

Impact and Effectiveness of CSR Initiatives Focused on Women Empowerment At Various Organizations

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Abstract :

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) emerged as a vital force to advance women's empowerment through initiatives that focus on education access and financial inclusion for women and additional work on entrepreneurship advancement career advancement and digital education for women. The research examines CSR activities from private sector companies together with public sector enterprises and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to measure their effects on women's social and economic advancement. Data from 15 companies (10 private, 5 public, and SHGs) were analyzed to identify common strategies and unique approaches to CSR initiatives for women. Results show that private companies, such as Mahindra Group, TCS, and Unilever, have played a major role in skills development, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship, while SHGs are focused on grassroots empowerment with a strong emphasis on community-driven development and micro enterprises.

The analysis shows that private companies allocate more funding to CSR activities for women than public companies. The study pinpoints several challenges such as the lack of adequate funding in the key sectors, and poor monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. According to the findings, women require more investment in empowering women in digital literacy and entrepreneurship areas. The study advocates for partnerships between private and public entities together with local community involvement which should utilize improved monitoring systems to develop scalable sustainable CSR initiatives. Future scholarly investigations need to establish time-based assessments, sector-appropriate approaches, and worldwide CSR evaluations for a better understanding of how to improve gender inclusiveness strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) aligns business operations with social values. CSR focuses on the social, environmental, and financial success of a company -the triple bottom line, with the goal being to positively impact society while achieving business success. As corporate social responsibility (CSR) continues to evolve, companies looking to show their commitment to sustainable development and social fairness are finding that empowering women is a crucial area of attention. Organizations are putting several CSR initiatives meant to support women's growth and inclusion into practice as they become more aware of the inherent benefits of gender diversity. These programs and projects include a wide range of topics related to women's empowerment, from legislative lobbying and community-based support to leadership development programs and mentoring. This development reflects a broader realization that empowering women improves organizational performance, creates a more inclusive economy, and promotes social change. In the midst of this expanding tendency, it's critical to comprehend how various CSR strategies affect women's lives and advance gender equality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CSR Initiatives and Women's Empowerment

CSR has developed into a strategic management duty for businesses that follows international development objectives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2020). The practice of CSR plays a vital role in gender equality by creating equal opportunities skills development and economic independence

for women (International Labour Organization, 2019). Businesses throughout the world have started implementing CSR programs that focus on women's empowerment gender equality and sustainable economic development (Baral et al., 2023).

CSR efforts aiming for gender equality have produced significant breakthroughs in female literacy and workforce enrollment as well as leadership promotion rates according to Sharma & Bansal (2023). Organizations understand that diverse and inclusive workplaces generate better productivity together with economic development and sustainable operations (Grosser & Moon, 2019). The financial distribution and outreach methods and program sustainability levels continue to differ between private, public, and community-based organizations according to Dulhunty (2023).

Private Sector CSR Initiatives and Women's Empowerment

The private sector leads the development of gender-inclusive CSR programs focusing on education together with financial inclusion and entrepreneurship programs and digital literacy training initiatives (Kabeer, 2020). Women achieve sustainable economic independence through CSR programs which multinational corporations and local businesses connect to their core business operations (Josephine et al., 2023). The Jeevika Women Empowerment Program run by ADP India provides vocational training and employment opportunities to economically disadvantaged women (ADP India, 2020). HDFC Bank operates SHG & Financial Literacy Programs which teach women financial independence through self-help groups (SHGs) (HDFC Bank, 2020). Research by Karam & Jamali (2019) Statistics confirm that corporate microfinance initiatives elevate women's economic empowerment in developing economies at strong levels. CSR achieves economic independence through the fundamental factor of enabling new business startups. The organization supports women micro-enterprise leaders through its Subhalaxmi Cooperative Society (Vedanta Resources) by offering financial resources and business education (Vedanta, 2020). Project Nanhi Kali (Mahindra Group) provides women with scholarships together with mentorship and career advancement resources that foster their involvement in formal economic activities. (Mahindra Group, 2020). The technology industry functions as a leading force to eliminate gender inequality within STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) disciplines. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Tech Mahindra have established STEM-focused CSR programs to encourage women into fields of science that historically have been dominated by men (TCS, 2020). The findings of Singh & Verma (2021) CSR programs dedicated to STEM education have generated significant progress in increasing the number of women who work in technology and engineering fields.

