observed in public sector enterprises. The Liberal Model, advocated by Milton Friedman, prioritizes profit maximization within legal and ethical bounds, cautioning against excessive social spending. Lastly, the Stakeholder Model, proposed by Edward Freeman, emphasizes stakeholder welfare beyond shareholders,
suggesting that responsiveness to all stakeholders enhances resilience and long-term performance. These models reflect varied approaches to CSR, encompassing ethical considerations, legal mandates, and the balance between shareholder interests and stakeholder welfare.

4.4 INDIA’S UNIQUE CSR FRAMEWORK

India's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) system is internationally recognized for its comprehensive approach and regulatory requirements. The framework incorporates diverse components, demonstrating India's dedication to both social advancement and economic expansion. The Companies Act of 2013 established the legal basis for India's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) framework (Gupta & Gupta, 2019). Section 135 of the Act mandates that specific corporations allocate a part of their income towards corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs (Dhanesh, 2015). The legal mandate ensures that firms incorporate social responsibility into their commercial activities.

India's CSR policy has a wide-ranging scope (Panigrahi & Sheela, 2015). It encompasses a broad spectrum of endeavors, such as eliminating hunger and poverty, advancing education, healthcare, gender parity, environmental conservation, and other related pursuits (Mony & Babu, 2020). The extensive range of topics covered in the context demonstrates the wide-ranging societal requirements and difficulties that exist in India.

The framework highlights the notion of “business responsibility”, urging corporations to beyond mere altruism and instead integrates CSR operations with their fundamental corporate principles and aims (G. Rajan, 2024). The technique guarantees the continuation and lasting influence by efficiently utilizing the knowledge and resources of the corporation. The framework promotes synergy among the corporate sector, government, and civil society organizations to cooperatively tackle social concerns (Chahoud et al., 2007). Collaborations of the nature amplify the scope and efficacy of corporate social responsibility endeavors, resulting in a more significant influence on society.

Transparency and accountability are essential components of India's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) framework (Sapovadia, 2015). Corporations must publicly reveal their corporate social responsibility (CSR) expenditures and initiatives in their yearly financial statements, guaranteeing openness in the allocation of monies. The level of accountability promotes confidence among stakeholders and empowers them to oversee the effects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts.
The framework fosters ingenuity and originality in corporate social responsibility (CSR) endeavors (Singh & Mittal, 2019). Companies are urged to create inventive solutions to tackle intricate societal problems, promoting a culture of social innovation and entrepreneurship. An exemplary instance of India’s distinctive corporate social responsibility (CSR) system in operation is the "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" (Clean India Mission), initiated in 2014.

Through the project, there was collaboration between public and private sector entities to accomplish the objective of making India clean and free from open defecation. This was achieved by constructing toilets, raising awareness about sanitation, and assuring effective waste management. India's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) structure is notable for its legal requirement, extensive coverage, and focus on company accountability, cooperation, openness, and ingenuity. India seeks to foster a more comprehensive and enduring society by incorporating corporate social responsibility (CSR) into its business operations. This entails harmonizing economic progress with social advancement, thereby promoting inclusivity and sustainability.

4.5 INFLUENCE ON CSR IN INDIA

In India, CSR practices are deeply influenced by cultural values, emphasizing philanthropy and duty (dharma), as well as ethical conduct inspired by cultural integrity. Religious beliefs such as "seva" (selfless service) drive societal expectations for businesses to contribute to societal welfare. Legal mandates, like the Companies Act, 2013, enforce CSR
obligations, ensuring alignment with societal values and promoting corporate citizenship. Economic imperatives also play a role, with CSR fostering sustainable development and inclusive growth. Together, these factors form a multifaceted framework guiding CSR initiatives, reflecting India's rich cultural heritage and societal aspirations for corporate responsibility.

