

A WORKING MODEL FOR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY-DRIVEN RURAL POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN THE SANGWE AREA, ZIMBABWE.

BY

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to God, whose grace, strength, and guidance made this journey possible. All glory and honour be to You.

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ABSTRACT

In Zimbabwe's Sangwe communal area, rural poverty persists despite abundant natural resources and the presence of several large companies in the agriculture and mining sectors. These firms have made only limited contributions to local development. Against this backdrop, the study examined how corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives could alleviate rural poverty in Sangwe. The research objectives were to evaluate the current level of CSR initiatives in the community, analyse the challenges in implementing CSR for poverty alleviation, and develop a framework for integrating CSR into effective poverty reduction strategies. Guided by Stakeholder Theory and the Triple Bottom Line concept, the study followed a pragmatic paradigm and employed a concurrent mixed-methods design. Data were collected through surveys of 304 community members and interviews with 9 key informants (CSR managers, NGO representatives, and local government officials). Key findings indicated that CSR engagement in Sangwe was minimal and largely superficial, misaligned with community needs, and lacking in transparency and local involvement. Multiple barriers were identified, including limited resources, poor communication, profit-driven corporate priorities, corruption, and weak collaboration, all of which undermine CSR effectiveness in alleviating poverty. To address these issues, the study proposed a community-centred CSR framework emphasising active local participation, multi-stakeholder partnerships, transparency, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation. The study recommends that companies adopt genuine, need-driven CSR strategies and that local authorities and NGOs facilitate greater engagement and accountability to ensure CSR efforts effectively reduce poverty. The study was limited by time constraints, logistical challenges associated with conducting research in a remote rural area, respondent reluctance due to political sensitivities, and the focus on the Sangwe communal area, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Future research should examine the long-term impacts of CSR-driven poverty alleviation initiatives, undertake comparative studies across different rural communities, and explore the role of digital technologies and corporate stakeholder perspectives in strengthening CSR effectiveness.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Rural Poverty Alleviation, Stakeholder Theory, Triple Bottom Line Theory, Community Participation, Sangwe Community Area

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Term
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

Abbreviation	Full Term
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TBL	Triple Bottom Line
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
ZIMRA	Zimbabwe Revenue Authority
ZELA	Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association
MoLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Services
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
Gvt	Government
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
NVivo	Qualitative Data Analysis Software (NVivo)
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CSRMs	Corporate Social Responsibility Managers

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Rural poverty is still considered one of the most complex and developmentally persistent challenges in the world, having a very similar nature across different countries but with slight variations in terms of extent and impact (World Bank, 2023). Such a case is Zimbabwe, where rural poverty is a big problem. In these communities, the rural poor suffer from poverty that is over tenfold the rate of their urban counterparts (Muruviwa, Akpan & Nekhwevha, 2020). The difference in household income levels between rural and urban areas calls for specific measures and adaptable methods of poverty reduction that will ultimately address the intensity of rural poverty (Carroll, 2015). The conceptualisation of rural poverty has undergone a transformation journey, where it has progressed from being defined solely in terms of low income to frameworks that recognise its different dimensions, such as lack of access to education and healthcare, not to mention clean water, sanitation, electricity, and productive assets (Meyer, 2018). Similarly, rural poverty alleviation has been through a process of evolution from strictly economic measures to integrated approaches that recognise the interaction between economic, social, environmental, and institutional factors (World Bank, 2022).

Modern local poverty reduction methods are diverse and consist of several primary tactics such as development based on assets, selling on markets, providing public services, enhancing governance and institutions, and involving the private sector (Mandevere, 2020). The last tactic, private sector participation, is the one through which Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) gets involved as a possible means for alleviating rural poverty (Ogbemi, 2020). The more companies realise the totality of their responsibilities to society (not just profit-driven), the more their CSR efforts can become a way of pumping corporate money into solving rural development issues where such companies are located (Hui, 2017). Thus, the question of this research was how to increase rural poverty alleviation and what the case of Corporate Social Responsibility is in the Sangwe location of Chiredzi District, Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. Then also, to find out how much the Sangwe Rural Community has gained from the CSR activities of the companies around, as a result of their obligation. This chapter discusses the historical background of the study, its aim and objectives,

the research questions, the assumptions, significance, contributions, scope, limitations, and definitions of key terms. An outline of the dissertation and a chapter summary can be found at the end of this chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of the rural poor's best friend has evolved into a strategic tool for businesses located in or near rural areas to take the lead in the fight against social and environmental problems, along with the stakeholders, and by making poverty reduction and improving the quality of life their main goals (World Bank, 2020). It has gone far beyond the edges of conventional charity or giving; the company's model of business has been built in such a way that it incorporates commitment to sustainable development from the very start. This obliges them to find out the exact needs and problems of the rural community; e.g., lack of access to education, health care, infrastructure, or marketable skills, and then to design the CSR projects accordingly to achieve the desired long-term, positive impact (Wirba, 2023).

The fundamental concept is that companies can turn into significant change agents in rural areas by utilising their resources, knowledge, and creativity (Wickert, 2021). A company may, for example, improve agricultural practices by giving the farmer in the area training and access to technology; hence, their yields and incomes will be raised. One more instance can be a company constructing or administering schools and health centres that would consequently make the community's access to essential services better (Yassine & Bakass, 2022). The infrastructure development, which includes building roads and providing access to clean water and sanitation, is one more critical area where CSR can cause a radical change (Tamvada, 2020).

Empowerment and participation are emphasised as vital factors to realise effective rural poverty alleviation through CSR (Zemarku et al., 2022). Providing only handouts and donations should not be the case, according to the World Bank (2019), but rather giving people the means to get better lives. This participation involves the community in the planning of CSR and the actual project throughout the whole process, thus ensuring that the initiatives are suitable for their needs and priorities, and that the locals are trained in such a way that they will be able to take the benefits over the long term. However, the successful execution of CSR projects often relies on the existence of economic opportunities for the locals created through the businesses' support, the promotion of

entrepreneurship, and the provision of skills training to improve the workers' chances of getting employed (Purnamawati, Yuniarta & Jie, 2023). By cultivating a partnership and interactive method, corporations can ensure that their CSR activities not only win the battle against poverty but also contribute to the building of stronger and more sustainable rural communities (Siregar, 2021).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is described by Anam et al. (2024) as the business manager's duty to take actions that not only protect but also enhance the whole of the society where the company's operations are located and, indirectly, its interests. Moreover, the Corporate Social Responsibility concept holds that corporate managers should try to attain, concurrently, both social and organisational goals (Adamolekun & Ogedengbe, 2020). The saga of world commerce is filled with tycoons who were ready to go to any extreme in their pursuit of the dollar. As a result, they not only got rid of the trees and animals but also the people, who were then left poorer than they had been before. Ekwok and Ogri (2019) affirmed that Corporate Social Responsibility is linked with management ethics. Managers must devote their energy to doing the right things. Both Sales and Public Managers work hard all the time to meet the wider community's needs for all stakeholders and also to protect the environment.

Ogbemi (2020) claimed that Corporate Social Responsibility stemmed from social power, which in turn was based on the notion that business has a tremendous impact or power over such vital social problems as minority employment and environmental pollution. So, businesses exert power over people's lives, and thus, society should hold businesses accountable for issues such as minority employment, economic empowerment, and environmental pollution, according to Choudhary. And Singh (2020) argues that the very idea of corporate social responsibility can only exist if it has two extreme fronts. The first and foremost duty of a firm is to achieve the triple bottom line—profitably and legally, by producing and providing goods and services that benefit its investors (shareholders) and society in general at the same time. At the same time, it must be socially conscious and responsible by predicting and working on solutions to social issues. Medina and Medina (2020) pointed out that businesses nowadays, as a consequence of Corporate Social Responsibility, try to bear the brunt of the impact that their striving for economic growth has on the concerned parties. In response to society's expectations for corporate social responsibility, many corporations are already making it part of their overall strategy. Corporate Social Responsibility does not mean the

sacrifice of an organisation's primary economic mission or profitability. Corporate social responsibility means the struggle to balance the possible benefits with the costs of achieving them.

1.2.1 Global developments in corporate social responsibility and rural development

While looking at it from a world-view angle, Corporate Social Responsibility has progressed from being a reactive and sometimes philanthropic gesture to a strategic tool aimed at long-term sustainability purposes. Ventura and Jauregui (2023) criticise the ignoring of the evolution and transition of Corporate Social Responsibility as clearly dynamic. The 19th century was the era of the Industrial Revolution, which made heavy competition and neglect of social impact almost justified. During the first half of the 20th Century, the Corporate social responsibility movement that had started with the poor and unemployed eventually turned public opinion more supportive of the companies that tried to strike a balance between making a profit and giving back to society (Ventura & Jauregui, 2023). Corporate social responsibility was more or less the norm in the 21st Century; however, companies still had to wrestle with the issue of how to cope with the rapid changes in the global market, such as technology and fierce competition, while staying true to their ethical values.

Big corporations have turned into social institutions that not only accept the hundreds of human lives affected by them but also give priority to the social relations of the workers (Valentinov, Vladislav, & Steffen, 2024). Human society has become more complicated, and the fight against the recent and, more so, the urban anonymity, plus the loosening of community ties, has lost its power, whilst the corporations have become partially responsible for this. The employees' company health insurance, pension plans, and private counselling services are among the key benefits that employers offer their workers through which they are also further participating in the non-business section of their employees' lives (Chen, He & Yang, 2024). Social responsibility does, however, mirror the culture, and different countries have different forms reflecting the same. What may be considered a normal practice in the USA, Japan, or Korea may not be the same in Zimbabwe and other African countries; in fact, it could be the reverse. It is very difficult to tell what is universally accepted as a social norm. Japanese companies, for example, have not had to deal with as much stakeholder pressure as American companies. In fact, environmental disaster victims have not fared well in seeking compensation from Japanese firms. Japanese working practices favouring certain

groups may be considered socially acceptable in general, whereas in Africa, being a provider of basic social services is perceived to be socially responsible.

CSR has been on the rise in the last few years, with around 90% of the Fortune 500 companies participating in various CSR activities (Srivastava, 2024). A representation of the Global Reporting Initiative (2022) surveyed companies and revealed that 73% of companies considered brand reputation enhancement as a positive result of their CSR efforts. Nevertheless, there are still hurdles to overcome, especially in terms of reconciling the speed of changes in the global business landscape, like technology and competition, with the values of the companies. As cited in studies that took Ogbemi (2020) as one of the authors, it was found that only 60% of the companies managed to combine CSR with their main business strategies successfully. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are one example of the various international policy initiatives that have been introduced to enhance CSR and encourage companies to practice social responsibility (World Bank, 2023). Newcomers in the regulatory schemes have made the European market stricter by demanding companies disclose their environmental and social impacts (GRI, 2022). Nevertheless, the discrepancy still exists, as the majority of firms in less developed areas still adopt CSR policies in the form of donations only, and not as a strategic measure.

1.2.2 Regional developments in corporate social responsibility: Southern Africa context

In Southern Africa, Corporate Social Responsibility evolved due to political issues such as apartheid which left the majority of the population with the effects of poverty, limited access to the majority of essential services, unemployment, and Health crises e.g., HIV and Aids. Businesses were left with a huge responsibility to play a huge role in addressing these social issues. In the SADC Region, Corporate social responsibility is mostly affiliated with national building and poverty eradication as opposed to corporate abuse as viewed in developed countries. Non-Governmental Organisations, communities, and governments actively contribute to economically sustainable development, growth of the economy, as well as environmental stewardship.

