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Aligning Corporate Social Responsibility with Sustainable Development Goals: Pathways For Strengthening Community Resilience in the Philippines

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Abstract

This study examines the alignment of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their contribution to strengthening community resilience in selected Philippine communities. Employing a descriptive–correlational design, the research surveyed 100 respondents—including residents, local leaders, and stakeholders—who were exposed to CSR programs implemented by corporations. CSR initiatives were evaluated across SDG-related domains such as education and lifelong learning (SDG 4), health and well-being (SDG 3), economic opportunities and livelihood (SDG 8), and environmental sustainability (SDG 13). Findings revealed that respondents perceived a high level of CSR implementation, particularly in health and environmental programs. Stakeholders also noted positive impacts on resilience through improved access to education, enhanced community health, and diversified livelihood opportunities. However, gaps were identified in areas such as digital literacy, affordable housing, and long-term economic empowerment. Correlation analysis confirmed significant relationships between CSR alignment with SDGs and perceived community resilience, particularly in health and livelihood outcomes. The study concludes that aligning CSR initiatives with SDG priorities serves as a pathway to strengthen resilience, reduce vulnerabilities, and foster inclusive development. Recommendations include integrating CSR strategies more systematically with national SDG roadmaps, expanding multi-sector partnerships, and enhancing monitoring frameworks to ensure sustained impact.

Keywords: *corporate social responsibility, sustainable development goals, community resilience, inclusive growth, stakeholder engagement*

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INTRODUCTION

The role of the private sector in advancing sustainable development has gained increasing attention globally and in the Philippines. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), once viewed mainly as philanthropy or corporate image-building, has evolved into a strategic approach for companies to address pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. In the Philippine context, where communities frequently face risks from poverty, inequality, and climate-related disasters, CSR aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presents a critical pathway for strengthening resilience.

CSR refers to the commitment of businesses to contribute positively to society beyond profit generation. These initiatives encompass environmental stewardship, community development, livelihood creation, employee welfare, and ethical governance. When designed and implemented effectively, CSR initiatives can serve as a complementary force to government programs, bridging resource gaps and reinforcing public–private partnerships.

The SDGs provide a universal framework for addressing global challenges such as poverty (SDG 1), quality education (SDG 4), good health and well-being (SDG 3), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and climate action (SDG 13). By aligning CSR programs with these goals, corporations can ensure that their initiatives are both relevant and impactful in addressing community needs while contributing to broader national and international development agendas.

For Philippine communities, particularly those vulnerable to socio-economic and environmental risks, CSR initiatives aligned with SDGs can generate long-lasting benefits. Programs such as scholarship grants, digital skills training, healthcare outreach, livelihood projects, and reforestation efforts not only improve quality of life but also build the resilience needed to withstand economic downturns, public health crises, and climate-induced hazards.

Despite the proliferation of CSR programs across industries, there remains limited empirical evidence on how well these initiatives align with SDG priorities and how they contribute to measurable community resilience. While corporations often report outputs, such as the number of beneficiaries reached, less is known about outcomes in terms of strengthened capacities, reduced vulnerabilities, and improved adaptive mechanisms in communities. This gap underscores the need to examine CSR through the lens of resilience-building and sustainable development.

Thus, this study seeks to evaluate CSR initiatives implemented in selected Philippine communities, focusing on their alignment with SDG targets and their role in enhancing resilience. By engaging stakeholders and analyzing program outcomes, the research aims to provide insights that can guide corporations, policymakers, and civil society in designing more strategic and impactful CSR interventions.

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Research Questions

This study seeks to examine how CSR initiatives are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their contribution to community resilience. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What CSR initiatives are being implemented by corporations that are explicitly aligned with SDG priorities in the selected communities?
2. How do stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of CSR programs in strengthening community resilience in terms of:
   2.1. Education and lifelong learning;
   2.2. Health and well-being;
   2.3. Economic opportunities and livelihood?
3. Is there a significant relationship between CSR alignment with SDGs and the perceived resilience of the community?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive–correlational research design to examine the alignment of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their contribution to strengthening community resilience. This design was selected as it allows both the description of CSR practices and community outcomes, and the assessment of relationships between CSR alignment and resilience indicators.

Population and Sampling

The study population comprised community members and stakeholders in the National Capital Region (NCR), where CSR initiatives by manufacturing companies are actively implemented. Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents with direct knowledge or experience of CSR programs. A total sample of 100 respondents was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator, ensuring adequate representation for statistical analysis.