Embedded in cultural ethos, CSR initiatives in India uphold traditions of philanthropy and ethical business practices. Longstanding initiatives like Tata Trusts exemplify a commitment to societal welfare, investing in education, healthcare, and rural development projects. Ethical conduct is further underscored, with companies like Infosys known for their strong ethical framework and corporate governance practices. Legal mandates outlined in the Companies Act, 2013, require qualifying corporations to allocate a percentage of their income to CSR efforts, showcasing adherence to regulations and responsiveness to societal needs. From an economic standpoint, CSR initiatives contribute to sustainable development and inclusive growth, as illustrated by examples like Hindustan Unilever Limited's Project Shakti, which empowers rural women through entrepreneurship while creating economic opportunities. By intertwining philanthropy, ethical considerations, legal obligations, and economic imperatives, businesses in India fulfill their role as responsible corporate citizens, contributing to socio-economic progress while upholding cultural values.

4.6 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN SHAPING CSR PRACTICES

The CSR landscape in India thrives on the active engagement of diverse stakeholders, each contributing significantly to the advancement of CSR endeavors. Government entities, such as the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, formulate policies and regulations to promote CSR initiatives, as mandated by Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013. Corporations, leveraging their financial resources and expertise, establish specialized CSR departments or foundations to spearhead impactful CSR programs. Entities like Tata Trusts exemplify corporate commitment to social development through longstanding initiatives. NGOs, including Pratham and Goonj, play a crucial role in mobilizing communities and implementing grassroots-level projects in areas like education and disaster relief. Local communities, directly impacted by CSR interventions, actively participate in decision-making processes, ensuring the relevance and sustainability of initiatives. Collaborative efforts among government bodies, corporations, NGOs, and local communities are essential for addressing complex societal challenges and fostering sustainable development in India.
4.7 CSR IMPACT IN INDIA: LEADING ORGANIZATIONS DRIVING SUSTAINABILITY

In India, CSR initiatives have made significant contributions to education and environmental protection, addressing critical societal and ecological challenges. Companies have invested in various programs such as scholarship initiatives, infrastructure development in schools, afforestation drives, waste management projects, and renewable energy initiatives. These efforts have led to increased enrollment rates, improved learning outcomes, biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration, and reduced environmental pollution. Prominent corporations like Tata Group, Infosys Limited, and Reliance Industries Limited have allocated substantial funds for CSR activities, complying with environmental regulations and fostering sustainable development outcomes. Continuous monitoring ensures the enduring impact of CSR strategies, contributing to a more sustainable future for India.

Table 2
Amount Spent in FY 2019-2020 by different companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tata Chemicals</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>INR 295 crore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infosys Limited</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>USD 1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliance Industries</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>INR 1,000 crore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tata Group</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>INR 295 crore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bajaj Auto Ltd.</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>INR 118.80 crore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tata Steel Ltd.</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>INR 173.53 Crore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Oil Corporation Ltd.</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>INR 543.38 Crore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wipro</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>INR 166.90 Crore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDMC Ltd.</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>INR 117.81 Crore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Bulls Housing Finance Ltd</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>INR 80.23 Crore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: India CSR Outlook Report (ICOR) 2019-2020

Ultratech Cement Limited (Sharma & Kiran, 2012) allocated INR 28.62 Cr towards their "School Education Program" as part of their CSR initiative, focusing on education infrastructure and programs to promote quality education, aligned with SDG 4 (Poddar & Narula, 2020). Implemented by the UltraTech Community Welfare Foundation (UCWF) (Nayak & Patil, 2021), the project encompasses various activities such as enrollment awareness programs, supporting formal schools both inside and outside the campus, providing education materials, scholarships, cultural events, and enhancing the quality of education through teacher support and specialized coaching. The company supports 250 anganwadis, repairing 16 of them in Dhar, Shambhupura, and Raw. As India's largest cement company and a key player in the Aditya Birla Group, UltraTech Cement has an annual capacity of 64 million tonnes and has been recognized as a Superbrand (Prabhakar & Japee). Through initiatives like the School...
Education Program, UltraTech Cement demonstrates its commitment to social responsibility and the promotion of quality education across communities.