According to a report published by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (2021), it was found that more than half of the companies that operate in the SADC region are involved in CSR activities aimed at community development and poverty alleviation. On the other hand, only 40% of the initiatives are reported to be sustained in the long run, thus indicating that

the efforts face difficulties (ibid). The corporate social responsibility treatment for enhancing the nation's potential and lessening poverty stands in sharp contrast to the corporate abuse stories that are widespread in developed countries (Olabisi, 2023). The SADC Regional Strategy on Corporate Social Responsibility is one of the major policy initiatives that have been put in place to alleviate the situation, promoting responsible business conduct (Mupaso et al., 2024). Different companies have collaborated on different projects, leading to communities getting better access to education and healthcare. However, the lack of proper engagement with the stakeholders results in projects being implemented that do not correspond with the actual needs of the communities (Tamvada, 2020).

1.2.3 Local developments in corporate social responsibility in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe, alongside numerous other African nations, is so much in need of foreign direct investments that it is not at all imposing regulations of corporate social responsibility, legislation, or even lawsuits against those companies that do not practice corporate social responsibility. Nevertheless, there are certain companies like Zimplats in Chegutu that have chosen to construct schools and health centres in the Ngezi region of Chegutu. The President of the Republic of Zimbabwe witnessed important projects. Econet Wireless, the biggest mobile operator in Zimbabwe, among other initiatives, through the Higher Life Foundation - Joshua Nqabuko Nkomo legacy, grants scholarships to poor and eligible students all over the country (Econet Wireless annual report, 2022). The late Dr Joshua Nqabuko Nkomo was the country’s prominent nationalist and the former vice president of Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe is in urgent need of foreign direct investment, and this hurts the enforcement of CSR regulations. Consequently, the enforcement of CSR practices is often lax, allowing companies to operate with minimal accountability. However, these difficulties do not stop corporations from giving. For example, Zimplats has donated more than USD two million to the construction of schools and health centres in the Ngezi area (Zimplats annual report, 2024). As per the Zimbabwe Chamber of Commerce (2023), approximately 55% of domestic corporations conduct CSR projects, albeit a minority of them have these projects coordinated with local requirements. The government of Zimbabwe has rolled out various support measures for CSR, the Corporate Social Responsibility Policy Framework being one of them. However, the execution is still far from

uniform. For example, the mobile network operator Econet Wireless provides scholarships through their Higher Life Foundation, but the cumulative result of CSR activities in fighting socio-economic problems is still not significant. Last Friday, community engagement showed an upward trend; nevertheless, the sustainability factor is still a big concern with these projects.

1.2.4 Corporate social responsibility and rural poverty alleviation in the Sangwe communal area.

Sangwe is a communal area located in Chiredzi District, Masvingo Province, in south-eastern Zimbabwe. The area lies within Natural Region V, which is characterised by low and erratic rainfall, high temperatures, and recurrent droughts, making rain-fed agriculture highly challenging. Livelihoods in Sangwe are largely dependent on subsistence farming, livestock rearing, and seasonal employment in nearby agricultural estates and mining operations. Despite the presence of commercial agricultural activities and mining companies in the surrounding area, many households continue to experience high levels of poverty, limited access to essential social services, and inadequate economic opportunities. These characteristics make Sangwe an appropriate setting for examining the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in rural poverty alleviation.

The Sangwe communal area in the Chiredzi district is a clear case of underdevelopment. There is no hospital or boarding school to serve over a hundred thousand people. Mandevere (2020) pointed out that rural communities have been getting poorer since Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980. He also mentioned that rural people face difficulties due to the prescriptive solutions and the problems that ensue, which impede the implementation of rural community development programs. The district of Chiredzi is located in Region 5, which implies that it is the driest area and the least rainfall is received there at any given time. The condition of the inhabitants of this district can only be described as one of absolute poverty. Ventura and Jauregui (2023) define poverty as a situation where people live below the minimum standard of living that is considered acceptable. The inability to have clean water, unemployment, and poor diet are some of the areas that can be mentioned, and they are made worse by the increase in population. Anam et al (2024) also discuss poverty as the minimum subsistence level that no household should fall below, which is also referred to as the poverty datum line. In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) states that the current poverty datum for a family of six is USD 196, which is extremely low.

Several companies in the Sangwe communal area are of great importance in the mining, agriculture, wildlife management, and tourism sectors, and thus they are mainly responsible for the local economy and community development (Chibememe et al., 2014). Mining activities with attention to platinum and other minerals have gained much ground in the area. Not only extracting precious metals, but taking steps through CSR; big companies like Mimosa Platinum Mines and Zimplats are doing their part to upgrade the community. Among these are the construction of schools and health centres that the surrounding community enjoys, and their lives are made better. In the Sangwe area, agriculture is one of the main sources of income, together with livestock. The farms that produce for the market cherry-pick the good qualities from the small farmers by giving them support in the form of training, high-quality seeds that are of high quality, and letting them use the modern ways of farming, such as irrigation (Dhliwayo et al., 2023). All these moves made are indeed necessary steps in making food available and lifting up the monetary standards of rural dwellers so that they can successfully take care of their families.

Wildlife management has a considerable impact on the local economy as well. The companies working in wildlife conservation in the Sangwe region, which is popular due to its diverse ecosystems, generate income mainly through eco-tourism (Nyoni & Mutasa, 2025). Local people are given jobs and money through the community-based tourism projects that contribute to the establishment of ecological practices, and thus conservation goes hand in hand with community development.

In addition, tourism development in Sangwe has great potential (Matseketsa et al., 2019). The tourism sector companies have often worked together with the local communities to the joint advantage of cultural heritage and environmental conservation. This cooperation not only earns money through the influx of tourists but also creates a feeling of ownership and guardianship among the locals, thus empowering them to be active in the fight to keep their natural resources intact. The people living in the Sangwe area mainly depend on a variety of livelihood activities to get their sustenance (WHO, 2019). A good number of families carry out subsistence agriculture, growing crops like maize, sorghum, and millet for their consumption. This activity is very important for food security; however, it can only produce small quantities for sale due to problems such as low soil fertility and irregular rainfall.

Raising livestock has been a necessary part of rural livelihoods along with agriculture (Mandevere,2020). Usually, families keep goats, cows, and birds that provide food, cash and a little

social prestige. However, there are issues such as a lack of veterinary services and grazing land that might affect livestock farming. The majority of the people living in the area search for casual work in the mining or agricultural sectors nearby as well (Masuku, 2022). Although these positions can provide essential income, they are most often unstable and low-paying, thus making it difficult for families to escape the poverty cycle (ibid). A few families are into small-scale business, and they sell their products in local markets or provide services like tailoring and carpentry. These business activities can assist the households in terms of income, but often they face hardships such as lack of access to finance and markets. Moreover, wood collection, wild fruits, and other natural resources can be sources of livelihood for the households. Though this is a common practice, it can lead to ecological destruction if not done in a sustainable manner.

1.3 Statement of the research problem

Even though the Sangwe communal area is rich in natural resources and there are quite a few big international and local organisations making lots of profit in agriculture and mining, the majority of companies don't seem to be very active when it comes to the socio-economic enhancement of the communities where they are operating (Dhliwayo et al., 2023). It is the absence of such engagement that makes the companies' positions regarding poverty alleviation and local development very questionable. The local communities, especially those in the Sangwe area of Chiredzi District, are still in a state of confusion as to whether they have received any benefits from the ongoing economic activities or whether the benefits are very minor. The sufferings of Sangwe in terms of rural poverty, which includes poor access to primary health care, education, unemployment, and lack of infrastructure, continue (Nyoni & Mutasa, 2025).

1.4 Aims and purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to develop a context-specific working model for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)-driven rural poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area of Zimbabwe. To achieve this, the study assesses existing CSR initiatives, examines the factors influencing their effectiveness in alleviating rural poverty, and proposes an integrated model to strengthen CSR contributions towards sustainable community development.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The study contains three specific objectives as outlined below.

1.5.1 To examine the current level of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the Sangwe area.

1.5.2 To analyse challenges in fostering CSR activities for poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area.

1.5.3 To develop a working model that effectively integrates CSR practices to alleviate rural poverty in the Sangwe area.

1.6 Research questions

To address each of the above specific objectives, the following research questions were generated.

1.6.1 What are the existing corporate social responsibility initiatives in the Sangwe area?

1.6.2 What are the main challenges faced in implementing CSR activities for poverty

1.6.3 How can a working model or framework be designed to integrate CSR practices for the purpose of alleviating rural poverty in the Sangwe area?

1.7 Underlying assumptions of the study

The study was guided by the following assumptions.

- Respondents would provide honest, accurate, and reliable information regarding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and their experiences with rural poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area.
- The selected respondents possessed sufficient knowledge and experience of CSR initiatives implemented within their communities to provide meaningful responses relevant to the study objectives.
- The data collection instruments (questionnaires and interview guides) were appropriate for capturing information necessary to address the research objectives.
- The CSR initiatives implemented by companies operating in the Sangwe area had been sufficiently experienced by the community to enable respondents to assess their contribution towards rural poverty alleviation.

- The study area was representative of the context under investigation and therefore suitable for developing a working model for CSR-driven rural poverty alleviation.

1.8 Significance of the study

The research not only made a significant contribution but also provided valuable recommendations and insights to various stakeholders.

1.8.1 Policy Makers

The Government and its local representatives will be the main beneficiaries of this study, as they will become a little more knowledgeable about Corporate Social Responsibility and its benefits. This knowledge will empower them to get the companies within their constituencies to engage actively with the communities and provide them with social services, thereby lowering poverty levels.

1.8.2 Local Companies

The relevant companies are going to be convinced by the study to start or improve Corporate social responsibility practices, and this will be a win-win situation for both the companies and the local communities where they operate.

1.8.3 Academia

Last but not least, the study results can greatly add to the already vast knowledge base about the social responsibility of big companies, especially in the area of poverty alleviation in rural areas, and they can also be regarded as a springboard for future studies, be-easy-up an-d co-initiatives fostering corporate social responsibility.

1.9 Contributions of the study

Knowledge

In relation to knowledge, the research gave a more profound and contextualised comprehension of the proper application of CSR in the rural areas of Zimbabwe with their distinctive socio-economic, environmental, and political realities. This comprehension was not limited to the standard CSR models, but rather, it provided the region, Sangwe, with very specific insights. Furthermore, the

study identified the most powerful CSR interventions for poverty alleviation in the region, giving empirical evidence about the effectiveness of different methods like support for agricultural production, infrastructure development, education, or health projects (Nyamwanza,2015).

Practice

In terms of practice, this research was able to provide a model that is very practical and usable by the businesses that are working in the Sangwe area or in comparable rural regions in Zimbabwe, for the design, implementation, and evaluation of their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) programs. It was such a model that gave clear and practical directions on how to join CSR activities to community needs, how to coordinate stakeholders in a very good manner, and how to assess the impact of their work in a very rigorous manner. The study not only unveiled but also compiled the best practices and major lessons from the existing CSR projects in the Sangwe area, thus giving other companies an advantage of not falling into the traps that are common and mimicking the strategies that are already successful. In the end, the research shared the ways that were not only practical but also less troublesome for the companies to get involved with the local communities, government agencies, and other stakeholders in such a way that the CSR initiatives were totally in harmony with the needs and priorities of the local area, and the result was more cooperative and powerful partnerships.