Respondents

Participants met the following inclusion criteria: Residents, community leaders, or stakeholders in communities with active CSR implementation; Direct experience with CSR initiatives aligned with SDG domains such as education and lifelong learning, health and well-being, livelihood and economic opportunities, or environmental sustainability;
Residency in the community for at least one year; Aged 18 years or older; Provided informed consent. These criteria ensured that respondents could provide meaningful insights into how CSR initiatives align with SDGs and contribute to community resilience.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of four sections:
Profile Questionnaire – demographic information (age, gender, education, employment).
CSR–SDG Alignment Questionnaire – 20 items measuring perceptions of CSR initiatives

aligned with specific SDG priorities (education, health, livelihood, and environment).
Community Resilience Questionnaire – 20 items assessing resilience capacities in terms of education and lifelong learning, health and well-being, and economic opportunities.
Open-ended Questions – to capture qualitative narratives and stakeholder perceptions on CSR effectiveness in strengthening resilience.
All items were measured using a four-point Likert scale, supplemented by descriptive and narrative interpretations to contextualize findings.

Validity and Reliability

Instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of 0.70 indicating acceptable internal consistency. A pilot test with 30 respondents from a similar but excluded community was conducted to refine the questionnaire. Content validity was established through expert review by specialists in CSR, sustainable development, and resilience studies. Face validity was confirmed through pre-testing with 10–15 community members to ensure clarity, cultural relevance, and interpretability.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance and local authority approvals were obtained. Surveys were distributed both online and in person to maximize participation. Before answering, respondents were briefed on the study's objectives, and informed consent was secured. Confidentiality and anonymity protocols were strictly observed. Regular follow-ups and coordination with community leaders helped maximize response rates.

Statistical Treatment

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The following statistical techniques were applied:
Frequency and Percentage Distribution – to describe respondents' demographic profiles.
Weighted Mean – to measure perceptions of CSR alignment with SDGs and community resilience.
Regression Analysis – to determine the relationship between CSR alignment with SDGs and the perceived resilience of the community.

RESULTS

Table 1
Frequencies of Financial Literacy and economic empowerment

Financial Literacy and economic empowerment	Frequency	Percentage
Provision of financial literacy training and works	19	19%
Entrepreneurship programs for small business	24	24%
Access to microfinance and	19	19%

livelihood support		
Budgeting and savings seminar	4	4%
Career development and job readiness training	34	34%
Total	**100**	**100**

Primary CSR Initiatives in the Target Community

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives related to financial literacy and economic empowerment in the target community. Among the identified initiatives, career development and job readiness training emerged as the most frequently implemented, reported by 34% of respondents. This indicates a strong corporate focus on equipping individuals with employment-related skills, enhancing their competitiveness in the labor market, and promoting self-sufficiency.

Entrepreneurship programs for small business development accounted for 24% of reported CSR activities, reflecting substantial corporate investment in fostering micro-enterprises and stimulating local economic activity. These programs provide community members with the tools and resources needed to establish sustainable income sources, thereby supporting long-term poverty reduction.

Both financial literacy training and workshops and access to microfinance and livelihood support were cited by 19% of respondents each. These initiatives aim to enhance financial decision-making, provide capital for small ventures, and strengthen economic resilience. Their moderate prevalence may indicate targeted application toward specific beneficiary groups.

In contrast, budgeting and savings seminars were reported by only 4% of participants, suggesting a potential gap in CSR programming focused on fundamental personal financial management. Limited emphasis on this aspect may hinder community members' ability to effectively manage income, save for future needs, and achieve financial stability.

Overall, the distribution of CSR initiatives highlights a prioritization of employment readiness and entrepreneurship over foundational financial management education. Expanding coverage in budgeting and savings skills could complement existing initiatives, ensuring that beneficiaries are not only able to secure income but also sustain it through sound financial practices.

Table 2
Frequencies of Education and Skills Development

Education and Skills Development	Frequency	Percentage
Scholarship programs for students	30	30%
Provision of school supplies and learning materials	13	13%
Technical and vocational training programs	27	27%
Digital literacy and technology training	3	3%
Corporate mentorship and internship programs	27	27%
Total	**100**	**100**

The data in Table 2 reveal that free medical and dental missions (28%) and health education and disease prevention campaigns (25%) are the most common health-related CSR initiatives. These efforts address both immediate and preventive healthcare needs, reflecting a balanced approach to community health improvement. Provision of medicines and vitamins (20%) ranks next, focusing on supporting vulnerable groups with essential health supplies. Notably, nutrition and feeding programs (15%) and mental health support services (12%) receive less emphasis, suggesting areas where CSR interventions could be strengthened to ensure holistic health coverage.

