



A Stakeholder-Centric Corporate Social Responsibility Communication Framework: A Responsible Leadership Perspective



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ABSTRACT

This study argues that corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication should incorporate responsible leadership (RL) principles to improve stakeholder-centrism and address societal expectations about sustainability, ethics, and organisational accountability. While existing research acknowledges CSR communication, few studies apply an RL lens to promote stakeholder-centric approaches. This conceptual study critically reflected on, holistically conceptualises, and synthesised literature and theories to generate a new perspective on CSR communication. The paper bridges this gap by proposing a conceptual Stakeholder-Centric Corporate Social Responsibility communication (SCCSRC) framework that integrates RL and stakeholder-focused perspectives into CSR communication. The research expands current understanding by redefining CSR communication through RL principles using a systematic and integrative literature review, offering a more engaged and ethical approach to organisation-stakeholder dialogue.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Communication, Responsible Leadership (RL), Stakeholder-Centrism, Stakeholder Communication, Stakeholder Engagement

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INTRODUCTION

Scholars acknowledge that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication is an important yet fragmented field, spanning disciplines like management and communication studies.¹ Likewise, leadership is crucial for organisational success, with a growing demand for responsible leaders who adhere to ethical and normative standards.² Modern leaders recognise CSR's role in fostering accountability, making stakeholder-centric CSR communication indispensable.³ Research highlights a strong CSR-leadership link, stressing that sustainable CSR communication requires inclusive, credible, and consistent leadership. However, despite this connection, a stakeholder-centric CSR communication framework grounded in responsible leadership (RL) remains absent in literature.

Therefore, this study builds on the growing emphasis on CSR communication and highlights the necessity of aligning communication strategies with an organisation's leadership function, particularly

¹ Andrea Pérez, "Corporate Reputation and CSR Reporting to Stakeholders: Gaps in the Literature and Future Lines of Research," *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 20, no. 1 (2015): 11–29; Laura Illia et al., "Communicating Corporate Social Responsibility to a Cynical Public," *MIT Sloan Management Review* 54, no.3(2013): 2.

² Illia et al., "Communicating Corporate Social Responsibility to a Cynical Public."

³ David A Waldman, Donald S Siegel, and Günter K Stahl, "Defining the Socially Responsible Leader: Revisiting Issues in Responsible Leadership," *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 27, no. 1 (2020): 5–20.

in shaping stakeholder perceptions and strengthening its market positioning.⁴ Organisations committed to RL recognise the need for consistent CSR communication with stakeholders, driven by evolving societal expectations of organisational roles.⁵ Consequently, CSR communication has become vital for building and sustaining positive stakeholder relationships through ongoing engagement.⁶

This study is grounded in the necessity for an integrative perspective on CSR communication, one that prioritises stakeholders through responsible leadership practices to foster sustainable organisational development and societal well-being. The primary objective of this research is to make a meaningful contribution to the fields of organisational communication, management, and business sciences—particularly in the areas of organisational leadership, stakeholder communication and engagement, and CSR communication.⁷

To achieve this, the study employs an explorative, interpretative, and theoretical research approach, combining systematic and integrative literature review methodologies to analyse and expand upon existing scholarship. As a key outcome, it introduces a novel perspective on CSR communication, culminating in the proposed Stakeholder-Centric Corporate Social Responsibility Communication (SCSRC) framework.

This framework presents an integrative model of CSR communication, anchored in stakeholder-centric and RL perspectives. Its foundational constructs are derived from a synthesis of existing literature on CSR communication, stakeholder-centrism, and RL. Furthermore, the framework is informed by a tripartite theoretical foundation that integrates Stakeholder Theory (ST), RL Theory, and CSR Theory. These theories guide the development of critical theoretical criteria and sub-criteria, which underpin the conceptual structure of the CSRSC framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CSR Communication

Extensive research across disciplines has established CSR's importance, recognising organisations as social systems operating within cultural and demographic contexts. Through stakeholder interactions involving information and message exchanges, organisations are expected to act responsibly. Consequently, CSR initiatives have become integral to corporate strategy, enhancing organisations' image and strengthening stakeholder relationships.⁸