Policy

This research provided a solid ground for the suggestions made to the policymakers, which were based on the evidence as to how they can help in a more supportive manner to CSR-driven rural poverty alleviation. To this effect, the recommendations were made in the areas of tax incentives for companies that would like to invest in CSR, regulations that would promote responsible business practices, and a policy framework that would facilitate and promote the interaction between the three stakeholders, i.e. business, government, and civil society. The study helped in the design of more efficient policies and programs for rural poverty reduction in Zimbabwe, and thereby the policymakers were able, through the knowledge of CSR's pros and cons as a poverty alleviation tool, to come up with very specific and impactful interventions. The results of this research were also applied to argue for policies that supported CSR and responsible business practices throughout Zimbabwe, thereby making the government officials, business executives, and civil society more aware of the ability of CSR to engage in the sustainable development process.

Of course, the study also pointed out that CSR initiatives should be aligned with national development goals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Zimbabwe's national development strategies, to ensure that these efforts contribute to more extensive societal progress.

1.10 Scope of the study

The geographic scope of the research was limited to Sangwe in Chiredzi District, Masvingo Province. This was because the researcher wanted to understand why some organisations have been unable to change the situation of the poor people. So, the research problem was deeper in the area. Moreover, the researcher suggested that by concentrating on this site, they would be able to reveal all aspects of the CSR initiatives and their role in poverty alleviation in that region. The time frame of the study was 2020 to 2024. The reason was that the problem was still present and that it was mainly due to severe economic instability and the impact of Covid-19. Additionally, this will help the researcher to see how CSR initiatives in the Sangwe Area and their effect on rural poverty alleviation have changed over this period.

Theoretically, the study was guided by the stakeholder theory, in dealing with the four study objectives mentioned in section 1.5 above. By using this theory, the study created a holistic model that not only meets the short-term needs of the Sangwe community but also encourages eco-friendly and economic development. This way, the CSR initiatives are more effective, and the bonds between companies and the communities they serve are stronger.

The study is primarily concerned with the combination of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and rural poverty alleviation. Its main aim is to figure out the ways through which CSR initiatives in the Sangwe area can help companies develop strategies that lead to poverty reduction and enhancements in the rural people's living conditions. The study investigates the processes via which CSR has the power to facilitate the reversal of poverty conditions, assesses the elements that play a role in the success or failure of such initiatives, and eventually aims at creating a model for making the best out of CSR's impact in this regard. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) stands out as the main independent variable. It acts as a marker for the different social and environmental responsibilities that the companies are trying to cope with through their initiatives, policies, and practices with regard to the Sangwe community. Such a range of activities is made up of

investments in education, healthcare, infrastructure, environmental protection, and community development.

CSR is the strongest intervention, and it is being explored for its ability to reduce poverty in rural areas. For a proper model to be developed, it is necessary to have an idea of the nature, scope and effectiveness of the CSR activities. Rural poverty is the main variable that depends on the model. It is the process of decreasing poverty levels and raising the quality of life of the rural inhabitants in the Sangwe area. The areas that are affected include income, access to basic services (healthcare, education, clean water), food security, and overall living standards. Poverty alleviation is the anticipated result of CSR input. It is very important to know how far CSR activities are involved in poverty reduction so that their impact can be measured and a successful model can be created.

1.11 Limitations of the study

Despite the study's significance, the researcher faced several limitations that might have had an impact on the scope and depth of the findings.

Time Constraints

The research project was supposed to fulfil academic requirements within a predetermined period; consequently, time was a restricting factor that influenced the possibility of evaluating the long-term impact of the CSR Initiative and carrying out a longitudinal analysis. To alleviate the problem of restricted time, the research was concentrated on a specific time interval and existing data were employed to augment the evaluation of CSR impact.

Respondents' willingness

The population being in the rural regions made some respondents suspicious, as they thought the study was politically motivated. Sometimes, local inhabitants were unwilling to talk freely because they feared retaliation from the government, particularly in view of the unsatisfactory state of CSR. The researcher, however, offset this respondent suspicion by winning the community's trust through engagement and promising anonymity and confidentiality.

Generalization

This research is only confined to the Sangwe communal area; thus, its results might not be entirely relevant to other parts of the country. Nevertheless, the valuable lessons learned may still provide significant insights for similar situations. In order to admit limited generalizability, the study specified the scope and pointed out the contextuality of the findings while indicating possible insights for analogous situations.

Logical and Geographical Constraints

The Sangwe communal area is isolated and lacks good connectivity; thus, it is difficult to reach the different targeted respondents. Poor transport systems and infrastructure, together with limited financial resources, limited the outreach of the fieldwork. To deal with logistics issues, the researcher resorted to stratified sampling, employed local helpers, and concentrated on the areas within Sangwe that were easy to get to.

1.12 Contextual definitions of key concepts

Absolute poverty - the condition where an individual or family cannot afford to satisfy basic needs like food, water, shelter, basic education, and healthcare (Mack, Schramm, Klasen, 2009). Another way of putting it would be the least possible standard of living under which no person or family should be made to live. CSR incorporates the whole gamut of activities that companies operating in the Sangwe area have taken up to deal with social and environmental problems, contributing to the community in terms of well-being and sustainable development as the main strategy in rural poverty alleviation. A community, being a political unit of social organisation, is a kind of social unit that gives its members a feeling of belonging, which can be either based on people living in a certain place or on the common identity of the community (Gasparini, 2010).

Corporate Social Responsibility - Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is interpreted, as per Anam et al (2024), to be a managerial duty that requires taking actions for the society in which the business of the organisation is located, as well as for its interests, to guarantee the society's and the organisation’s well-being.

Society: A more or less large collective of individuals who inhabit the same area and are to a certain degree self-sufficient as far as the external world is concerned (Luhmann, 1992). Society connotes the larger Zimbabwean context within which the Sangwe community dwells, affecting the CSR

practices and poverty alleviation efforts through the norms, values, and systems that society imposes.

Societal Power: The capability of imposing one's desire over society. Corporations, due to their capacity to use natural resources, have a say in society's decisions (Luhmann, 1992). Societal power recognises the dominance that corporations have in the Sangwe region, mainly their potential to influence the distribution of resources, the area of environmental sustainability, and the community's overall quality of life through their CSR activities.

Workers- Only the present and past workers of the concerned companies comprise such a group (Choudhary & Singh, 2020). Workers are the staff (both past and present) of companies that are located in the Sangwe region. Their lives can be considerably improved or negatively affected depending upon the social responsibility (CSR) policies and practices of the companies. They may also be the ones who carry out the CSR initiatives.

1.13 Dissertation outline

The research consists of five (5) chapters, each chapter contributing to a working model aimed at promoting corporate social responsibility as a strategy for poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area of Chiredzi District, Masvingo Province. The first chapter is the introduction; the second chapter is the literature review, in which the theoretical and conceptual framework that underpins the study is outlined. The third chapter presents the methodology employed in the study. The fourth chapter is dedicated to the display, analysis, and interpretation of the data gathered. The fifth chapter is where the summary and recommendations of the study are presented, and the implications of the study are discussed.

1.14 Chapter summary

The first chapter has depicted the study's background from a worldwide viewpoint to the local context. Additionally, it has revealed what initiated the research. Research objectives, research questions, and the study's significance followed this. Other important parts that were well covered in this chapter include the study's assumptions and limitations. The chapter ended with a brief outline of the dissertation. The next chapter discusses a review of academic and empirical literature regarding the relationship between CSR and poverty alleviation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present an overview of the literature and scholarship related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its impact on rural poverty alleviation. Corporate social responsibility has evolved from a largely philanthropic concept into a broader strategy and ethical business practice concerned with sustainable development, stakeholder engagement, accountability, and social impact. Studies have been carried out in different countries on this matter, and a few of them specifically referred to Zimbabwe, particularly in rural areas like Sangwe. The chapter will both synthesise existing scholarship and situate this study within ongoing policy and debate. By doing so, it creates a basis for developing CSR frameworks that respond to the realities of rural Zimbabwe whilst supporting sustainable poverty alleviation. Firstly, the chapter discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the study, with particular emphasis on Stakeholder Theory and supporting perspectives relevant to CSR and poverty alleviation. Secondly, it reviews empirical studies on CSR initiatives, implementation challenges, and their contribution to rural poverty reduction. Thirdly, the chapter analyses the knowledge gap in the existing literature, especially the limited evidence on CSR-driven poverty alleviation models within the Zimbabwean rural context. Finally, the conceptual framework of the study is presented, showing the relationship between CSR initiatives, CSR implementation challenges, and rural poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area. This structure ensures that the conceptual framework is grounded in the theoretical and empirical literature before being presented as the basis for the study.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Stakeholder theory

The Stakeholder theory underpins the research study. It is a broad structure that points out the necessity of considering all parties that are affected by the actions of a company, rather than just its shareholders (Valentinov et al., 2024). The theory properly asserts that corporations must create value for a wide range of stakeholders. The stakeholders consist of workers, clients, suppliers, society, and nature. The main advocate for stakeholder theory has been Edward Freeman (1984). Freeman was of the opinion that companies should use a wider-angle lens that takes into account the interests of all the stakeholders, not only those of the shareholders (Freeman, Harrison, & Zyglidopoulos, 2018). The key idea or hypothesis of stakeholder theory is the concept of

interdependence, which means that the prosperity of a company is tied up with the welfare of its stakeholders, and vice versa (Valentinov et al., 2024). This interdependence also means that companies should conduct active stakeholder engagement so as to discern their needs and expectations. Another premise is value creation, in which businesses are stimulated to pursue the objective of creating value for all stakeholders, instead of just paying attention to financial returns for shareholders (Freeman, Phillips & Sisodia, 2020). This larger view of value creation prompts businesses to be mindful of the social, environmental, and economic consequences of their decisions.

Ethical responsibility is an important factor in stakeholder theory (Phillips et al., 2019). The theory states that companies have a duty to consider the rights and interests of all the stakeholders. This moral aspect of the stakeholder theory motivates companies to be responsible and open in their dealings, thus helping to build trust and cooperation with the stakeholders. Moreover, the relationships between companies and stakeholders are revealed by the theory as being fluid and subject to changes over time (Valentinov et al., 2024). Therefore, businesses are prompted to constantly review and adjust their practices according to changing stakeholder demands and social values in order to keep the relationships good and thus achieve success in the long term.

Theory is fundamental to the research as it helps businesses with CSR initiatives that directly tackle poverty causes by identifying and considering all stakeholders' needs, which also include local communities (Phillips et al., 2019). This entire viewpoint enables the tailoring of interventions that will slacken the burdens of particular rural populations. Not only that, stakeholder theory promotes the involvement of local communities and thus partnership and trust. Such collaboration is very important for understanding the peculiarities of the socio-economic environment of the Sangwe region and for planning suitable poverty reduction measures. The focus on value generation for all stakeholders resonates with the principles of sustainable development. If companies' CSR projects take into account social, economic and environmental aspects, they will be able to guarantee that the rural populations' quality of life is improved permanently.

2.2.2 Supporting theories

Triple Bottom Line (TBL)

The Triple Bottom Line theory, which was put forward by John Elkington in 1994, is a sustainability framework that enlarges the traditional accounting method by giving importance to three areas of performance: economic, social, and environmental (Elkington, 1997; Slaper & Hall, 2011). The theory suggests that corporations should not just concentrate on gaining the maximum financial profits but also function considering the consequences on humanity and the Earth. The framework underlines that the concept of sustainable development can be very well realised if there is a truce between profit-making, social responsibility, and care for the environment (Milne and Grey, 2013). The authors propose that the TBL theory entails that CSR initiatives should comprise long-term inputs to economic empowerment (creating jobs and generating income), environmental sustainability (infrastructure development and sustainable agriculture), and social welfare (poverty reduction, health, and education). The Triple Bottom Line Theory signals that rural poverty reduction cannot be separated from eco-friendly practices and economic growth (Arowoshegbe & Emmanuel, 2016; Isil & Hernke, 2017; Goyal, Kumar & Rahman, 2023).