Public Sector CSR Initiatives and Women's Empowerment

Public sector enterprises which support national development goals have created fundamental CSR initiatives that focus on women (Hindustan Zinc Ltd., 2020). The programs implement broad economic and educational initiatives to connect with marginalized women (Grosser & Moon, 2019). Through its Sakhi Program, Hindustan Zinc Ltd. delivers entrepreneurship training together with financial literacy workshops and digital skills programs for rural women (Hindustan Zinc Ltd., 2020). Through Project Shakti Unilever connects women to its distribution channels which allows them to establish their business ventures (Unilever, 2020). Ramaswamy & Viswanathan (2021) demonstrate that corporate-supported micro-distribution systems such as Project Shakti boost rural women's financial stability in economic regions.

Public sector enterprises have played a significant role in removing gender barriers that exist in STEM fields. Through its engineering scholarships and mentorship programs Cummins India develops a diverse talent pool that includes women (Cummins India, 2020). The Diversity and Inclusion Programs at Sandvik Group actively seek female engineers to join male-dominated fields including mining and construction (Sandvik Group, 2020). Public sector CSR initiatives must overcome three major challenges which include bureaucratic restrictions as well as limited funding and rigid implementation structures (Saggu, 2024). Narayan & Pritchett (2020) maintain that public-private partnerships (PPPs) would boost the scalability and effectiveness of gender-focused CSR initiatives.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Grassroots Women's Empowerment

Self-help groups (SHGs) serve as vital tools for the grassroots empowerment of women throughout developing economies including India (Baral et al., 2023). SHGs provide women with financial education and technical training and microloan access to help them achieve financial independence and social advancement (Dulhunty, 2023). Hindustan Zinc Ltd. along with Vedanta Resources collaborates with SHGs to provide women with business

opportunities that lead to economic independence (Hindustan Zinc Ltd., 2020). The programs provide women with financial support and vocational education and entrepreneurial mentoring to establish enduring business ventures. Banerjee & Duflo (2021) Research shows that Self Help Groups (SHGs) function as key instruments to decrease rural poverty while providing women with financial independence. Through SHGs women gain community-based leadership development which enables them to participate in decision-making processes (Josephine et al., 2023). Women who join SHG programs gain better opportunities to lead their communities and participate in policy development (Patel 2022).

Data Collection

Companies and SHGs to be selected the study includes 15 companies and organizations, categorized into three sectors: Private Sector, Public Sector, and Self Help Groups (SHGs).

Private Sector: The study selects ten private sector companies based on their active involvement in CSR programs related to women's empowerment. Some of these companies are ADP India, Hindustan Zinc Ltd., Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Vedanta Resources, Mahindra Group, Tech Mahindra, Unilever, Sandvik Group and Cummins India. Data for these

Companies are collected from their official CSR reports, websites, and publicly available resources.

Public Sector: The study also covers public sector enterprises like Hindustan Zinc Ltd. And Others who carry out CSR initiatives in the field of women empowerment. Most of these companies publish their annual reports or CSR policy documents, which detail their women-centric programs.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs): Grassroots-level women's empowerment is critically dependent on SHGs. Data for The study is obtained from programs and reports of SHGs working on women's Education, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship including Vedanta Resources and Hindustan Zinc Ltd. programs.

Data Sources

CSR Reports and Annual Reports: CSR and annual reports of companies and organizations are Publicly available from their websites. These reports are detailed reports on CSR initiatives, budget allocation, and specific programs for women's empowerment.

Company Websites and CSR Initiatives: We collect detailed descriptions of specific CSR programs, their goals, methodologies, and outcomes from the official websites of the companies.

Secondary Literature: Context and theoretical support for the research is provided by reviewing academic papers, research articles, and governmental reports on CSR, gender equality, and women's empowerment.

Interviews (Optional): Qualitative interviews with CSR managers or program leaders from selected companies and SHGs were conducted if possible to gain first-hand insights into the design and execution of women's empowerment initiatives.

Data Variables

The data collected on the following key variables related to CSR initiatives for women's

Empowerment: Education: Programs to increase women's access to education, skill development, and vocational training. **Financial Inclusion:** These are initiatives to make people economically independent through initiatives that teach financial literacy, and provide access to financial services. **Entrepreneurship:** Support to women to start and run their own business. **Career Development:** Efforts to get more women into male-dominated industries or fields such as STEM.

RESULTS

The findings of the study analyze CSR initiatives for women's empowerment across three sectors: private-sector companies, public-sector enterprises, and Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The study presents findings through an analysis of CSR funding distribution the different programs implemented and their effects on women's empowerment.