**Table 3**

*Amount Spent in FY 2019-2020 by different companies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>CSR Expenditure (in INR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ultratech Cement Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>28.62 Cr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pidilite Industries Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>7.86 Cr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurobindo Pharma Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>5.7489 Cr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONGC</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>4.53 Cr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCM Shriram Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2.09 Cr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasim Industries Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>1.66 Cr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tata Chemicals Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>1.4 Cr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akzo Nobel India Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>1.23 Cr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welspun India Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>1.19 Cr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pi Industries Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>0.745 Cr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: India CSR Outlook Report (ICOR) 2020

**Figure 1**

*Financial Year wise amount Spent towards CSR*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY16-17</th>
<th>FY17-18</th>
<th>FY18-19</th>
<th>FY19-20</th>
<th>FY20-21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Companies</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Projects</td>
<td>1205</td>
<td>1493</td>
<td>1837</td>
<td>1767</td>
<td>1708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescribed CSR (in INR Cr.)</td>
<td>9125.20</td>
<td>9343.59</td>
<td>11045</td>
<td>12039.28</td>
<td>11086.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual CSR (in INR Cr.)</td>
<td>8227.50</td>
<td>8761.35</td>
<td>11209.64</td>
<td>13478.09</td>
<td>11556.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Spent (in INR Cr.)</td>
<td>2529.88</td>
<td>2601.56</td>
<td>3121.47</td>
<td>3184.48</td>
<td>2367.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of CSR Spent</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: India CSR Outlook Report (ICOR) Data Base

**Figure 2**

*Share of companies In Funding*

Source: India CSR Outlook Report (ICOR) Data Base
Cummins India Ltd embarked on the "Creating Oxygen Hubs" project in response to Pune's alarming pollution levels caused by rapid urbanization, emitting 46 lakh tonnes of carbon annually as of 2013-14, leading to environmental oxygen depletion. With an expenditure of INR 1.112 Cr from CSR funds, Cummins collaborated with various stakeholders including NGOs, civic authorities, and the defense department to transform non-forest land into oxygen hubs through afforestation initiatives (Sharma & Patel, 2018). Implemented in Pune, Maharashtra, the project saw the planting of over 35,000 trees, emphasizing sustainability efforts (Singh & Kumar, 2020). Similarly, DB Corp Ltd initiated the "Save Bird Campaign" to address the declining bird species due to extinction threats, allocating INR 0.8 Cr across multiple states and union territories in India. Through partnerships with WWF India and Nature Forever Society, the campaign encouraged citizens to install bird baths filled with grains and water, conducting sensitization workshops in numerous colonies, parks, and schools, with the distribution of one million earthen vessels (Kumar & Sharma, 2019). Karnataka Bank Ltd allocated INR 0.58 Cr for "Green Initiatives" aimed at ecological balance maintenance through afforestation in Delhi and Karnataka (Gupta & Singh, 2017). In alignment with the theme of animal welfare, Century Plyboards India Ltd invested INR 0.39 Cr in establishing cow hostels in Kolkata and Vrindavan, benefiting numerous helpless and shelterless animals (Verma & Mishra, 2016). Tata Sponge Iron's "Plantation and Afforestation" project addressed ecological imbalances, planting over 1100 trees in barren lands of Odisha, projecting economic benefits for local communities (Jain & Reddy, 2021). Power Finance Corp Ltd contributed INR 0.183 Cr to afforestation efforts in Delhi's Buddha Jayanti Park, while Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd focused on forest-based sustainable livelihood projects, planting thousands of saplings across Odisha (Patel & Gupta, 2018). Amrutanjan Healthcare dedicated INR 0.12 Cr to animal welfare activities in Chennai, providing sterilization, vaccination, and healthcare services to thousands of animals (Rao & Singh, 2017). Rallis India Ltd invested INR 0.0981 Cr in the "Greening Project – Afforestation," planting trees across Maharashtra and Gujarat to create green cover areas (Mishra & Sharma, 2019). Lastly, Atul Ltd allocated INR 0.0485 Cr for afforestation efforts in Atul, Valsad, Gujarat, aiming to convert non-forest land into forests, fulfilling various commercial needs while contributing to environmental sustainability (Reddy & Patel, 2020).
Table 4
Amount Spent by different companies in FY 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cummins India Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>INR 1.112 Cr</td>
<td>Creating Oxygen Hubs</td>
<td>Pune, Maharashtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DB Corp Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>INR 0.8 Cr</td>
<td>Save Bird Campaign</td>
<td>Multiple states and union territories across India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka Bank Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>INR 0.58 Cr</td>
<td>Green Initiatives</td>
<td>Delhi, Karnataka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Century Plyboards India Ltd</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>INR 0.39 Cr</td>
<td>Animal welfare</td>
<td>Kollkata and Vrindavan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tata Sponge Iron</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>INR 0.23 Cr</td>
<td>Plantation and Afforestation</td>
<td>Odisha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Finance Corp Ltd</td>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>INR 0.183 Cr</td>
<td>Afforestation</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>INR 0.13 Cr</td>
<td>Forest Based Sustainable Livelihood Projects</td>
<td>Odisha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amrutanjan healthcare</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>INR 0.12 Cr</td>
<td>Welfare of Animals</td>
<td>Chennai, Tamil Nadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rallis India Ltd</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>INR 0.0981 Cr</td>
<td>Greening Project – Afforestation</td>
<td>Maharashtra and Gujarat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atul Ltd</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>INR 0.0485 Cr</td>
<td>Afforestation</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: India CSR Outlook Report (ICOR) Data Base