A significant amount of criticism has been directed towards the TBL framework as well. Certain academics point out that though most companies take the economic, social, and environmental aspects into account, actually, a lot of companies use them purely as a means of improving their image without making any real changes in their operations (Milne & Grey, 2013). Others go on to say the same thing but adding that the three dimensions are not easily quantifiable or implementable which makes the framework to be vague (Isil & Hernke, 2017), thus raising the issue of whether it is a practical drive for the development of green business practices. But if one does apply the framework in a rigorous manner, it still turns out to be a good device for merging the objectives of CSR with poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

2.3 Review of empirical studies

2.3.1 Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives in rural communities

Adamu, Kente and Rabiu (2024) evaluated the corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities of faith-based organisations (FBOs) in Nigeria, with a special emphasis on their assistance to orphanages. Among other things, the study pointed out that FBOs are very important in tackling social problems in the country of Nigeria, especially since the situation is so dire with poverty and the number of kids without parents being high. The authors presented a panorama of such CSR

activities as basic provision, primary health care, and educational support. The study is also revealing how these organisations are performing their religious duties and meeting social needs at the same time. The case study method adopted in the research made it possible to look deeply into particular FBOs and to gather rich qualitative data that could help understand the practical implications of CSR initiatives. It was thus possible to see the operations of these organisations in the larger context of Nigeria's socio-economic landscape.

The findings correlate with those of Khan and Ahmed (2019), who pointed out the tremendous impact that the actions of the Muslim charity had in dealing with educational inequalities and accessibility issues in Pakistan. The charity scores high in terms of commitment to educational improvement and social mobility by building schools, providing scholarships, and implementing educational programs for the needy. But even with its strengths, the study has some important limitations. First of all, it offers a detailed study of only three FBOs but does not cover all the faith-based organisations engaged in CSR in Nigeria, which could be misleading as one may then think that CSR uptake is less effective or totally ineffective in the other organisations. Also, the fact that the study relied heavily on literature review and case studies makes the findings less applicable to other contexts. The present study was conducted using the primary data obtained from the participants, which was considered the most suitable way to deal with the research problem.

2.3.2 Education and training

Abebe et al. (2024) and Anam et al. (2024) came to the same conclusion that industries usually put money into schemes that would develop local human resources. These programs are essential in giving people the right skills for the respective jobs in different fields; thus, their employability and income potential are also raised. As an illustration, vocational training attaches practical skills to the workers that are in demand in the local market and makes it easier for the workers to find stable jobs.

In the same way, Achmad (2022) mentioned that education support projects comprise scholarships, supplying of school materials and upgrading of local school infrastructure. These are all very helpful in attaining and maintaining the desirable educational outcomes for children in the countryside, and hence, they have the right to access education and learning resources that are

conducive to the process. Moreover, the local community involvement is usually very strong so that the educational programs feel like they are the community's and the participants' cake. Ajina et al. (2020) opined that the aforementioned community involvement is not only a contributing factor to the successful initiatives but also a way of building trust and good relations between companies and the communities in which they operate.

2.3.3 Infrastructure development

Alam and Islam (2021) have pointed out that CSR initiatives in rural areas will not just explore but also develop infrastructure as a critical focus area. However, companies working for and with rural communities also do the essential infrastructure. So, infrastructure investments by companies include transportation, roads, and facilities to increase the accessibility of markets, healthcare, and educational institutions. The whole of the above-mentioned is an accessibility that drives economic development and improves the quality of life of the people to a certain level.

Ogbemi (2020) has further mentioned that companies in the construction of transportation contribute to community facilities such as schools, health clinics, and centres for community activities. Such facilities become very important for the local community as they provide, through education, health care, and social interaction, the basic services that are needed. Moreover, a lot of companies are now adopting green practices in their infrastructure projects. The use of sustainable materials and the encouragement of energy-saving practices create not only a good environment for the affected community but also long-term profits for the firms (Ferrarini, 2021).

2.3.4 Education and training

Hui (2017) and Khan et al. (2021) agreed that health and nutrition projects are the cornerstones of the CSR programs that are intended to help the rural population overall. In addition to that, the authors pointed out that companies hold medical camps wherein free health check-ups, vaccinations, and basic healthcare services are offered to the unprivileged community. These medical initiatives are addressing very important requirements for health and reducing health disparities in the countryside.

Ventura and Jauregui (2023) also pointed out that nutrition education is another important aspect of these CSR programs. By providing communities with information on nutrition, proper eating habits, and food security, companies also bring about better health and lower malnutrition rates as a result of their contributions. In the same breath, Siregar (2021) mentioned that working with local health care providers and NGOs adds to the strength of these health projects and makes them more suitable for the culture and more responsive to the community's specific needs. Besides, such alliances are a way of sharing resources and knowledge, which also plays a role in the health and nutrition programs' (Tamvada, 2020) impact being even more powerful.

2.3.5 Community engagement

Achmad (2022) disclosed that having direct communication with community members helps the companies to get a clear picture of their needs, wants, and difficulties. Alam and Islam (2021) disclosed the same by saying that through the participatory approach, local voices are heard and considered in the decision-making process. This is done through community meetings, surveys, and focus group discussions, which give the inhabitants a chance to tell what they think about the possible CSR activities (Adamolekun & Ogedengbe, 2020). Ferrarini (2021) further maintained that once the community's needs are identified, the companies are able to come up with and carry out projects that are really important and advantageous.

2.3.6 Challenges in fostering CSR activities for poverty alleviation in rural communities

2.3.6.1 Resource Constraints

a) Financial constraints

Anam (2015) pointed out that the majority of companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), encounter serious financial difficulties that prevent them from applying full-scale CSR programs. These financial limitations can take different forms. The authors disclosed that SMEs very often are running on the edge of their budget, which severely restricts the amount of money they can put aside for CSR programs. Contrary to big companies that might have separate budgets for CSR activities, SMEs could find it hard to defend the cost of social responsibility practices when the immediate needs of the business are given priority.

Carroll (2015), in the same regard, stated that short-term gain was more preferred by companies over long-term investment in CSR due to financial pressures. This kind of short vision may cause companies to consider poverty alleviation initiatives to be more expensive and slow to arrive by investing in them rather than taking the easy way out by using low-cost solutions. Moreover, Ekwok and Ogri (2019) pointed out that financial limitations may induce an attitude of being risk-averse among SMEs. Companies might not like to take the chance of putting their money in CSR ideas with the possibility of substantial benefits for rural areas but also the risk of losing the money invested. This conservativeness not only inhibits innovation but also narrows down the range of CSR activities.

b) Human resource challenges

A study conducted by Ogbemi (2020) demonstrated that, besides the financial issues, the challenges related to human resources have a great deal to do with the effectiveness of corporate social responsibility programs directed at poverty alleviation. The study disclosed that there is quite frequently a shortage of qualified staff who have the know-how to create and run successful corporate social responsibility programs. Many companies might not be able to hire professionals with the knowledge and skills related to community engagement, project management, or social impact assessment, which are the backbone of CSR initiatives. In the same vein, Olabisi (2023) contended that even if paying attention to the importance of CSR, the companies would not invest in the training of their existing personnel to obtain the required skills. The lack of investment in human resources has the potential to lead to the implementation of programs that do not resonate with the needs of rural communities, thus, the impact of CSR efforts becoming null and void.

Of vital importance to note is the submission of Meyer (2018), who indicated that in some cases, high turnover rates within organizations disrupt the continuity of CSR programs. When skilled personnel leave, the knowledge and expertise required to sustain and grow CSR initiatives are lost, leading to inconsistent program implementation and diminished effectiveness.

c) Infrastructure constraints

Olabisi (2023) disclosed that rural areas suffer from infrastructure difficulties which make CSR activities harder to implement. The writer posited that bad transport, absence of communication means, and limited healthcare or educational facilities restrain the area of influence and effectiveness of CSR actions. Supporting this statement, Ventura and Jauregui (2023) pointed out

that such difficulties force CSR to be approached in a holistic manner that would contemplate the wider frame the activities are taking place within.

2.3.6.2 Stakeholder engagement

a) Community participation

The work of Tamvada (2020) established that the sustainability of CSR activities is dependent on the involvement of local communities. Nonetheless, the participation of communities and companies intended to serve them is often hindered by various challenges. It was found that the CSR activities of companies were being driven by their corporate objectives rather than the needs and priorities of the local community. Such a situation diverts attention from the community and thus leads to a lack of participation and engagement by the residents. Along the same lines, the World Bank (2019) claimed that if communities are not involved in the planning and execution of CSR activities, their voices and perspectives will be frequently neglected. Consequently, the dissent and doubt towards the corporate initiatives will increase, as the communities feel their needs are not being properly treated. Likewise, Wirba (2023) pointed out the importance of knowing the cultural context of rural communities for the CSR to be effective. The author further claimed that companies that neglect local customs, traditions, and social dynamics will not only be implementing programs that are culturally unfit or ineffective but also will be driving the community away from them.

b) Communication barriers

Jakunskiene (2021) and Abebe et al. (2024) were of the same opinion that communication is significant for stakeholder engagement, but there are still certain things that might hinder the effectiveness of such dialogues between companies and people living near them. Besides, the authors revealed that when there's no clear communication, there's a misunderstanding regarding CSR's goals and benefits. If a certain community is not fully informed about a CSR initiative and not aware of its benefits, that community may not be active in participating the program. Moreover, Ventura and Jauregui (2023) came to the conclusion that there is an information gap between the big corporations and the local communities. Companies can rely on vast amounts of data and resources, while the community members are mostly uninformed about the CSR projects that are being planned. This difference in information creates a climate of distrust and suspicion, and thus

the people living nearby doubt the validity of the reasons for corporate actions. Ogbemi (2020) shared that he believes that ineffective communication drives a wedge of distrust between the corporations and the communities. He remarked that if the past CSR initiatives had been poorly implemented or had not delivered their promised benefits to the community, the community would be reluctant to engage with the new programs. Trust can only be established through continuous, open communication along with real dedication to solve community issues.

2.3.6.3 Systemic barriers

a) Regulatory challenges

Medina and Medina (2020) as well as Mandevere (2020) concurred in their findings that one of the major obstacles that regulators place in the way of companies trying to practice Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in rural areas is the long and tedious process of regulatory approval. They showed that the firms difficulty faced by interacting with various government offices leads to the long wait for the green light and sometimes even aborting the project under such circumstance. A similar case was noted by Ekwok and Ogri (2019) who said that in some areas, the rules governing the activities of businesses were confusing and ambiguous, thus, creating a situation where the companies were uncertain as to how to proceed. This confusion sends the message to the businesses that CSR is not a safe area, so they hesitate to start projects in that domain due to the possibility of getting caught up in legal issues or having to deal with the government. On the other hand, Choudhary and Singh (2020) went further to state that the local authorities do not have the power or willingness to back CSR. The companies find it very difficult to open communication with the local government, which further leads to the project getting bogged down in the midst of their difficulties.

Research suggests that unclear or inconsistent policies regarding CSR can create uncertainty for companies, discouraging them from investing in poverty alleviation initiatives (Chen, He & Yang, 2024). Additionally, bureaucratic hurdles slow down the implementation of projects, further complicating efforts to address rural poverty (Bester & Groenewald, 2021).