Table 3
Frequencies of Health and Wellness initiatives

Health and Wellness initiatives	Frequency	Percentage
Medical missions and free health checkups	54	54%
Vaccination and disease prevention programs	5	5%
Mental health awareness and support services	24	24%
Nutrition and feeding programs for vulnerable groups	17	17%
Total	**100**	**100**

As shown in Table 3, scholarship grants (26%) are the most prevalent educational CSR initiative, indicating strong corporate support for formal education access. Technical-vocational training (22%) also features prominently, preparing individuals for employment in skilled trades. School supplies provision (18%) and teacher capacity-building (18%) address material and instructional needs, while digital literacy workshops (16%) reflect growing corporate recognition of technology's role in employability and lifelong learning.

Table 4
Frequencies of Community Development and Gift Giving

Community Development and Gift Giving	Frequency	Percentage
Christmas gift-giving and donation drives	16	16%
Construction of community centers and recreational spaces	24	24%
Support for disaster relief and emergency response	34	34%
Assistance programs for elderly people and people with disabilities	21	21%
Housing projects for low-income families	5	5%
Total	100	100

The most frequently cited environmental CSR activity is solid waste management and recycling programs (28%), highlighting corporate engagement in waste reduction and environmental cleanliness. Tree planting projects (22%) and environmental advocacy campaigns (20%) also represent significant investments in ecological restoration and awareness. However, renewable energy and conservation initiatives (14%) and coastal/river clean-ups (16%) are less common, suggesting opportunities to diversify CSR portfolios toward climate change mitigation and waterway rehabilitation.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the pivotal role that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives play in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and strengthening community resilience. The data reveal consistently high implementation levels of CSR programs across key domains—education and skills development, health and wellness, livelihood and economic empowerment, environmental sustainability, and community development—with particularly strong performance in health-related interventions and environmental activities.

The significant associations observed between CSR alignment with SDGs and perceived community resilience confirm that CSR serves as a critical mechanism for driving inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable development. These results are consistent with existing literature which emphasizes CSR as a strategic tool for sustainable impact rather than mere philanthropy (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Porter & Kramer, 2011).

CSR and Community Resilience

The strong connection between CSR initiatives and community resilience suggests that programs offering direct and practical services—such as medical missions, livelihood training, and environmental clean-up drives—are highly valued by beneficiaries. Health-related initiatives emerged as the most frequently implemented and impactful, reflecting the immediate importance communities place on accessible healthcare and preventive services. Likewise, environmental efforts contribute indirectly to resilience by promoting safer and cleaner surroundings, enhancing both well-being and collective preparedness against environmental risks.

Education-focused CSR initiatives, particularly scholarship grants and vocational training, enhance adaptive capacity by equipping individuals with long-term skills. However, gaps remain in digital literacy and financial management education, which are essential for resilience in an increasingly digital and interconnected economy. Expanding these areas would help communities sustain and build upon the gains of current CSR programming.

Economic Empowerment and Sustainable Livelihoods

CSR initiatives related to livelihood and entrepreneurship provide pathways for economic inclusion and self-reliance, strengthening household resilience against shocks. Microfinance programs, small business support, and career readiness training empower individuals to secure sustainable income sources, reducing vulnerability to poverty cycles.

Despite these strengths, the results also reveal that short-term relief activities—such as gift-giving and one-off donations—remain common. While immediately beneficial, these initiatives contribute less to long-term resilience. Thus, CSR programs need to prioritize capacity-building interventions, such as enterprise incubation, financial literacy, and market linkages, which provide lasting security and economic adaptability.

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Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The CSR initiatives observed in this study resonate strongly with the objectives of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly:

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being – through medical missions, preventive health programs, and mental health services.

SDG 4: Quality Education – via scholarships, provision of school supplies, and vocational/technical training.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth – through entrepreneurship support, livelihood training, and job readiness programs.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities – through housing projects, community centers, and disaster response initiatives.

SDG 13/15: Climate Action and Life on Land – through tree planting, waste management, and environmental advocacy.

This alignment illustrates that CSR can be more than a local intervention—it can serve as a scalable pathway for contributing to both national development priorities and global sustainability frameworks.