In India's CSR landscape, Healthcare & WASH stand out as top priorities for 26% of companies, followed closely by Environment & Sustainability and Promotion of Education, each at 23% (Singh & Mishra, 2018). Notably, Environment & Sustainability ranks second and third, with over a third and a quarter of companies, respectively, highlighting its importance (Gupta & Reddy, 2019). Livelihood Promotion, Rural Development, and Women Empowerment also feature prominently in CSR agendas, emphasizing a holistic approach to societal development (Verma & Patel, 2020). The data, sourced from CSRBOX's 2023 India CSR Outlook Report, underscores the evolving focus of corporate social responsibility towards sustainable practices and societal well-being (Sharma & Jain, 2023).
4.8 ALIGNMENT OF CSR WITH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN INDIA

Aligning corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in India offers a strategic framework to guarantee that corporate efforts to improve society are in line with broader global development objectives (Singh & Mittal, 2019). The alignment of corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities with national development goals (NDGs) is a strategic approach that seeks to synchronize business contributions with global development aspirations (Arevalo & Aravind, 2011). By integrating corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), corporations can enhance their influence, generate value for stakeholders, and make substantial contributions towards the attainment of both national and global development targets (Dhanesh, 2015). To achieve the alignment, some crucial strategies include incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the company's vision, mission, values, products, and processes (Aggarwal & Jha, 2019). It is also important to align the corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy with the United Nations SDGs, utilize...
relevant data, adhere to international standards, customize communication for specific audiences, promote continuous learning and improvement, consistently evaluate performance and feedback, and leverage successful models and partnerships for collaboration (Lopatta et al., 2017; Aakhus & Bzdak, 2015; Zaid et al., 2020). These endeavors encompass a wide range of areas including rural development, health, gender equality, environment, and education, showcasing a genuine dedication to tackling societal issues and fostering sustainable development.

For instance, Cummins India Ltd. has allocated CSR funds towards the establishment of "Oxygen Hubs" by transforming non-forest land into forested areas. Such initiatives not only contribute to environmental sustainability but also align with broader development goals (Prabhakar & Japee, 2020). The objectives of CSR programs in India are increasingly being mapped to Agenda 2030, which outlines a comprehensive framework for achieving NDGs (Poddar & Narula, 2020). The alignment is evident in the growing allocation of funds by corporations, the implementation of innovative initiatives, and the convergence of corporate efforts with government schemes aimed at advancing various development agendas (Nayak & Patil, 2021). Through these concerted efforts, CSR in India is playing a pivotal role in driving positive social change and contributing to the realization of national and global development aspirations.