2.3.6.4 Evaluation and measurement

a) Short-Term Focus

Chauhan and Sukhmani (2024) pointed out that the short-term focus of many programs is one of the major problems associated with CSR initiatives. Such a short-term view weakens long-term poverty alleviation endeavors in various respects. For example, Ferrarini (2021) argued that a lot of CSR activities are created to bring about quick benefits like fast financial donations or short-term projects. Though these activities may help to some extent, they do not usually get to the root of the problem and do not contribute to sustainable development. Jakunskiene (2021) also opined that short-term focus means lack of strategic planning aimed at long-term impact. Without a sustainability vision, CSR projects do not succeed in bringing about change that lasts in the target communities, thus trapping them in poverty cycles rather than facilitating their liberation. In the same line, Khan and Ahmed (2019) found out that when CSR practices are dominated by short-term gains, then it comes to be that the resources are not allocated in a very effective way. Supporting this, Hui (2017) also found out that companies can end up concentrating on impressive projects that attract immediate eyesight but do not help the community in terms of long-run existence thus the total effectiveness of the CSR strategies would be reduced leading to the overall decline of the CSR impact.

2.3.7 Framework that integrates CSR practices to alleviate rural poverty

The research by Ventura and Jauregui (2023) investigates the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the poverty alleviation of rural families in Peru. The project was based on interviews with families that benefited from the CSR activities of the two mining companies and used qualitative data as its core. The study produced a large volume of data regarding the programs in terms of their effects and viewpoints. A key benefit of the research is that it has allowed the CSR programs to hear from rural families through qualitative data as their poverty-lightened contributions. This viewpoint is significant as it brings forth the direct and indirect advantages of the CSR projects; they include, among others, capacity strengthening, opening new markets, and strategic giving. Moreover, the research has brought to light that a large number of families are involved in informal business activities, which, though indirectly related to CSR initiatives, are an indication of the CSR involvement area in the future. Hence, CSR activities could be tailored in such a way as to both assist and empower local business ventures. The study has also pointed out building capacity and market entry as CSR strategies that have been

particularly effective in alleviating poverty. This degree of detail allows for a more precise approach in the future CSR planning and implementation Overall, the small size of the sample of twenty families has limited the degree of generalization appropriate to the conclusions drawn, even though they are valid. The perspectives mentioned are certainly very informative, but they may not entirely represent the variety of experiences of all rural families in Peru and elsewhere. Therefore, it is justifiable that more research is conducted.

The research by Chauhan and Sukhmani (2023) looked into the impacts the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) actions have on rural families in the Indian state of Punjab. They first collected data through a questionnaire prepared under strict regulations and then employed various statistical methods for data analysis. The analysis of the results led them to the conclusion that the CSR activities have a major role in improving the social, economic, and environmental conditions of the rural families concerned. By taking a whole approach, the researchers made it easier for policy-makers to see the interrelations of these dimensions in the quest for sustainable development and thus, have a holistic understanding of rural development. The credibility of the findings is much more given by the structured questionnaires and statistical tools used since they make the data to be analyzed with more power. The methodology used increases the reliability of the results regarding the impact of CSR. The results of Chauhan and Sukhmani's (2023) research agree with the spotlight of existing literature, which has been casting CSR as rural development supporters. For example, the studies like Ventura and Jauregui (2023) have pointed out similar trends and have even reported that CSR can help uplift these areas by improving access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure. On the other hand, this particular study has not yet provided a practical model which could lead to the establishment of corporate social responsibility as a driving force behind the lessening of rural poverty, thus making this study an answer to that gap.

Anam et al. (2024) carried out a study that looked closely at the relations between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and poverty reduction. More specifically, the study focused on the CSR projects of Lafarge Africa Plc in the Cross River State, Nigeria. The research comes up with a major insight since it sheds light on how CSR initiatives could actually help the poor in developing countries. The study disclosed the priority of education and infrastructure, namely rural roads, in making poverty reduction easier. Thus, these results confirm that, if they wish, corporations can be the agents of change in neighborhood and so practicing the social responsibility of business. The

research method that was opted for, that of survey employing a sample of 400 respondents, is a systematic way of data collection through which reliable data can be obtained.

The application of unstructured interviews and questionnaires gave a holistic view of the community's attitudes about the CSR activities of Lafarge Africa being effective or not. Nevertheless, the principal drawback of the research was that it dealt with just one company (Lafarge Africa Plc) and one region (Cross River State), which made the results less applicable to other contexts. It is well-known that the effects of CSR can differ a lot between regions and sectors, and one might need to conduct a more inclusive comparative study with several organizations and places to draw more general conclusions about CSR's impact on poverty alleviation. The results of Anam et al. (2024) corroborate the earlier work of Adamolekun and Ogedengbe (2020), which highlighted that CSR has a strong positive influence in community development and poverty reduction. Aderogba and Adegboye (2019) have earlier provided evidence that corporate social responsibility programs can result in better educational facilities and services, which are the key factors for a country to grow economically and socially.

2.4 Analysis of the knowledge gap in the available literature

The majority of current literature has limited itself to examining particular places like Peru, India, and Nigeria. At the same time, it is the case that the Sangwe region of Zimbabwe has had no studies about CSR initiatives, which makes it impossible to properly ascertain the CSR's impact in different areas. This geographical gap brings up the issue of the necessity for specific context studies that would be able to support policy and practice in that area.

Moreover, although some researchers worked their way through the CSR's contribution to rural development, few offered a full-scale framework through which rural poverty could be tackled by the means of CSR practices. This study proposes to provide a working model for the area of Sangwe CSR initiatives that will help remove this obstacle. Research has often emphasized the need for long-term planning and sustainability in CSR initiatives, but many studies still tend to concentrate on short-term gains. Thus, there is a demand for more studies on CSR enshrined in the policies that will lead to long-lasting impacts and sustainability.

The effect of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can greatly differ depending on the industry and region, and the few studies that do exist are often centered around one company or one industry,

which makes their results less applicable to the general case. A more extensive comparative analysis that involves many organizations and different geographical contexts is essential for a deeper understanding of CSR's contributions to poverty alleviation. Furthermore, while some of the studies used qualitative or quantitative approaches, there is still a need for more solid and mixed-methods studies that can reveal more about CSR's role in poverty elimination.

The key points needing more research are the CSR tactics that emphasize human resource development and access to markets in rural areas being on the cutting edge, and at the same time the infrastructure created through CSR, such as rural roads and education facilities. Moreover, it will be very useful to investigate how CSR programs could support and be compatible with the local entrepreneurship activities.

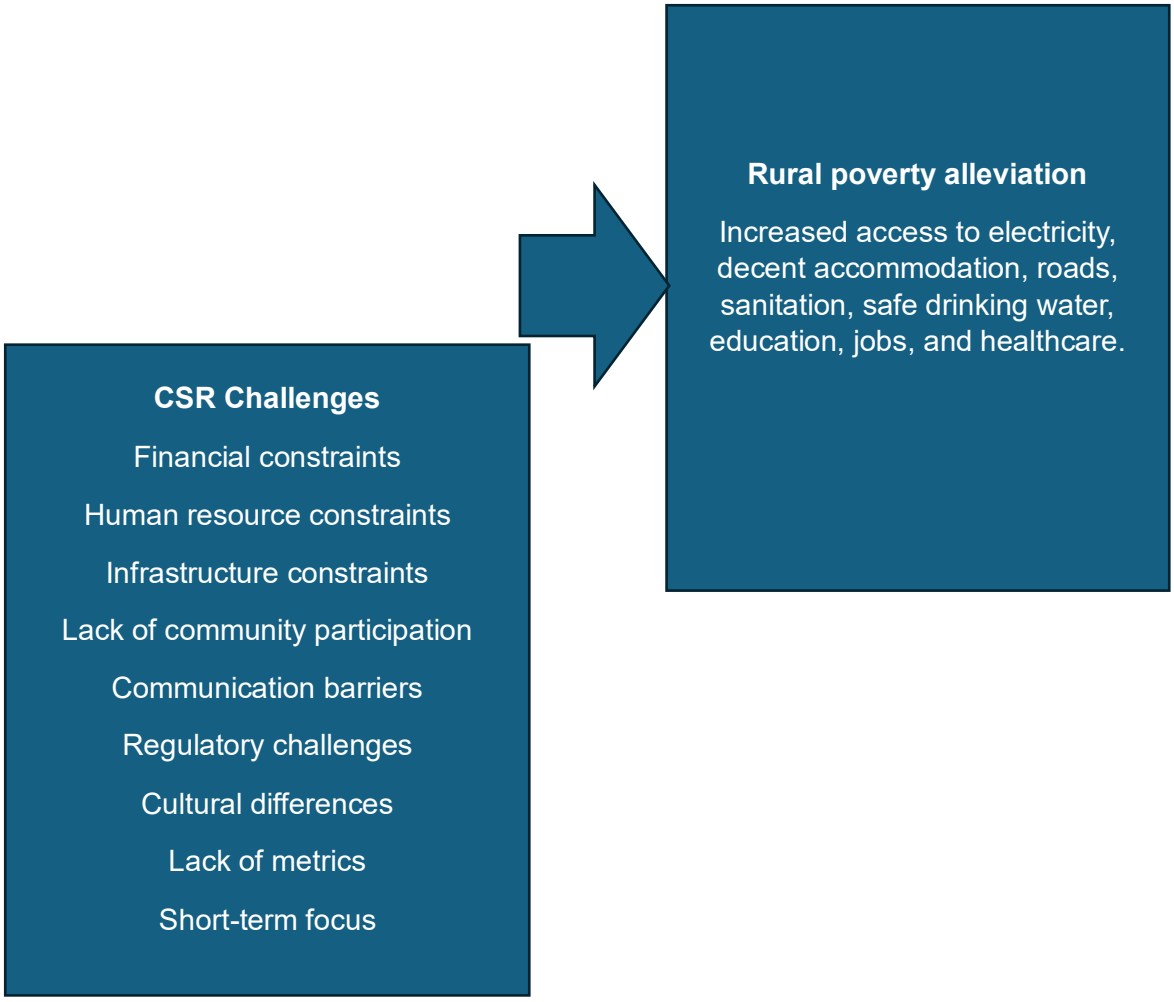
This study will contribute to the existing literature by developing a working model for CSR-driven rural poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area of Zimbabwe, providing insights into the effectiveness of CSR initiatives in different geographical contexts, highlighting the importance of long-term planning and sustainability in CSR strategies, and informing policy and practice aimed at enhancing CSR initiatives and addressing challenges to achieve more effective rural poverty alleviation.

2.5 Conceptual framework of the study

This investigation demonstrates the role of CSR in the reduction of poverty in the rural region of Sangwe and at the same time it also shows the ways the challenges of CSR might weaken and/or limit that effect. The conceptual framework of the research is depicted in Figure 2.1 below. The independent variable is CSR as measured by different CSR initiatives and CSR challenges. The dependent variable is poverty alleviation.

Figure 2. 1 Conceptual framework





Source: Researcher's own compilation (2025)

CSR initiatives, particularly education and training, are expected to empower the local community such that they are employable and catalyze income-generating projects, which will ultimately reduce poverty due to improved income levels and standard of living.

2.5.1 Independent Variable: CSR Initiatives

Definition: This is the area where organizations conducted activities for the community's development, such as education, training, health and nutrition, community engagement, infrastructure development, and sustainable agriculture - the deeper and better these programs were, the more positive their impact on the community's development would be.

Measurement: CSR initiatives were measured using five key dimensions: education and training, infrastructure development, health and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, and community engagement. These dimensions were used to assess the extent to which companies implemented Corporate Social Responsibility programmes aimed at improving the socio-economic well-being of the Sangwe community. Higher levels of implementation across these dimensions indicated greater corporate commitment to rural development, while lower levels reflected limited CSR intervention.