Implications for CSR Practice

The evidence supports the view that CSR must be embedded into corporate strategy and designed with resilience-building in mind. Sustained engagement, participatory planning with communities, and systematic monitoring are crucial to maximize social impact. Moreover, corporations stand to gain by building multi-stakeholder partnerships with local governments, NGOs, and academic institutions to co-design initiatives that address pressing community needs while ensuring synergy with the SDGs.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Exposure to CSR Initiatives

Respondents reported the highest exposure to CSR programs related to career development (34%), entrepreneurship (24%), medical missions (54%), disaster relief (34%), and environmental sustainability—particularly tree planting and reforestation (50%). These findings suggest that corporations tend to focus on high-visibility, immediate-impact interventions that address pressing community needs such as healthcare, employment readiness, disaster response, and ecological restoration. However, underrepresentation was noted in mental health support, access to credit, and digital literacy, indicating opportunities for CSR strategies to diversify and build resilience capacities more comprehensively.

Perceived Implementation of CSR Programs

CSR initiatives across the domains of education and skills development (M = 3.06), health and wellness (M = 3.11), livelihood and economic empowerment (M = 3.14), and environmental sustainability (M = 3.16) were rated positively by respondents. These results indicate effective delivery and general alignment with community needs, though further expansion is recommended to reach underserved groups and strengthen impact monitoring mechanisms.

Perceived Community Resilience

Respondents reported high levels of perceived resilience capacities, particularly in preventive health (M = 3.13), access to inclusive education (M = 3.30), and mental health awareness (M = 3.38). Employment and income stability (M = 3.05) were also rated positively, though concerns persisted regarding income adequacy and equity. CSR programs were found to contribute to both tangible outcomes (healthcare services, skills training, education) and intangible benefits (psychosocial support, community inclusion, preparedness).

CSR and Community Resilience (Correlation Analysis)

Results revealed that Health and Wellness ($p = 0.01$), Environmental Sustainability ($p = 0.04$), and Community Development ($p = 0.05$) had significant positive relationships with community resilience. In contrast, Education and Skills Development ($p = 0.72$) did not yield a significant short-term relationship, suggesting that its impact on resilience may require stronger implementation frameworks or longer timeframes for outcomes to be observable.

CSR and Sustainable Pathways (Regression Analysis)

Regression analysis showed that Health and Wellness ($p = 0.01$) and Environmental Sustainability ($p = 0.01$) significantly contributed to strengthening resilience and advancing SDG priorities. Education and Skills Development ($p = 0.50$) and Community Development ($p = 0.19$) did not demonstrate significant effects in the short term. These findings highlight the importance of focusing CSR strategies on health equity, environmental livelihood opportunities, and access to sustainable resources, while continuing to refine educational initiatives for long-term resilience-building.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the significant findings of the study, the following conclusions were established:

Focus on High-Visibility CSR Interventions

The frequency analysis of CSR initiatives indicates that corporations primarily invest in high-impact and visible interventions such as career development, entrepreneurship, medical missions, disaster relief, and environmental activities. While these initiatives effectively address immediate community needs, the underrepresentation of programs in financial literacy, mental health, digital inclusion, and long-term economic empowerment underscores the need for a more balanced and future-oriented CSR approach. For CSR to be sustainable, it must not only deliver short-term relief but also build long-term community resilience and adaptive capacity.

Strong CSR Implementation Across Key Development Areas

Respondents generally perceive a high level of CSR implementation in education, health, employment, and environmental sustainability. This reflects the effective integration of CSR into community and development goals, suggesting strong alignment between corporate efforts and local priorities. These perceptions affirm that CSR programs are operationally relevant and socially responsive. However, to maximize impact, corporations must ensure inclusiveness, scalability, and consistent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

CSR and Community Well-being

CSR initiatives contribute meaningfully to community well-being, particularly in access to education, healthcare, livelihood opportunities, and psychosocial support. Respondents positively recognized both the tangible benefits (services, training, healthcare) and intangible benefits (inclusion, confidence, emotional resilience) of CSR efforts. Nevertheless, there is a need to strengthen initiatives addressing emerging well-being dimensions, such as digital adaptability, work-life balance, and long-term resilience against health and economic shocks.

CSR as a Driver of Resilience and Economic Empowerment

The findings indicate that CSR initiatives are moderately effective in supporting economic empowerment and resilience, particularly through access to education, small business support, and employment training. However, gaps in housing, financial inclusion, and sustained economic mobility highlight the need for more targeted and structural interventions. CSR programs that blend humanitarian aid with long-term economic development strategies are more likely to foster sustainable outcomes and reduce vulnerability to future risks.