Despite CSR's recognised importance, CSR communication has received less scholarly attention, likely due to its conceptual complexity.⁹ While researchers acknowledge its critical role in maintaining organisational reputation, this study emphasises its stakeholder-centric function of building trust-based relationships. Grounded in stakeholder theory, it adopts a CSR communication approach that reflects a transparent process of (1) anticipating stakeholder expectations, (2) articulating CSR policies, and (3) using tailored tools to share how an organisation integrates social, environmental, and operational concerns into stakeholder interactions.¹⁰

CSR communication engages both internal and external stakeholders by developing and sharing CSR initiatives.¹¹ It showcases an organisation's economic, environmental, and social contributions, along with resource allocation, amid growing competition, evolving stakeholder demands, and rapid

⁴ Joep P Cornelissen et al., "Putting Communication Front and Center in Institutional Theory and Analysis," *Academy of Management Review* (Academy of Management Briarcliff Manor, NY, 2015).

⁵ Shuili Du et al., "The Roles of Leadership Styles in Corporate Social Responsibility," *Journal of Business Ethics* 114, no. 1 (2013): 155–69.

⁶ Andrew Crane and Sarah Glozer, "Researching Corporate Social Responsibility Communication: Themes, Opportunities and Challenges," *Journal of Management Studies* 53, no. 7 (2016): 1223–52.

⁷ Janette Hanekom and Christelle Swart, "A Co-Creational Perspective on Consumer-Organisation Relationships (COR) on Digital Platforms in a Post-Truth Era," *Consumer Behavior Review (CBR)* 7, no. 1 (2023).

⁸ Bárbara Castillo-Abdul, Eglée Ortega Fernandez, and Luis M Romero-Rodríguez, "Corporate Social Responsibility Communication of Male Luxury Fashion Brands: Analysis on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok," *Management Decision* 62, no. 2 (2024): 471–91.

⁹ Wim J L Elving et al., "The Bad, the Ugly and the Good: New Challenges for CSR Communication," *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 20, no. 2 (2015): 118–27.

¹⁰ Klement Podnar, "Guest Editorial: Communicating Corporate Social Responsibility" (Taylor & Francis, 2008).

¹¹ Andrew Crane et al., *Business Ethics: Managing Corporate Citizenship and Sustainability in the Age of Globalization* (Oxford university press, 2019); Nataša Verk, Urša Golob, and Klement Podnar, "A Dynamic Review of the Emergence of Corporate Social Responsibility Communication: N. Verk et Al.," *Journal of Business Ethics* 168, no. 3 (2021): 491–515.

market changes.¹² Despite its strategic importance, scholarly progress in this field remains slow, with limited and often fragmented discourse.¹³ CSR communication is defined by principles of honesty, stakeholder involvement, and direct engagement, making it essential for effective, holistic management.¹⁴ Failure to prioritise this function can have serious negative consequences for organisations, particularly given today's rapidly evolving business environment and shifting operational demands.¹⁵ While CSR communication is valued for building stakeholder relationships and ensuring organisational sustainability, a more expansive approach, as proposed in this paper, is needed.¹⁶ This should examine how organisations truly centre stakeholders through (1) proactive communication and engagement, (2) systematic feedback collection and interpretation, and (3) the cultivation of mutually beneficial relationships across their broader ecosystem.¹⁷ CSR communication is fundamentally built on four ethical pillars: (1) credibility (demonstrating reliable CSR actions), (2) openness (engaging diverse stakeholders), (3) transparency (clear information disclosure to build trust), and (4) accountability (owning socio-economic-environmental impacts).¹⁸ It also prioritises inclusion by integrating stakeholder perspectives into decisions.¹⁹ However, research has yet to sufficiently examine how these communication strategies align with broader organisational objectives like RL.²⁰

A Stakeholder-Centric Perspective

A stakeholder-centric approach demands active engagement with invested parties to ensure organisational viability, innovation, and sustainability.²¹ This method integrates diverse perspectives through collaborative, trust-based relationships, fostering more informed and sustainable decisions.²² Transparent communication and responsiveness to stakeholder concerns are essential to this process.²³ Given stakeholders' vested interests in CSR and recent scholarly emphasis on environmental considerations, this study advocates for a stakeholder-centric CSR communication framework. The proposed framework reimagines traditional stakeholder paradigms by prioritising the ecological impacts of organisational activities.²⁴