Levels of variation:

- **Low:** CSR initiatives are limited or largely absent, with minimal corporate investment in community development programmes.
- **Medium:** CSR initiatives are implemented to a moderate extent, although gaps remain in coverage, participation, or effectiveness.
- **High:** CSR initiatives are implemented extensively across key development areas and adequately address the socio-economic needs of the local community.

Effects interpretation: In case of high CSR the rural poverty alleviation will be more successful as companies will be making a huge investment in the local community's development. Consequently, access to basic services will be more widespread, and the quality of life will be better, and there will also be more business opportunities. Conversely, low CSR would mean that businesses would not get involved in the region at all and cpould even oppress poverty through lack of participation, and the area would miss out on the benefits of corporate donations (Ekwok & Ogri, 2019). Education and Training

Measurement: Education and training were evaluated through the number of community members educated, the number and quality of programs, and the overall impact of these programs on livelihoods. Participants are allowed to express their opinions on the relevance and effectiveness of such programs.

Levels of variation: A low level of education and training would mean that there are hardly any programs or very few of them, while a medium level would imply that some programs exist but they might not be extensive. High education and training would mean that companies provide large

and relevant programs that give the community people the skills they need (Anam, Eteng & Ojong, 2017).

Interpretation of effects: Increased education and training measures would probably result in better livelihoods, higher employability and better economic prospects for the people in the community. This, in the end, might help to reduce rural poverty.

Infrastructure Development

Measurement: The development of infrastructure was measured through an assessment of the kinds and the quality of the infrastructure projects carried out, such as roads, schools, healthcare facilities, and water supply systems. The respondent's lives were rated according to the impact of these projects (Choudhary and Singh, 2020).

Levels of variation: Low infrastructure development would mean very little or no investment in infrastructure at all whereas medium would refer to some investment with large gaps in between. High infrastructure development would be understood as a situation where the companies have made a considerable investment in the infrastructure which is not only robust but also well-maintained and accessible to the local community.

Interpretation of effects: Access to essential services, economic opportunities, and quality of life would all be factors positively affected by high infrastructure development. Ultimately, it would be a significant factor in the reduction of rural poverty.

Health and Nutrition

Measurement: Health and nutrition were evaluated based on the kind and the quality of health services delivered, the number of community members using these services, and their effects on health outcomes. Respondents were those who provided information about the effectiveness of these services.

Levels of variation: Low health and nutrition would signal no or very few healthcare services available, while medium would mean that some services are accessible but with serious shortcomings. High health and nutrition would infer that companies are offering thorough and top-notch medical services that positively influence health outcomes.

Interpretation of effects: High health and nutrition services would probably result in better health, increased productivity, and higher living standards for community members, thereby aiding rural poverty reduction eventually.

Sustainable Agriculture

Measurement: Sustainable agriculture was determined through the evaluation of the kind and the quality of agricultural practices that were being promoted, the number of community members that were getting involved in those practices, and the impact on production and income from agriculture. Respondents are the ones who can give information about the effectiveness of these practices.

Levels of variation: Low sustainable agriculture situation would mean that no or very few sustainable practices are adopted, whereas a medium situation would be that some practices are adopted but there are considerable gaps in the adoption. A high sustainable agriculture situation would indicate that the companies are leading and backing the development of strong and environmentally friendly agricultural practices that enhance both productivity and income.

Interpretation of effects: It is very likely that high sustainable agriculture practices will result in better agriculture productivity, further generating income as well as providing assurance of food for the community thereby making a great contribution to the alleviation of rural poverty.

Community Engagement

Measurement: Community engagement was measured through the analysis of the frequency and quality of interactions among companies and the local community, the degree to which the community was involved in the decision-making processes, and the effect on the development of the community. Survey participants can give feedback on the effectiveness of community engagement initiatives.

Levels of variation: Low community engagement would signify that there were no or very few interactions between the companies and the community, while medium would mean that there was some interaction but with major gaps. High community engagement would suggest that companies

not only interact but do so on a regular basis and in a meaningful manner, taking the community's needs and concerns into account.

Interpretation of effects: High community engagement will, in all likelihood, lead to greater trust, collaboration, and ownership of development projects which, in turn, will make rural poverty alleviation measures more effective.

2.5.2 Independent Variable: CSR Challenges

Measurement: The challenges associated with CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) were evaluated by a scale that measured the degree of difficulty facing companies in the Sangwe area in various aspects (Ayoo, 2022). For instance, the respondents evaluated the level of financial constraints, human resource constraints, infrastructure constraints, lack of community participation, communication barriers, and regulatory challenges using a Likert scale (1 = "not a challenge at all," 2 = "somewhat challenging," 3 = "very challenging"). The individual scores were then added together to create a total score for CSR challenges.

Levels of variation:

- Low CSR challenges would signify that the companies have very few obstacles to their CSR initiatives.
- Medium CSR challenges would mean that some companies are facing certain challenges, yet these are manageable and do not deter the CSR initiatives from being implemented.
- High CSR challenges would indicate that the companies are facing serious and complicated challenges, which are the barriers to CSR being implemented.

Interpretation of effects: High CSR challenges will most probably lead to rural poverty alleviation efforts getting less pay-off, inasmuch as the companies might find it very hard to come up with and conduct efficient CSR programs. This scenario might open the door for scarcities in accessing basic needs, evaporating economic chances, and a general decline in the standard of living for the individuals residing in that area. Conversely, low CSR challenges would enable companies to put

into practice their CSR programs without much fuss, and this would result in making more effective poverty alleviation campaigns.

Financial Constraints

Measurement: Financial limitations were gauged by estimating the amount of money granted for CSR projects, the extent of resource provisioning, and the effect of financial restrictions on the execution of the CSR. The respondents can give their feedback on the sufficiency of the funds and resources they have.

Levels of variation: Low financial constraints would point to plentiful funding and resources, while medium would imply some financial limitations but manageable ones. High financial constraints would mean that the companies are encountering substantial financial problems that restrict them from carrying out CSR activities.

Interpretation of effects: High financial constraints are most likely to result in reduced CSR initiatives' impact, less access to the most basic needs, and fewer economic opportunities for the text community, thereby unplugging rural poverty alleviation efforts.

Human Resource Constraints

Measurement: The constraints in human resources were revealed through measuring the skill levels and availability of the personnel, the competence of the staff in carrying out the CSR initiatives, and the negative effects of the human resource limitations on CSR's overall effectiveness. Besides, respondents are free to share their views on the sufficiency of human resources and the necessity for enhancing capacities.

Levels of variation: Low human resource constraints would mean that the personnel are not only skilled but also have the capacity to work. Medium constraints would mean that there are some limitations, but they are manageable. High human resource constraints would mean that companies face serious problems regarding both personnel and their capacity, thus limiting the effectiveness of CSR.

Interpretation of effects: High human resource constraints would most probably cause the reduction of CSR effectiveness, the limitation of the access to the essential services, and these

factors would in turn lead to the decline of the economic opportunities for the community members, which would eventually be the case for rural poverty alleviation efforts.

Infrastructure Constraints

Measurement: Infrastructure constraints impacted CSR implementation (Khan & Ahmed,2019) were determined by evaluating the quality and availability of infrastructure, including roads, transportation, and communication networks, and the consequent limitations on CSR activities. Thereby, the respondents would be in a position to inform about the infrastructure adequacy and its impact on CSR activities.

Levels of variation: Low infrastructure constraints would represent a scenario of total sufficiency with regard to the infrastructure, thereby, its being in a good state; and medium would indicate some limitations, yet, the situation is manageable. On the other hand, high infrastructure constraints would suggest that companies are actually facing serious problems due to the absence or poor quality of infrastructure, which leads to the non-implementation of CSR activities.

Interpretation of effects: It is very probable that the situation of high infrastructure constraints would result in CSR activities being less effective, there being no or very limited access to essential services, and community members being less economically dynamic, which in turn, would go against the rural poverty alleviation efforts.

Lack of Community Participation

Measurement: Lack of community participation was determined by engaging the communities in the companies' CSR activities, the capacity of the communities to get involved, and the inference drawn from limited community participation on CSR (Phillips et al., 2019). Hence the participants are expected to share their insights about the communities' involvement and participation.

Variations in communities' participation being very low would mean that there was a lot of engagement and participating going on, whereas very medium would be indicative of some participation with a considerable number of gaps. On the contrary, very high variation in community participation would not suggest otherwise but rather that the community would not

otherwise be involved at all in or connected with the CSR initiatives, which, in turn, would render them less efficient.

A High lack of community participation would most probably result in diminished CSR effectiveness, restricted access to basic needs plus services and reduced economic opportunities for the residents all of which would slow down the fight against rural poverty and even cause it to be worse off.

Barriers to communication

Methodology: Barriers to communication were gauged by evaluating the communication channels, the messages' clarity, and the communication difficulties' impact on CSR (Zemarku et al., 2022). The survey also collected information on communication adequacy and problems encountered from the respondents.

Variations in communication barriers being very low, the organizations would have very good communication channels and clear message. On the other hand, medium would show that there are some challenges but they are manageable. Very high communication barriers would mean that companies have a big problem communicating with the community and this will negatively impact their CSR activities.

Interpretation of effects: The presence of various communication barriers of a high degree would probably result in the ineffectiveness of CSR, restricted access to basic services, and the lowering of economic opportunities for the people in the area, finally, through all these, rural poverty alleviation measures would be very much affected.

Regulatory challenges

Measurement: Regulatory challenges were measured by examining the clarity and stability of regulatory frameworks, the support provided by regulatory bodies, and the effect of regulatory challenges on CSR execution (Valentinov et al., 2024). The respondents gave information about the quality of regulatory frameworks and the difficulties experienced.

Levels of variation: Regulatory challenges would mean the presence of clear and supportive regulatory frameworks, while a medium level would signal the presence of some challenges, but they are manageable. A high level of regulatory challenges would mean that companies encounter significant and complicated regulations that severely restrict CSR implementation.

Interpretation of effects: The presence of high regulatory challenges would definitely cause the CSR to be less effective, the community to have no access to essential services, and the economic opportunities to be reduced for the residents, thereby the rural poverty alleviation efforts would be undermined in the end.

2.5.3 Dependent Variable: Rural Poverty Alleviation

Measurement: The public access to the basic services that consisted of electricity, good housing, roads, sanitation, clean water, education, employment, and medical care among others was evaluated by The World Bank (2019) in their analysis of rural poverty alleviation. The study also took into account how the CSR activities impacted the respondents' livelihoods and health.

Levels of variation:

- Low rural poverty alleviation would mean that there are no or very few essential services available.
- Medium rural poverty would imply that there is only partial access to the necessary services, but the quality, price, and area covered are still significantly poor.
- High rural poverty alleviation would signify that the entire community has the necessary services, thereby, uplifting the living and health standards.

Interpretation of effects: The level of rural poverty alleviation was interpreted based on the extent to which communities had access to essential services and experienced improvements in their socio-economic well-being. High levels of rural poverty alleviation indicated greater access to basic services, improved livelihoods, enhanced health outcomes, increased employment opportunities, and improved living standards. Moderate levels indicated partial improvements in these indicators, while low levels reflected limited access to essential services and minimal

improvements in the socio-economic conditions of the community. These interpretations provided the basis for assessing the level of rural poverty alleviation achieved within the study area.