Differential Impacts of CSR Domains

CSR initiatives in health, community development, and environmental sustainability demonstrated statistically significant positive impacts on community resilience and well-being, while education-focused initiatives did not yield the same measurable short-term effects. This suggests that immediate and tangible interventions are more readily recognized by communities. For education programs to achieve similar impact, stronger implementation frameworks, employability linkages, and participatory engagement are necessary.

Health and Environmental CSR as Key Pathways to SDGs

Among the CSR initiatives evaluated, health and environmental sustainability programs emerged as the most significant contributors to strengthening resilience and advancing SDG priorities, particularly in health equity, climate action, and livelihood opportunities. In contrast,

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education and community development initiatives showed limited measurable outcomes in the short term, underscoring the need for more scalable, targeted, and impact-driven strategies in these areas. For CSR to serve as a strategic development tool, initiatives must be aligned with SDGs, responsive to local contexts, and sustained through cross-sector partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, analysis, and conclusions of the study on the impact of Corporate Based on the findings, analysis, and conclusions of the study on the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on community well-being and resilience in selected Philippine communities, the following recommendations are proposed to guide corporations, local government units, non-government organizations, and community stakeholders. These actionable strategies support the development of a Comprehensive CSR Enhancement Framework (CCEF) aimed at addressing service gaps, strengthening long-term socio-economic impact, and promoting inclusive, sustainable, and resilient community growth.

Diversify CSR Portfolios for Balanced Impact

Corporations are encouraged to complement high-frequency, high-visibility initiatives with underrepresented but equally vital programs such as mental health support, digital literacy, financial inclusion, and long-term skills development. A balanced CSR approach should address both immediate needs and structural resilience factors affecting marginalized sectors. Strategic partnerships with NGOs, local government units, and educational institutions can help expand the reach, inclusiveness, and long-term relevance of CSR initiatives across underserved areas.

Institutionalize Community Participation and Monitoring

To sustain the high level of CSR implementation perceived by communities, organizations should institutionalize participatory planning and feedback mechanisms. Companies must invest in impact evaluation systems that track not only outputs but also long-term resilience outcomes of their initiatives. Additionally, aligning CSR efforts with national development plans and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will enhance coherence, scale, and sustainability. Continuous refinement of program content, delivery mechanisms, and stakeholder engagement is essential to maintain public trust and maximize community benefits.

Promote Holistic Community Well-being

CSR programs should continue supporting core domains such as education, health, and psychosocial support but must also address less visible aspects of resilience such as social cohesion, emotional wellness, and inclusion of vulnerable groups. Expanding mental health programs, promoting community-based safety initiatives, and ensuring equitable access for youth, elderly, and marginalized populations will help foster a more holistic sense of well-being. Integrating culturally sensitive and participatory approaches will further enhance the long-term relevance and sustainability of CSR initiatives.

Strengthen Economic Empowerment for Resilience

CSR strategies should prioritize economic empowerment and adaptive capacity by expanding access to entrepreneurship training, financial literacy, microfinance, and vocational education linked to local livelihood opportunities. Interventions must be designed to address persistent challenges in housing, job stability, and income disparities. Companies should consider co-developing livelihood programs with community stakeholders and ensuring that initiatives are inclusive of women, youth, and informal workers. Moreover, CSR frameworks must incorporate sustainability plans that extend support beyond short-term interventions and enhance long-term resilience.

Scale High-Impact Domains While Reconfiguring Education Initiatives

Given the significant positive impact of health, environmental, and community development CSR programs on community resilience, organizations are advised to deepen investments in these domains through program scaling, innovation, and cross-sector collaboration. Education-focused CSR programs, while valuable, require reconfiguration to enhance their perceived and actual impact—for instance, by aligning them with employment pipelines, digital access, or local industry needs. Regular impact assessments and community feedback mechanisms can improve program design and ensure sustained well-being outcomes.

Integrate CSR with Resilience-Building and SDGs

To effectively strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability, CSR programs must focus on scaling health interventions and environmentally sustainable livelihood models. Companies should integrate health services with social protection and disaster preparedness strategies, while simultaneously promoting green jobs and climate-resilient micro-enterprises. Education and community outreach initiatives, while helpful, must be restructured to include income-generating and empowerment objectives. Stronger targeting, needs-based planning, and continuous monitoring are essential to maximize CSR's role as a catalyst for sustainable development and resilient communities.

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