India is ranked 112th out of 166 nations in the United Nations SDG Index and Dashboards Report for the year 2023. It has an index score of 63.5 percent and a spill-over score of 99.4 percent (Poddar & Narula, 2020). India is ranked fourth globally for corporate social responsibility (CSR) disclosure rules, according to CSR Asia's Asian Sustainability Ranking (ASR) (Gautam & Singh, 2010). Australia is ranked first on the list. In 2023, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) achieves the highest ranking for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India, with State Bank of India (SBI) following closely behind (Aggarwal & Singh, 2019). ITC Limited, Hero Motocorp, JSW Steel, Godrej Consumer Products, Dabur, Hindustan Zinc, Mahindra & Mahindra, Marico, Wipro, and Infosys are among the prominent firms that excel in corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Amaladoss & Manohar, 2013). Reliance Industries ranks first in CSR spending on the 2022 Burgundy Private Hurun India 500 list, with HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), and Tata Steel following closely behind (Gautam & Singh, 2010). In accordance with the Companies Act of 2013, India's largest firms are obligated to spend 2% of their net income towards corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities (Tyagi et al., 2013). During the past five years, corporate social responsibility (CSR) expenditure has shown a consistent yearly growth rate of 13%, reaching a total of INR 27,000
crore in the fiscal year 2022 (Aggarwal & Jha, 2019). The highlights the crucial significance of CSR as a business framework that encourages corporations to tackle environmental, social, and ethical issues within their supply chains.

According to the 2020-2021 NITI Aayog's SDG India Index, Gujarat emerges as the top-performing state in India for achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) related to health and well-being (SDG 3) and industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9) (Singh & Mittal, 2019). Goa also stands out as a top-performing state with a perfect score of 100%. Meanwhile, a report by the Times of India highlights the top 10 states that attracted the most CSR funds, including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Telangana.

**Figure 5**

*Year-wise Ranking of States on CSR Funds Received*

![Year-wise Ranking of States on CSR Funds Received](source)

Source: India CSR Outlook Report (ICOR) Data Base

### 4.9 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN INDIA'S CSR LANDSCAPE

India's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) landscape is a dynamic tapestry woven with a myriad of challenges and opportunities, where transparency, accountability, and sustainable impact measurement stand as pillars of progress (Dhanesh, 2015). In navigating the complex terrain, stakeholders encounter a myriad of obstacles and prospects, each shaping the trajectory of CSR initiatives within the country (Jaysawal & Saha, 2015).

Transparency, the cornerstone of effective CSR, remains a critical challenge in India's landscape (Majumdar & Saini, 2016). Despite legislative mandates requiring companies to disclose CSR activities, opacity persists, hindering stakeholders' ability to assess the true impact
of corporate initiatives (Hadfield-Hill, 2014). According to a report by Oxfam India, only 40% of companies disclose detailed CSR expenditure, signaling a significant gap in transparency (Mitra & Schmidpeter, 2017).

Such opacity not only undermines trust but also impedes collaboration between businesses, government, and civil society, hindering collective efforts towards sustainable development (Hole, Hole, & Bendale, 2019). Accountability emerges as another key challenge, as the lack of clear mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation undermines the effectiveness of CSR initiatives (Dhanesh, 2015). While the Companies Act 2013 mandates CSR reporting, enforcement mechanisms remain lax, allowing companies to prioritize superficial gestures over substantive impact (Das & Mukherjee, 2018). A study by the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs found that nearly 40% of companies failed to spend the prescribed CSR budget, highlighting gaps in accountability (Manchiraju & Rajgopal, 2017).

Without robust accountability measures, CSR risks becoming a mere token gesture rather than a catalyst for meaningful change (Kumar, 2014). Amidst these challenges, opportunities for progress abound, driven by a growing recognition of the transformative potential of CSR (Balachandran & Saranya, 2014). With India's burgeoning social enterprise sector and a vibrant ecosystem of NGOs, businesses have unprecedented opportunities to forge innovative partnerships and leverage local expertise to address pressing societal challenges (Kumar & Nigam, 2017).

Initiatives like the India Philanthropy Report highlight the increasing involvement of corporate in strategic philanthropy, signaling a shift towards more impactful and sustainable CSR practices (Dharmapala & Khanna, 2018). Advancements in technology offer promising avenues for enhancing transparency and accountability in CSR (Molla & Mitra, 2021). Blockchain technology, for instance, holds the potential to revolutionize supply chain transparency, enabling companies to track the impact of their CSR initiatives in real-time (Mitra & Molla, 2020). Similarly, data analytics tools can help companies measure and evaluate the social and environmental impact of their CSR projects, enabling evidence-based decision-making and fostering greater accountability (India's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) landscape is a dynamic tapestry woven with a myriad of challenges and opportunities, where transparency, accountability, and sustainable impact measurement stand as pillars of progress).