2.6 Chapter summary

The literature on CSR and poverty alleviation has been examined critically in both academic and empirical aspects by the chapter. One of the main theories of the study, stakeholder theory, has been discussed as the theoretical basis of the research. The chapter has also delineated the conceptual framework of the project. By overcoming literature issues, the chapter has also pointed out the knowledge gaps in the field. The next chapter describes the research methods used for the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was dedicated to the literature review about corporate social responsibility and poverty alleviation and it pointed out the different methodologies employed by former empirical researchers. The present chapter is thus going to discuss and defend the research philosophy, research approach, data collection instruments, sampling methods, and data analysis methods that have been made up based on the previous methodological strengths and the researcher's choice. Finally, the researcher's ethical considerations in conducting the study will be presented as a conclusion of the chapter.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Instead of using a purely positivist or interpretivist approach, this study implemented a pragmatist research philosophy. The decision was made according to the characteristics of the research issue and the research questions. The first research question concerned the analysis of the present situation in the area of CSR initiatives: hence it required measurable and quantifiable data to be obtained through the application of the positivist methodology. The second objective required a more in-depth analysis of the problems associated with CSR: hence the interpretivist approach was utilized to understand stakeholder experiences, power plays and organizational barriers. The third research question was to develop a working model, which involved both the gathering of numbers and the providing of contextual insights to come up with a practically applicable framework.

Consequently, the philosophical foundation that was most appropriate was pragmatism, as it prioritized "what works" the most for the solution of practical problems over strict adherence to one epistemological position (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In the case of rural poverty reduction research, Carson (2012) argues that pragmatism permits researchers to select their methods by taking into account their efficacy in answering the specific research questions rather than observing the philosophical truth. In the Sangwe case, it meant that the research could justifiably combine the stakeholder surveys (to measure the impact of CSR on different beneficiaries) and the interviews with CSR managers (to understand the decision-making process in the organization). The pragmatist perspective also acknowledged that the situation in Sangwe could be characterized both in objective terms (poverty rates, CSR funding) and in a socially constructed way (perceptions of

corporate responsibility, ranking of community needs), hence the complete use of various methods was necessary to portray this complexity in all its aspects.

3.3 Research Design

The research utilized a mixed-methods concurrent triangulation design, which allowed for the simultaneous collection of both quantitative and qualitative data and gave equal importance to both at the same time. The integrated analysis of data was done, and the insights across the entire research project became deeper and wider. Using structured surveys the current CSR levels were assessed and the reach, frequency, and types of interventions to which the beneficiary communities got exposed were captured. The interviews with CSR specialists that were conducted alongside provided the background both strategically and operationally, through which the intervention choices and processes of implementation were made clear. The qualitative methods were primary when it came to the exploration of implementation difficulties. The corporate managers, government officials, and NGO partners who were interviewed using the semi-structured method revealed the barriers that were both systemic and organizational. Quantitative surveys corroborated this by categorizing the challenges according to the degree of their severity and frequency, thereby allowing the evidence-based prioritization.

The two types of data were integrated very first during model development. On the one hand, the quantitative findings pointed at CSR approaches which were associated with poverty reduction indicators, while on the other hand, the qualitative insights provided an explanation of the success or failure mechanisms. The convergence of the two not only strengthened the validity but also the divergence revealed the contextual complexities that need a nuanced interpretation. The concurrent design was preferred over a sequential approach because of the logistical constraints in rural areas such as Sangwe. It facilitated a thorough but non-rigorous single-visit data collection, which was assisted by the careful alignment of the instruments that addressed the phenomena in different ways from different angles.

3.4 Research Approach

The study utilized both deductive and inductive approaches in alignment with the pragmatist philosophy and mixed-methods design.

The deductive procedure had for its chief purpose the more or less thorough covering of Objective 1 and the less addressing of Objective 2. The research in the case of evaluating present CSR made use of existing CSR frameworks like Carroll's CSR Pyramid and Porter and Kramer's Creating Shared Value model to set up the surveys that would measure CSR activities according to the already set-up theoretical categories (philanthropic, ethical, economic, and legal responsibilities). The use of deductive reasoning in this situation permitted a systematic comparison of Sangwe's CSR with the best practices and theoretical expectations. In the case of obstacles identification, it was also done deductively to find out whether the barriers pointed out in the literature (poor needs assessment, no community participation, and sustainability issues) were also present in Sangwe or not. The questions in the survey were directed at establishing the extent to which these obstacles were predicted by the theory.

The inductive approach was primarily utilized for investigating Objective 2 and Objective 3. The qualitative data collection process included open-ended interview questions which empowered the participants to point out the challenges and contextual factors not mentioned in the existing literature. For example, the initial analysis disclosed some difficulties that were only faced in the Sangwe area like the cultural protocols regarding corporate-community collaboration and the accessibility problems during the rainy season that the literature review did not cover. The researchers took the themes that were coming up and put them into different categories by coding them to generate new theoretical insights about the rural areas of Zimbabwe where CSR is practiced. In the case of Objective 3, the working model was inductively developed by putting together the patterns derived from the empirical data rather than just adapting an existing model. Although established CSR frameworks played a role in the analysis, the specifics of the model, the implementation steps, and the factors of success were all derived from the unique characteristics of Sangwe that the data had revealed.

The dual strategy was methodologically robust since Objective 1 involved testing the manifestation of the fictional CSR categories in Sangwe (deductive), Objective 2 involved both

the confirmation of known problems and the discovery of new ones (deductive + inductive), and Objective 3 necessitated the construction of local evidence-based theory while being informed by existing frameworks (inductive with deductive elements). Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) advocated this adoptive way in mixed-methods research, claiming that the strict following of purely deductive or inductive reasoning inhibits the researcher's ability to pass over the complete picture of complex social phenomena.

3.5 Population of the study

The study population comprised four distinct stakeholder groups, each selected for their direct relevance to the research objectives:

1. CSR Managers and Corporate Representatives (Population: 12): The CSR managers, community liaison officers, and senior executives from companies supporting or surrounding Sangwe with CSR programs documented formed this group. These persons played a significant role in the first aim (examining the existing CSR initiatives, their goals, and ways they are being carried out) and in the second aim (finding out the organizational problems in CSR implementation). The number of people involved was 12 which was the only way to signify the truth that very few firms have a formal CSR presence in rural Sangwe including those mining companies that have been granted concessions in the area, agricultural businesses, and a telecommunications provider. Hence, this small population size called for census sampling and not probabilistic sampling for this group.

2. Community Members/CSR Beneficiaries (Population: around 4,500 households) The adult participants of this community group came from eight villages in Sangwe. They were in different ways regarded as the beneficiaries of the CSR projects. This group met all three goals: offering the beneficiary perspective on the current CSR situation (Objective 1), identifying the problems and weaknesses in CSR reaching the grassroots (Objective 2), and confirming the model components for their relevance and technicality (Objective 3). The population figure was derived from the 2022 Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency census data for the Sangwe ward. Moreover, in order to guarantee that the participants fully understood the CSR activities during the years, a two-year minimum residency was stipulated as one of the inclusion criteria.

3. Local Government Officials (Population: 8): A group of 8 consisted of the ward councilor, village authorities, traditional leaders, and members of the district development committee responsible for the Sangwe area. They were important for Objective 2 (to understand the regulatory, coordination, and governance issues that hindered the CSR practices) and for Objective 3 (the model being designed used government-corporate-community partnerships mechanisms). The entire available population of 8 officials was targeted because of their unique positions of knowledge and power.

4. NGO and Development Agency Representatives (Population: 6): In this study, the persons representing NGOs and Development Aid Agencies involved in the poverty alleviation support lo Sangwe were taken into account. Besides their comparison of different developmental approaches (Objective 1), they pointed out the issues that arose due to the lack of proper coordination between CSR and other development activities (Objective 2), and gave their opinion on the sustainable models of intervention (Objective 3). The selected population of 6 was a mirror of the very limited NGO presence in this particular rural area.

The population of stakeholders was not only a good idea but also unavoidable as poverty alleviation through CSR is an inherently multi-actor process. If only corporate perspectives were examined, the beneficiary experiences would be missed; if only communities were the focus, the organizational constraints would be overlooked. The comprehensive stakeholder inclusion gave the study more power to develop a working model (Objective 3) that took into account the needs, constraints, and contributions of all key actors, thus increasing the model's practical applicability.

Table 3. 1 Population Strata of the Study

Population Stratum	**Target Population**	**Inclusion Criteria**	**Relevance to Study Objectives**
CSR Managers and Corporate Representatives	12	CSR managers, community liaison officers, and senior executives from companies implementing CSR	Assess existing CSR initiatives (Objective 1); identify organisational challenges affecting CSR implementation (Objective 2)

		programmes in or around Sangwe	
Community Members / CSR Beneficiaries	Approximately 4,500 households	Adult residents from the eight villages of Sangwe with a minimum residency of two years	Assess beneficiaries' experiences of CSR (Objective 1); identify grassroots challenges (Objective 2); validate the proposed working model (Objective 3)
Local Government Officials	8	Ward councillor, traditional leaders, village heads, and district development officials responsible for Sangwe	Examine governance and coordination challenges (Objective 2); provide institutional input into the working model (Objective 3)
NGO and Development Agency Representatives	6	Representatives from NGOs and development agencies involved in poverty alleviation within Sangwe	Compare CSR and development interventions (Objective 1); identify coordination challenges (Objective 2); contribute to sustainable intervention strategies (Objective 3)
Total	**26 key informants + approximately 4,500 households**	—	—

3.6 Sampling Methods

Given the diverse stakeholder populations and the need for both generalizability and depth, the study employed multiple sampling techniques, each justified by the characteristics of the target population and the specific objectives being addressed.

3.6.1 Sample Frame

Corporate Representatives and CSR Managers: The sample frame was composed of the Zimbabwe Investment Authority's list of companies operating in the Chiredzi District (where Sangwe is situated) as a main source, followed by checking it against the Ministry of Mines' registry of mining concessions in that area, and finally incorporating local government records of companies that were involved in community development projects. The creation of this multi-source frame was very important as there is no complete list of CSR-active companies in the rural parts of Zimbabwe. The frame consisted of 12 companies, which were 5 mines, 4 agriculture firms, 2 construction companies, and 1 telecom operator. The census sampling method was applied, directing the effort to all 12 companies due to the small size of the population and the possible range of CSR strategies of the individual companies, thereby making the case very helpful for an intimate understanding (Objective 1) and model development (Objective 3).

For Community Members: The selection of the sample was done on the basis of household lists from the eight villages in the Sangwe ward. These lists were obtained from village registries that are maintained by village heads. The total number of households in the sampling frame was about 4,500. The villages were located in different geographic areas, some of them being nearer to the corporate operations while others were farther away. This was important from a methodological point of view as it allowed for the interpretation of different values in CSR access and impact. A stratified random sampling method was used. The stratification was done on the basis of the location of the village (distance from corporate operations: near, moderate, remote) and the household's CSR exposure (confirmed beneficiaries vs. non-beneficiaries), which resulted in six strata. This was a very critical stratification for Objective 1 as it made sure that the sample got a chance to include the viewpoints of the people who directly benefitted from CSR and those who were likely to be excluded, thus giving a comprehensive view of CSR's reach and impact. For Objective 2, the stratification showed if the difficulties were different depending on the geographic accessibility or the prior CSR engagement. In each stratum, a simple random model was used to select particular households through random number generation.

For Local Government Officials: With the population being 8 officials, census sampling was used, contacting all officials. This was necessary as each official represented a unique governance function (traditional leadership, elected representation, development coordination), and excluding

any would create gaps in the understanding of regulatory and coordination challenges (Objective 2).

For NGO Representatives: Likewise, all 6 accessible NGO representatives were approached (census sampling), as diversity in the type of interventions (education, agriculture, health) offered by each organization and their different experiences contributed to the understanding of the development coordination challenges and best practices.