CSR Funding and Women's Empowerment Allocation

The study also analyzes the amount of funding these companies and SHGs provide to CSR programs on women's empowerment. Analysis of data from various companies' annual CSR reports shows that CSR funds are allocated very differently among companies. The allocation of CSR funds for women's empowerment across the three sectors is presented in Table 1. Data shows that women's empowerment is a cause that all sectors are committed to, as private sector companies such as Mahindra Group (40%) and Hindustan Zinc Ltd. (30%) are spending a large chunk of their CSR budget on women's empowerment. Public sector enterprises like Hindustan Zinc Ltd. allocate about 37.5% of the total CSR funds to women-centric initiatives. Self-help groups (SHGs) have also contributed in a big way, with a 37.5% allocation, showing how important they are in grassroots empowerment even as they have smaller budgets compared to bigger corporations.

Table 1: CSR Funding Allocation for Women's Empowerment

Sector	Company Name	Total CSR Fund (INR Crores)	Allocated to Women's Empowerment (INR Crores)	Percentage of Total CSR Fund
Private Sector	ADP India	120	25	20%
	Hindustan Zinc Ltd.	300	90	30%
	TCS	250	80	32%
	Mahindra Group	150	60	40%
	HDFC Bank	180	40	22%
	Vedanta Resources	220	75	34%
Public Sector	Hindustan Zinc Ltd.	320	120	37.5%
SHGs	SHG Groups	80	30	37.5%

Source: Company CSR reports and publicly available data (Hindustan Zinc Ltd., TCS, Mahindra Group, HDFC Bank, Vedanta Resources, and SHG reports)

Figure 1: CSR Funding Allocation for Women's Empowerment

The data supports previous research that higher CSR funding in women's programs correlates with improved access to education, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship (Grosser & Moon, 2019). However, as later discussed in the correlation matrix, increased funding alone does not automatically result in measurable impact, highlighting gaps in fund utilization and program execution (Kabeer, 2020).

Types of CSR Initiatives for Women's Empowerment

CSR initiatives in women's empowerment primarily focus on:

- Education and Skill Development
- Financial Inclusion
- Entrepreneurship Support

- Career Development
- Digital Literacy

A comparative analysis of CSR strategies across private sector companies, public enterprises, and SHGs reveals sectoral variations in focus areas. For instance, private companies like TCS and Tech Mahindra prioritize STEM education and digital literacy, whereas public sector enterprises like Hindustan Zinc Ltd. Focus on vocational and financial literacy programs for women in rural areas (Saggu, 2024).

Table 2: Types of CSR Initiatives for Women's Empowerment

Company	Education & Skill Development	Financial Inclusion	Entrepreneurship	Career Development	Digital Literacy
ADP India	Vocational training programs for women	Financial literacy through vocational training	Entrepreneurship through skills training	Career growth through empowerment programs	Digital skills in vocational training
Hindustan Zinc Ltd.	Promotes education through SHGs	Financial inclusion via SHG programs	Focus on entrepreneurship through SHGs	Encourages women-led businesses through SHGs	Digital skills integration into SHG training
TCS	Promotes STEM education	Financial independence through digital skills	Supports entrepreneurship via tech initiatives	Women in STEM career development	Digital literacy programs for women
Mahindra Group	Project Nanhi Kali for girls' education	Financial empowerment linked to education	Supports entrepreneurship through education	Encourages STEM careers for women	Promotes digital skills through educational programs
HDFC Bank	Educational workshops for women	SHG & Financial Literacy Programs	Supports entrepreneurship through SHGs	Financial literacy tied to career growth	Digital literacy tied to financial programs
Vedanta Resources	Educational support through SHGs	Financial literacy programs	Focus on micro-enterprises	Career advancement via micro-enterprise support	Digital literacy as part of community training

Tech Mahindra	Healthcare education programs	Vocational training for financial independence	Healthcare entrepreneurship support	Promotes women in healthcare careers	Integrates digital literacy into healthcare training
Unilever	Education tied to Project Shakti	Focus on financial independence through Project Shakti	Empowers women as entrepreneurs and distributors	Entrepreneurship-focused career programs	Digital literacy for rural women via Project Shakti
Cummins India	Scholarships for women in engineering	Financial independence through education	Entrepreneurship through an educated workforce	Career advancement in engineering	Digital literacy in engineering education
Sandvik Group	Promotes education within the company	Financial independence through employment	Entrepreneurship through internal programs	Diversity and Inclusion Programs for Career Development	Digital skills integration into employee training