A stakeholder-centric perspective requires leadership recognition to align stakeholder needs with decision-making. This dependence on stakeholder involvement has been recognised in organisational relationship-building initiatives, marking a significant shift in how organisations perceive their

¹² Shuili Du, Chitrabhan B Bhattacharya, and Sankar Sen, "Maximizing Business Returns to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): The Role of CSR Communication," *International Journal of Management Reviews* 12, no. 1 (2010): 8–19.

¹³ Elving et al., "The Bad, the Ugly and the Good: New Challenges for CSR Communication."

¹⁴ Henri Servaes and Ane Tamayo, "How Do Industry Peers Respond to Control Threats?," *Management Science* 60, no. 2 (2014): 380–99; Ruchi Tewari, "Communicating Corporate Social Responsibility in Annual Reports: A Comparative Study of Indian Companies & Multi-National Corporations," *Journal of Management and Public Policy* 2, no. 2 (2011): 22–51; Shaomin Li et al., "Corporate Social Responsibility in Emerging Markets: The Importance of the Governance Environment," *Management International Review* 50, no. 5 (2010): 635–54.

¹⁵ Carsten Lund Pedersen, Thomas Ritter, and C Anthony Di Benedetto, "Managing through a Crisis: Managerial Implications for Business-to-Business Firms," *Industrial Marketing Management* (Elsevier, 2020).

¹⁶ Joep P Cornelissen, "Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice," *Sage Open*, 2023, 1–100.

¹⁷ Maud Tixier, "Australian Public Affairs: Links to European Corporate Communication," *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 5, no. 3 (2000): 152–57.

¹⁸ Servaes and Tamayo, "How Do Industry Peers Respond to Control Threats?"

¹⁹ Sharifah Faridah Syed Alwi et al., "Introducing Integrated Hybrid Communication: The Nexus Linking Marketing Communication and Corporate Communication," *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 25, no. 4 (2022): 405–32; Tewari, "Communicating Corporate Social Responsibility in Annual Reports: A Comparative Study of Indian Companies & Multi-National Corporations"; Li et al., "Corporate Social Responsibility in Emerging Markets: The Importance of the Governance Environment."

²⁰ Linjuan Rita Men, "Internal Reputation Management: The Impact of Authentic Leadership and Transparent Communication," *Corporate Reputation Review* 17, no. 4 (2014): 254–72; Yan Zhu, Li-Yun Sun, and Alicia S M Leung, "Corporate Social Responsibility, Firm Reputation, and Firm Performance: The Role of Ethical Leadership," *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* 31, no. 4 (2014): 925–47; Du et al., "The Roles of Leadership Styles in Corporate Social Responsibility."

²¹ Johanna Kujala et al., "Stakeholder Engagement: Past, Present, and Future," *Business & Society* 61, no. 5 (2022): 1136–96; R Edward Freeman et al., "Stakeholder Theory: The State of the Art," 2010.

²² Akinwale Omowumi Ishola, Olusegun Gbenga Odunaiya, and Oluwatobi Timothy Soyombo, "Stakeholder Communication Framework for Successful Implementation of Community-Based Renewable Energy Projects," *Journal Name*, 2024.

²³ Christianah Pelumi Efunniyi et al., "Strengthening Corporate Governance and Financial Compliance: Enhancing Accountability and Transparency," *Finance & Accounting Research Journal* 6, no. 8 (2024): 1597–1616.

²⁴ Elena Bulmer, "The Problem of Defining Stakeholders in a Sustainable Development Goal Context, Examined via the Analysis of Environmental Conservation Projects," *Ihering. Cuadernos de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales*, no. 4 (2021): 40–73.

stakeholders.²⁵ Recognising and managing stakeholders' interests and expectations has become increasingly important for organisations seeking to maintain their license to operate, manage their reputation, create long-term value, innovate and transform.²⁶ A stakeholder-centric perspective posits that organisations consider a diverse group of stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, suppliers, customers, managers, citizens, local communities, society and the environment in a responsible manner to benefit from enhanced trust, improved brand reputation, access to new markets, and innovation.²⁷

This study advocates for stakeholder-centrism as a vital perspective across business, communication, and social research. It integrates RL and CSR communication through a stakeholder-centric lens, recognising their natural alignment. Since stakeholder-centrism emphasises incorporating stakeholder needs in social and environmental decision-making, the study proposes a unified framework combining these elements.