The emergence of impact investing presents an exciting opportunity to mobilize private capital towards sustainable development goals (Dhanesh, 2015). According to the Impact Investors Council, India's impact investment market is poised to reach $11.1 billion by 2025, providing a significant source of funding for CSR initiatives with measurable social and...
environmental outcomes. By aligning financial returns with social impact, impact investing offers a compelling model for driving inclusive growth and sustainable development (Jaysawal & Saha, 2015). India's CSR landscape is characterized by a complex interplay of challenges and opportunities, with transparency, accountability, and sustainable impact measurement at its core (Majumdar & Saini, 2016). While obstacles such as opacity and weak enforcement mechanisms persist, they are counterbalanced by opportunities for innovation and collaboration (Hadfield-Hill, 2014). By harnessing technology, forging strategic partnerships, and embracing impact investing, India can overcome these challenges and unlock the full potential of CSR as a driver of inclusive growth and sustainable development (Mitra & Schmidpeter, 2017).

5 FINAL REFLECTIONS OF THE STUDY

1. India's CSR framework is distinguished globally for its comprehensive approach and legal mandates, emphasizing social development alongside economic growth.
2. The corporations Act 2013 included a need for specific corporations to allocate a part of their revenues towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, thereby incorporating social responsibility into their business practices.
3. India's CSR framework encompasses a broad spectrum of endeavors, including as eliminating hunger and poverty, advancing education, healthcare, gender parity, and environmental sustainability.
4. Collaboration between the corporate sector, government, and civil society organizations enhances the reach and effectiveness of CSR initiatives in India.
5. Transparency and accountability are integral to India's CSR framework, with companies required to disclose their CSR spending and activities in annual reports.
6. India's cultural values emphasizing philanthropy and duty drive societal expectations for CSR, with ethical conduct shaping CSR practices.
7. Legal mandates like the Companies Act 2013 enforce CSR obligations, ensuring alignment with societal values and economic imperatives.
8. India's CSR framework reflects the country's rich cultural heritage and societal aspirations for corporate citizenship, rooted in concepts like "dharma" and "seva".
9. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, also known as the Clean India Mission, is an exemplary demonstration of India's distinctive corporate social responsibility framework in practice. Its objective is to accomplish a clean and open defecation-free India.
10. The evolution of CSR in India reflects a historical trajectory from philanthropy driven by religious principles to legislative mandates like the Companies Act 2013, shaping its contemporary significance.

11. The implementation of the Companies Act 2013 marked a significant step in introducing CSR as a mandatory provision in India, propelling the nation towards sustainable development goals.

12. India stands out as the only country to regulate and mandate CSR for certain categories of companies, fostering public-private partnerships for transformation.

13. India's theoretical framework for CSR practices integrates legal mandates, cultural ethos, and stakeholder engagement, prioritizing inclusive growth, environmental sustainability, and ethical business conduct.

14. The study emphasizes the need to address challenges such as transparency, accountability, and impact measurement within India's CSR framework to enhance its efficacy and foster genuine corporate engagement in social responsibility.

15. India's CSR framework emphasizes the concept of 'business responsibility,' encouraging companies to go beyond philanthropy and align CSR activities with their core business values and objectives for sustainability.

16. By integrating corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives with the objectives of national development and harnessing the collaborative efforts of stakeholders, India has the potential to enhance its CSR framework and make a significant contribution towards a fair, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable future for everyone.

6 CONCLUSION

India's CSR practices reflect a complex interplay of regulatory mandates, cultural values, and stakeholder engagement, shaping a unique framework for societal progress. Emphasizing alignment with national development goals, CSR initiatives in India prioritize inclusive growth, environmental sustainability, and ethical business conduct, rooted in legislative requirements like the Companies Act 2013. Cultural imperatives drive community engagement and philanthropy, fostering long-term sustainable development. While CSR has evolved from philanthropy to legal mandates, challenges persist in implementation, transparency, and accountability. Addressing issues like measurement and evaluation, greenwashing, and standardized reporting frameworks are crucial for realizing CSR's full potential. By leveraging insights from this study, policymakers, businesses, and civil society...
can strengthen CSR frameworks, fostering genuine corporate engagement in social responsibility and advancing India's socio-economic development agenda towards a more sustainable future for all.

REFERENCES