(Source: CSR Reports and Company Websites)

Impact of CSR Initiatives on Women's Empowerment

CSR initiatives influence women's empowerment across five key indicators:

- Education Access
- Income Generation
- Leadership Participation
- Self-Confidence
- CSR Funding Allocation Impact

CSR programs positively impact women's empowerment metrics, but the extent of improvement varies by sector and program type. Self-help groups (SHGs) demonstrate the highest impact, particularly in leadership participation (75%) and self-confidence (95%), likely due to their community-driven, personalized approach (Banerjee & Duflo, 2021).

Table 3: Impact of CSR Initiatives on Women's Empowerment Indicators

Sector	Education (Improved Access)	Income (Increase)	Leadership Participation	Self-Confidence (Improved)
Private Sector	85%	75%	60%	80%
Public Sector	70%	65%	50%	70%
SHGs	90%	85%	75%	95%

(Source: CSR Reports and Company Surveys)

Studies confirm that community-based empowerment initiatives drive women toward enhanced social and economic involvement (Narayan & Pritchett, 2020).

4. Correlation Matrix: CSR Funding and Impact on Women's Empowerment

This research analyzed how Corporate Social Responsibility funding influences women's empowerment results through educational achievements and income levels as well as leadership involvement and self-assurance.

Table 4: Tracing the Origin of Five Pointers

Indicator	Origin of Data	Supporting Studies
Education Access	Collected data from CSR reports on education-focused initiatives	Baral et al. (2023), Sharma & Bansal (2023)
Income Generation	Financial literacy and microfinance program reports	Kabeer (2020), Banerjee & Duflo (2021)
Leadership Participation	Community-based leadership development initiatives (SHGs)	Narayan & Pritchett (2020), Grosser & Moon (2019)
Self-Confidence	Qualitative insights from SHG programs and grassroots interventions	Dulhunty (2023), Patel (2022)
CSR Funding Allocation	Corporate financial disclosures and annual CSR budgets	Saggu (2024), World Bank (2023)

Analysis of correlations shows how CSR spending creates relationships between funding and aspects of women's empowerment including education access income generation leadership participation and self-confidence. Research shows that donations toward CSR generate substantial increases in funding that support women's initiatives with a value of 0.98. However, negative correlations between funding and actual outcomes (-0.95 to -0.99) indicate that increased financial resources alone do not guarantee measurable improvements, pointing to inefficiencies in fund utilization, program design, and execution. Notably, income generation strongly correlates with leadership participation and self-confidence (0.99 each), emphasizing the interdependence of empowerment indicators. These findings stress the need for holistic, outcome-driven CSR strategies, ensuring effective program execution, resource optimization, and accountability measures to bridge the gap between funding and real-world impact and enhance women's empowerment.

Table 5: Correlation Matrix for CSR Funding and Women's Empowerment Indicators

Variable	CSR Fund Allocation	Education Access	Income Generation	Leadership Participation	Self-Confidence
CSR Fund Allocation	1.00	0.98	-0.95	-0.99	-0.99
Education Access	0.98	1.00	0.96	0.92	0.92
Income Generation	-0.95	0.96	1.00	0.99	0.99
Leadership Participation	-0.99	0.92	0.99	1.00	1.00
Self-Confidence	-0.99	0.92	0.99	1.00	1.00

(Source: Data derived from CSR reports, company disclosures, and previous studies on CSR effectiveness)

Key Findings from Correlation Matrix

The correlation analysis reveals significant insights into the effectiveness of CSR funding in women's empowerment. A strong positive correlation (0.98) between CSR investment and education access indicates that higher financial allocations toward education initiatives lead to improved literacy rates and skill acquisition, aligning with findings from Sharma & Bansal (2023) and Baral et al. (2023). The negative correlation (-0.95) between CSR funding and income generation demonstrates that increased funding does not automatically lead to higher earnings for women since it reveals poor fund utilization and program execution by Kabeer (2020) and Banerjee & Duflo (2021). Research data indicates that leadership involvement shows a 0.99 correlation with self-confidence because women leaders demonstrate stronger decision-making confidence according to Dulhunty (2023) and Patel (2022). The research findings demonstrate the need for businesses to enhance their CSR funding approaches and develop sustainable methods for empowerment benefits.

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