Responsible Leadership (RL)

This study adopts an RL perspective to develop a stakeholder-centric approach to CSR communication. Grounded in ethical principles, RL fosters trust-based relationships with stakeholders through social engagement, particularly with those invested in an organisation's societal impacts.²⁸ The research positions RL as inherently aligned with CSR communication, as both share the common goal of creating stakeholder and societal value through intentional leadership actions that promote benefits and mitigate adverse consequences.²⁹

RL is grounded in accountability, ethical decision-making, and trust-building, with a specific focus on individuals in senior leadership roles. This framework highlights how leaders' actions and decisions shape organisational responsibility, making RL a crucial subject in management studies examining leadership's social impact.³⁰ The study demonstrates this connection through its proposed CSR communication framework, which links these two domains explicitly.

RL is fundamentally built on credibility, the perceived reliability of organisational actions and communications. It emphasises fairness and legitimacy by incorporating diverse stakeholder perspectives (inclusion) and fostering open dialogue to build stakeholder confidence. RL expands these principles to include transparency by sharing relevant information and cultivating mutual trust as the cornerstone of sustainable stakeholder relationships. Within CSR, RL ensures organisational accountability for social, economic, and environmental impacts.³¹

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study builds on an integrated theoretical framework combining stakeholder theory (ST), RL, and CSR theory. ST serves as the foundation, advocating a stakeholder-centric approach that equally

²⁵ Charlotte Reypens, Annouk Lievens, and Vera Blazevic, "Hybrid Orchestration in Multi-Stakeholder Innovation Networks: Practices of Mobilizing Multiple, Diverse Stakeholders across Organizational Boundaries," *Organization Studies* 42, no. 1 (2021): 61–83.

²⁶ Nitin Pangarkar, "A Framework for Effective Crisis Response," *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 29, no. 4 (2016): 464–83.

²⁷ Bradford Cornell and Alan C Shapiro, "Corporate Stakeholders, Corporate Valuation and ESG," *European Financial Management* 27, no. 2 (2021): 196–207; J Robert Mitchell et al., "Stakeholder Engagement, Knowledge Problems and Ethical Challenges," *Journal of Business Ethics* 175, no. 1 (2022): 75–94; Karl V Lins, Henri Servaes, and Ane Tamayo, "Social Capital, Trust, and Firm Performance: The Value of Corporate Social Responsibility during the Financial Crisis," *The Journal of Finance* 72, no. 4 (2017): 1785–1824.

²⁸ K V James and R G Priyadarshini, "Responsible Leadership: A New Paradigm for Organizational Sustainability," *Management and Labour Studies* 46, no. 4 (2021): 452–70.

²⁹ Günter K Stahl and Mary Sully de Luque, "Antecedents of Responsible Leader Behavior: A Research Synthesis, Conceptual Framework, and Agenda for Future Research," *Academy of Management Perspectives* 28, no.3(2014):235–54.

³⁰ Michael A Witt and Günter K Stahl, "Foundations of Responsible Leadership: Asian versus Western Executive Responsibility Orientations toward Key Stakeholders," *Journal of Business Ethics* 136, no. 3 (2016): 623–38; David A Waldman and Rachel M Balven, "Responsible Leadership: Theoretical Issues and Research Directions," *Academy of Management Perspectives* 28, no. 3 (2014): 224–34; Yang Shi and Maolin Ye, "Responsible Leadership: Review and Prospects," *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management* 6, no. 08 (2016): 877.

³¹ Katrin Muff, Anna Liechti, and Thomas Dyllick, "How to Apply Responsible Leadership Theory in Practice: A Competency Tool to Collaborate on the Sustainable Development Goals," *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management* 27, no. 5 (2020): 2254–74; Jonathan P Doh and Narda R Quigley, "Responsible Leadership and Stakeholder Management: Influence Pathways and Organizational Outcomes," *Academy of Management Perspectives* 28, no. 3 (2014): 255–74; Stahl and Sully de Luque, "Antecedents of Responsible Leader Behavior: A Research Synthesis, Conceptual Framework, and Agenda for Future Research"; Waldman and Balven, "Responsible Leadership: Theoretical Issues and Research Directions."

considers diverse stakeholder interests to generate long-term value and competitive advantage.³² The framework shifts from shareholder-focused to ethical, mutually beneficial engagement.³³ The study recognises three ST paradigms, adopting normative stakeholder theory for its alignment with RL's emphasis on moral responsibility, ethical conduct, and value creation, honouring stakeholders' rights.³⁴ This normative approach specifically connects open dialogue principles with CSR communication objectives.

RL theory extends this foundation by emphasising leaders' role in promoting ethical, inclusive, and sustainable operations.³⁵ The theory asserts that impactful leaders serve as custodians of stakeholder interests, incorporating ethical considerations and societal welfare into organisational decisions.³⁶ Central to RL are the principles of transparency, accountability, and trust development - critical elements for achieving organisational objectives while navigating socio-environmental challenges.³⁷

METHODOLOGY

This conceptual study critically reflected on, holistically conceptualises, and synthesised literature and theories to generate a new perspective on CSR communication, as indicated in Figure 1.

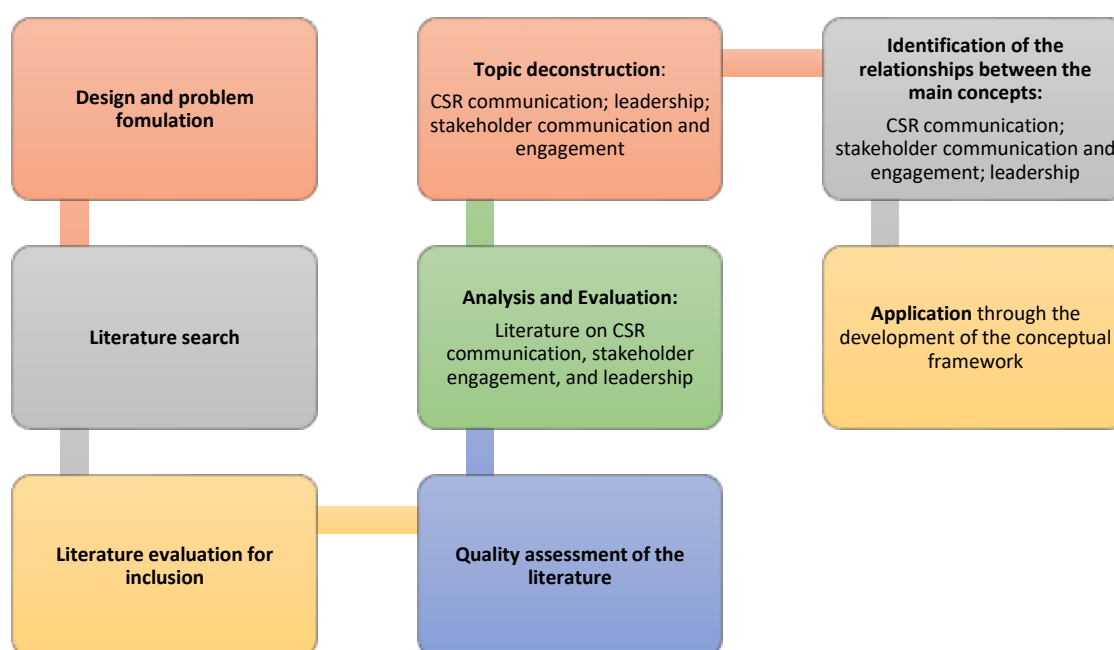


Figure 1: The explorative interpretative theoretical research process
 Source: Authors' own conceptualisation

³² Gabriela Almeida Marcon Nora, Anete Alberton, and Diego Hernando Florez Ayala, "Stakeholder Theory and Actor-network Theory: The Stakeholder Engagement in Energy Transitions," *Business Strategy and the Environment* 32, no. 1 (2023): 673–85; Sergiy D Dmytriyev, R Edward Freeman, and Jacob Hörisch, "The Relationship between Stakeholder Theory and Corporate Social Responsibility: Differences, Similarities, and Implications for Social Issues in Management," *Journal of Management Studies* 58, no. 6 (2021): 1441–70; Eric W Orts and Alan Strudler, "The Ethical and Environmental Limits of Stakeholder Theory," *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 2002, 215–33.

³³ R Edward Freeman and Robert A Phillips, "Stakeholder Theory: A Libertarian Defense," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (2002): 331–49.

³⁴ Cornelissen, "Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice"; Bradley R Agle et al., "Dialogue: Toward Superior Stakeholder Theory," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (2008): 153–90.

³⁵ Anne S Tsui, "Responsible Research and Responsible Leadership Studies," *Academy of Management Discoveries* 7, no. 2 (2021): 166–70.

³⁶ Doh and Quigley, "Responsible Leadership and Stakeholder Management: Influence Pathways and Organizational Outcomes."

³⁷ Julia Mamaria Sefako, "Towards Responsible Leadership within the South African National Parks" (Stellenbosch University, 2021).

This method pinpointed key concepts for investigation, defined the research scope, advanced theoretical knowledge through robust theoretical foundations, and provided fresh insights into the relationships between core concepts by developing a conceptual framework.³⁸

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The study synthesises five CSR communication models – Perez’s authenticity,³⁹ Hansen et.al’s multi-experience,⁴⁰ Kim’s process,⁴¹ Pasricha, et.al’s structural,⁴² and Archimi et.al’s⁴³ cynicism models – to develop an integrated theoretical foundation. While not exhaustively analysed, their key premises inform the proposed conceptual framework. CSR theory operationalises ethical commitments by implementing voluntary initiatives surpassing legal requirements (environmental, social, economic), aligning organisational objectives with societal needs, building stakeholder trust, enhancing reputation, and advancing sustainable development.⁴⁴

Together, ST, RL, and CSR theory form an interconnected foundation that guides organisations in achieving ethical leadership, stakeholder-centrism, and sustainable value creation, offering a comprehensive theoretical foundation for the proposed conceptual framework. Figure 2 identifies the key theoretical constructs from the theoretical foothold of ST, RL and CSR theory.



Figure 2: Key theoretical constructs of the theoretical foothold
Source: Authors’ own conceptualisation

³⁸ Deborah J MacInnis, “A Framework for Conceptual Contributions in Marketing,” *Journal of Marketing* 75, no. 4 (2011): 136–54; Hanekom and Swart, “A Co-Creational Perspective on Consumer-Organisation Relationships (COR) on Digital Platforms in a Post-Truth Era.”

³⁹ Pérez, “Corporate Reputation and CSR Reporting to Stakeholders: Gaps in the Literature and Future Lines of Research.”

⁴⁰ S Duane Hansen et al., “Corporate Social Responsibility, Ethical Leadership, and Trust Propensity: A Multi-Experience Model of Perceived Ethical Climate,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 137, no. 4 (2016): 649–62.

⁴¹ Sora Kim, “The Process Model of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Communication: CSR Communication and Its Relationship with Consumers’ CSR Knowledge, Trust, and Corporate Reputation Perception,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 154, no. 4 (2019): 1143–59.

⁴² Palvi Pasricha, Bindu Singh, and Pratibha Verma, “Ethical Leadership, Organic Organizational Cultures and Corporate Social Responsibility: An Empirical Study in Social Enterprises,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 151, no. 4 (2018): 941–58.

⁴³ Carolina Serrano Archimi et al., “How Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility Affects Employee Cynicism: The Mediating Role of Organizational Trust,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 151, no. 4 (2018): 907–21.

⁴⁴ Archie B Carroll, “Corporate Social Responsibility: Perspectives on the CSR Construct’s Development and Future,” *Business & Society* 60, no. 6 (2021): 1258–78; Florence Benoît-Moreau, Fabrice Larceneux, and Béatrice Parguel, “La Communication Sociétale: Entre Opportunités et Risques d’opportunisme,” *Décisions Marketing* 59, no. 3 (2010): 75–78.

Table 1 reflects the critical theoretical criteria and sub-criteria derived from the explorative interpretive conceptual research. These criteria reflect a critical interpretive synthesis and cross-sectional comparison of relevant literature.

Table 1: Key theoretical criteria and sub-criteria for stakeholder-centric CSR communication and RL

Key theoretical criteria and sub-criteria	CSR communication	Stakeholder-centric perspective	Responsible Leadership
Holistic	Highlights economic, environmental, and social contributions through the integration of strategic leadership, management, public relations and marketing communication functions.	Encompasses all stakeholders and moves beyond shareholder-centrism.	Views strategic organisational functions holistically.
Strategic leadership	Organisational leadership employs CSR communication to respond to social responsibilities.	Leaders centralise stakeholder requirements, needs and demands.	CSR principles are instilled at a strategic level through RL.
Honesty	Aligns with the CSR principle of honesty.	Mutual honesty ensures trust and long-term commitment.	Honesty is reflected in a responsible leader's morality.
Credibility	The perceived reliability of an organisation's CSR efforts.	Requires reliable and credible communication for relationship-building and securing continuous engagement.	A responsible leader's perceived reliability.
Open conversations	Willingness to engage with diverse stakeholder perspectives.	Move beyond dialogue to open transparent conversations.	Stakeholder engagement through open, transparent conversations.
Transparency	Disclosure of relevant information to internal and external stakeholders.	Requires transparent information and knowledge sharing.	Relevancy of responsible leader's information sharing.
Trust	Stakeholder trust is the foundation of long-term stakeholder relationships earned through honest, open, and reliable CSR communication.	Stakeholders trust organisations that acknowledge their significance in decision-making. Similarly, organisations trust stakeholders who are concerned about societal and environmental impacts.	Reinforces the sustainability of RL.

Inclusion	Consideration of diverse stakeholders in CSR decision-making.	No stakeholder group is prioritised over another.	Consideration of diverse stakeholder voices.
Accountability	Organisational responsibility for social, economic, and environmental impacts.	Stakeholders hold organisations accountable for their roles in society.	Social, economic, and environmental impacts.
Stakeholder engagement and participation	Stakeholder feedback and interaction result in participation.	Ethical stakeholder engagement.	Responsible leaders are involved through active participation.
Stakeholder relationships	Direct engagement through CSR communication results in participation and mutually beneficial relationships.	Mutual long-term relationship-building transpires as a result of a stakeholder-centrism approach.	Arises from social interactions. Long-term beneficial stakeholder relationships are built by upholding ethical principles.
Stakeholder-centrism approach	Stakeholders are vested in organisations' CSR impacts.	Stakeholders are centred in CSR communication.	Deliberate actions by leaders to benefit stakeholders and prevent negative consequences for society.
Decision-making	Strategic decision-making foregrounds CSR activities and communication.	Responsible leaders involve stakeholders in CSR decision-making.	Inclusive decision-making processes.
Ethical	Adherence to ethical principles of openness, honesty, credibility, and accountability.	Stakeholders demand ethical conduct in CSR activities.	Ethical considerations with individuals who influence or are influenced by leadership.
Sustainable organisational development	Organisational development is sustained through effective CSR communication. Through effective communication and engagement with stakeholders in corporate social responsibility actions, organisations innovate for sustainability.	Sustainable organisational development through stakeholder centrism. Organisational innovation for long-term sustainability locates stakeholders at the core of CSR activities.	RL leadership contributes to sustainable organisational development. Responsible leaders contribute on the strategic level and aim to innovate CSR activities to enhance long-term sustainability.
Societal well-being	Organisational CSR endeavours benefit society.	Open CSR conversations involve stakeholders.	Responsible leaders enact social responsibility principles.

Based on the theoretical criteria and sub-criteria reflected in Table 1, Figure 3 presents the proposed conceptual SCCSRC framework based on RL principles.



Figure 3: A conceptual SCCSRC framework from an RL perspective

DISCUSSION

The discussion conceptualises the proposed conceptual framework and elaborates on the main and sub-components to indicate the connection between CSR communication, a stakeholder-centric perspective, and RL for sustainable organisational development and societal well-being. The framework is contextualised within CSR leadership and viewed from a stakeholder-centric perspective, which underlines holistic strategic decision-making and enhanced stakeholder engagement and relationships. The sub-components of credibility, openness, transparency, accountability, inclusion, and trust serve as foundational elements for both CSR communication and RL and are linked to the main components. The framework suggests an integrative view of CSR communication based on stakeholder-centric and RL perspectives; hence, the components are, for purposes here, regarded as connected constructs evident in specific organisational contexts that have the purpose of attaining specific outcomes.

CSR leadership and engagement fulfil a crucial role in shaping how organisations approach social responsibility. Leaders must balance strategic direction with inclusivity, ensuring that CSR initiatives are credible and meaningful. At the core of the proposed framework, CSR leadership and engagement holistically approach strategic decision-making, which centres stakeholders through meaningful engagement and the creation of long-term sustainable relationships. These processes transpire on a strategic organisational level through the implementation of CSR principles in response to social responsibility. A holistic approach foregrounds economic, environmental, and social contributions based on strategic leadership functions. The framework extends beyond shareholders to encompass all internal and external stakeholders in an organisation.

This paper suggests a stakeholder-centric approach and RL perspective, resultantly progressing from CSR communication to SCCSRC. The SCCSRC process incorporates holistic strategic decision-making based on stakeholder-centrism and acts as a bridge between leadership and stakeholder engagement by combining the following key principles:

Table 2: SCCSRC principles and descriptions

Principle	Description
Credibility	Consistent, trustworthy communication is embodied in the corporate strategy, symbols, mission statements, and visual branding.
Transparency	There is accurate, responsible knowledge sharing, especially on governance, finances, and product development.
Openness	Goes beyond dialogue to foster collaboration in decision-making, enhancing trust and credibility.
Accountability	Responsible leaders must meet stakeholder expectations through sustainability reports and transparent disclosure, thereby reinforcing trust and long-term relationships.
Inclusion	Recognises the diversity of stakeholder groups in CSR engagement.

Trust	Fundamental to stakeholder-centric CSR communication. Built through honest, open, and reliable interactions.
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The SCCSRC process is built on principles (Table 2) aligned with RL, stakeholder-centrism, and CSR. The framework was developed to achieve two key outcomes: sustainable organisational development and societal well-being. CSR is motivated by an organisation's awareness of societal needs and its duty to support well-being. Furthermore, effective CSR communication – grounded in stakeholder-centrism and RL – sustains organisational development and innovation.

The SCCSRC framework (Figure 3) ensures coherence and alignment between constructs to prevent inconsistencies in practical implementation. It addresses power imbalances among stakeholders during inclusive organisational approaches, as well as barriers like hierarchies, cultural differences, and resistance to change that may disrupt communication. By accounting for these limitations, the framework enables a realistic application of communication theory in organisational settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further empirical research is needed to validate the framework's components and refine CSR communication and stakeholder engagement strategies. Future studies should test the framework across different organisations and industries, examining leadership styles, power imbalances, and cultural or regional variations. Additionally, research should explore technology's role, particularly digital tools' influence on CSR transparency, engagement, and communication effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The originality of the proposed SCCSRC framework lies in its holistic integration of organisational leadership, stakeholder-centrism, and CSR communication. It emphasises leadership's pivotal role in stakeholder-centric strategic decision-making while addressing challenges like power imbalances, cultural differences, and organisational barriers to effective communication. The incorporation of the stakeholder-centric perspective underlines holistic decision-making on a strategic level, thereby enhancing stakeholder engagement and relationships. Credibility, openness, transparency, accountability, inclusion, and trust are the foundational elements that bind RL and CSR communication. The study foregrounded leadership and engagement as foundational elements in credible and meaningful CSR initiatives in response to social responsibility and sustainability. The proposed SCCSRC framework initiates the progression from CSR communication to corporate social responsibility stakeholder communication. As a foundation for future research, the framework helps organisations implement more inclusive and transparent CSR practices across diverse industries and cultural contexts.

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