3.6.2 Sample Size Determination

Quantitative Sample (Community Members): The sample size was calculated using Yamane's formula for finite populations:

$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size (4,500 households)
- e = margin of error (0.05 for 95% confidence level)

$n = 4,500 / (1 + 4,500(0.05)^2) = 4,500 / 12.25 = 367$

To account for potential non-response and ensure adequate representation across strata, the sample was increased by 10% to 404 households. This sample size provided sufficient statistical power for quantitative analysis while remaining feasible for field data collection in a rural area with transportation and accessibility challenges. The sample was distributed proportionally across the six strata based on each stratum's size in the population, ensuring representativeness.

Qualitative Sample (CSR Managers): Every one of the 12 CSR managers was invited for a detailed interview. Even if this is a census method, it made sure that all the different corporate views were heard in terms of qualitative data. The interviews took 60-90 minutes and so made it possible to very thoroughly examine the difficulties of implementation (Objective 2) and the strategic

considerations that were necessary for model development (Objective 3). Qualitative Sample (Officials and NGOs): Targeted at the 8 government officials and 6 NGO representatives, a total of 14 semi-structured interviews (30-45 minutes each) were planned. This total method was necessary because these stakeholders were in the special positions, and the saturation was not the proper criterion—comprehensiveness was, since each official or NGO represented a separate institutional viewpoint that was relevant to the multi-stakeholder model being developed and had to be taken into account.

The sample size decisions balanced methodological rigor with practical constraints. The quantitative sample of 404 provided statistical validity for generalizing about CSR reach and impact across Sangwe's population (Objective 1), while the qualitative samples provided the depth and contextual richness necessary for understanding implementation challenges (Objective 2) and developing a grounded, contextually appropriate working model (Objective 3). The integration of these sample sizes in the mixed-methods design created complementarity, where the breadth of quantitative data was enriched by the depth of qualitative insights, and vice versa, directly serving the study's objective of developing a working model that was both evidence-based and contextually relevant.

3.7 Data Collection

3.7.1 Data Collection methods

Primary data collection methods

Surveys

Surveys were selected as a means of collecting quantitative data from a larger sample of community members. This method allowed for the assessment of community awareness of CSR initiatives, participation rates in CSR programs, perceived benefits of CSR, and suggestions for improvement. The use of a structured questionnaire ensured that data were collected in a standardized manner, facilitating quantitative analysis and the identification of statistically significant relationships between variables.

Semi-structured Interviews

These interviews were chosen to enable in-depth exploration of the challenges faced by companies, NGOs, and community members in implementing and benefiting from CSR initiatives. The semi-structured format provided the flexibility to probe into unexpected issues, gather rich qualitative data, and capture the nuances of individual experiences and perspectives. This method was particularly useful for understanding the underlying reasons for the successes and failures of CSR programs.

3.7.2 Data Collection Instruments

To ensure the collection of high-quality and relevant data, a range of data collection instruments were carefully developed and utilized:

Survey questionnaire

After a lot of thought a structured questionnaire was created to get the quantitative data from the community members. The questionnaire included both closed and open questions covering the entire range of information on CSR initiatives awareness, participation in CSR programs, perception of benefits, and suggestions for improvement *(attached in appendix C)*. The questionnaire was done with great care to be precise, short, and culturally acceptable for the target group. To make sure the questionnaire was valid and reliable it was first tested on a small group of community members before being given out to the larger sample.

Interview guide

A semi-structured interview guide *(attached in appendix B)* was developed to facilitate in-depth interviews with key informants from companies, NGOs, and the community. The guide included open-ended questions related to the challenges of implementing CSR initiatives, the impact of CSR programs on poverty alleviation, and recommendations for improving CSR effectiveness. The interview guide was designed to be flexible, allowing for follow-up questions and exploration of emerging themes. Prior to data collection, the interview guide was reviewed by experts in the field to ensure its relevance and comprehensiveness.

3.7.3 Data Collection Procedure

To ensure the ethical and rigorous collection of data, the following procedures were meticulously followed:

1. Ethical Clearance: Prior to commencing data collection, ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. This involved submitting a detailed research proposal outlining the study's objectives, methods, and ethical considerations. The ethical review board assessed the proposal to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines and standards, and provided approval to proceed with data collection after addressing any concerns or issues raised
2. Survey Administration: The survey questionnaire was administered to a random sample of community members. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before administering the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered in a neutral location to ensure privacy and minimize potential bias.
3. In-depth Interviews: Key informants from companies, (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018) NGOs, and the community were identified and invited to participate in in-depth interviews. Participants were provided with information about the study's purpose and procedures, and their informed consent was obtained prior to the interview. Interviews were conducted in a private setting to ensure confidentiality and minimize distractions. With the consent of the participants, interviews were audio-recorded to facilitate accurate transcription and analysis.
4. Data Storage**:** All data collected, survey responses and interview transcripts, were stored securely and confidentially. Electronic data were stored on password-protected computers and encrypted to prevent unauthorized access. Hard copies of data were stored in locked cabinets in a secure location. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy, and the original recordings were stored separately from the transcripts.

3.8 Data Analysis Methods

The data collected through the various methods were analyzed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research problem.

- **Quantitative data:** Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) to summarize the characteristics of the sample and the distribution of responses. These descriptive statistics provided an overview of community awareness of CSR initiatives, participation rates in CSR programs, and perceived benefits of CSR. Inferential statistics (correlation analysis) were used to examine the relationships between variables and to determine whether observed differences were statistically significant. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for data analysis.
- **Qualitative data:** Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved identifying recurring themes and patterns in the data, coding the transcripts, and organizing the codes into meaningful categories. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. The process of thematic analysis involved multiple steps, including familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.
- **Triangulation of data:** Quantitative and qualitative findings were triangulated to enhance the credibility and comprehensiveness of the study. The survey results were compared with interview findings to identify areas of convergence, complementarity, and divergence regarding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and their contribution to rural poverty alleviation in Sangwe. This process strengthened the validity of the findings by allowing evidence from one method to corroborate or explain results obtained from the other. For example, survey findings on community awareness of CSR initiatives were compared with interview responses from key informants to provide a more comprehensive understanding of CSR effectiveness and implementation challenges.

This rigorous approach to data analysis allowed for a nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between CSR and poverty alleviation, addressing the research objectives effectively and providing a solid foundation for the development of the working model.

3.9 Research Rigour

3.9.1 Reliability and Validity

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study, the following measures were implemented throughout the research process (

- **Triangulation:** Data were collected from multiple sources (companies, NGOs, community members) using different methods (surveys and interviews) to triangulate findings and enhance validity. (Crawford, 2020). This involved comparing and contrasting data from different sources to identify areas of convergence and divergence, and to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research problem. For example, data from surveys on community perceptions of CSR were compared with data from interviews with company representatives to assess the alignment between company objectives and community needs.
- **Member Checking:** Preliminary findings were shared with participants to ensure accuracy and credibility. Participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback and clarify their responses, ensuring that their perspectives were accurately represented in the research findings. This process involved sharing interview transcripts and preliminary themes with participants and soliciting their feedback on the accuracy and completeness of the data.
- **Peer Debriefing:** The research process and findings were discussed with peers and experts in the field to obtain feedback and identify potential biases. This involved presenting the research design, data collection methods, and preliminary findings to a panel of experts and soliciting their feedback on the rigor and validity of the study. Peer debriefing helped to identify potential biases and limitations in the research process and to refine the interpretation of the findings.
- **Pilot Testing:** The survey questionnaire and interview guide were pilot-tested to ensure clarity, relevance, and validity. This involved administering the instruments to a small group of participants and soliciting their feedback on the clarity, comprehensiveness, and appropriateness of the questions. Pilot testing helped to identify and address any potential problems with the instruments before they were administered to the larger sample.
- **Inter-coder Reliability:** For qualitative data analysis, inter-coder reliability was established by having two independent coders analyze a subset of the transcripts. The level of agreement between the coders was assessed using Cohen's kappa coefficient. This

ensured that the coding process was consistent and reliable, and that the themes identified were grounded in the data.

3.9.2 Trustworthiness of the study

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the following strategies were employed to address the key criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

- **Credibility:** Prolonged engagement in the study area, persistent observation, triangulation, and member checking were employed to ensure that the findings accurately reflect the experiences and perspectives of the participants. This involved spending a significant amount of time in the Sangwe area, observing CSR activities, and interacting with community members, companies, and NGOs. The use of multiple data sources and methods, as well as member checking, helped to ensure that the findings were credible and trustworthy.
- **Transferability:** Rich, detailed descriptions of the study context, participants, and data collection and analysis procedures were provided to allow readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other settings. This involved providing a thorough description of the Sangwe area, including its socio-economic characteristics, cultural context, and the nature of CSR activities being implemented. The detailed description of the research methods allowed readers to assess the extent to which the findings could be transferred to other similar contexts.
- **Dependability:** A clear audit trail was maintained, documenting the research process from start to finish, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This allows for an external reviewer to examine the consistency and coherence of the study findings. The audit trail included detailed notes on the research design, data collection procedures, data analysis methods, and decision-making processes.
- **Confirmability:** Reflexivity was practiced throughout the research process to acknowledge and address potential biases. The researcher's assumptions, values, and potential biases were explicitly stated in the research report. External reviews of the data analysis and interpretations were conducted to ensure that the findings are grounded in the data and not unduly influenced by the researcher's perspectives.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

Informed consent

The researchers ensured that all participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, and any potential risks. Participants voluntarily agreed to participate without any coercion.

Confidentiality and anonymity

The study protected the identities of participants by ensuring that their responses were kept confidential. Data was anonymized to prevent any identification of individuals, especially in sensitive contexts such as rural poverty.

Respect for participants

The researcher treated all participants with respect and dignity. This included being sensitive to cultural norms and values in the Sangwe area, as well as being aware of power dynamics that may exist between researchers and community members.

Avoiding harm

The study minimized any potential harm to participants. This comprises of psychological, social, or economic risks that arose from discussing sensitive topics related to poverty and CSR initiatives.

3.11 Chapter Summary

The chapter has expressed and defended the selected pragmatic research philosophy, mixed research approach, data collection tools comprising structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The chapter has also detailed and justified the sampling methodologies used that involve simple random sampling, stratified sampling, and purposive sampling. The data analysis methods used were also adequately described. The chapter finished by specifying the ethical considerations that the researcher followed in conducting this research and that included Informed consent, Confidentiality and anonymity, Respect for participants and Avoidance of harm. The following chapter offers, analyzes, and debates the research results.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reveals results, using tables for illustration, related to a CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) working model that was designed for the purpose of relieving rural poverty in the Sangwe district of Zimbabwe. The analysis is conducted with the help of primary data gathered during the field study, and is corroborated through comparison with earlier studies, citing points of consensus and divergence. Among other things, the chapter deals with the response rate of the research, the data's reliability and the answers to the three research questions.

4.2 Descriptive statistics

4.2.1 Response Rate

Table 4.1 a Response rate

Instrument	**No. Administered**	**Actual returned**	**Response rate**
Questionnaires	404	307	76%
Total	**404**	**307**	**76%**
Instrument	**Targeted**	**Responded**	**Response rate**
Interviews	12	9	75%
Total	**12**	**9**	**75%**

Source: Primary data (2025)

As shown in table 4.1a above, the survey conducted through questionnaires, out of 404 questionnaires distributed, 307 were returned, and this resulted in a 76% response rate. This response rate is considered very good, as it shows that not only the majority but also the whole targeted participants were willing to take part in the study and share their opinions. A 76% response rate is usually seen as acceptable and representative; this means that the risk of non-response bias is reduced, and the reliability and validity of the findings are increased according to Bryman's (2021) assertion that a response rate of at least 50% is credible and generalisable to the target population. Also, for the interview part of the research, 12 individuals were approached, and 9 of

them replied yielding a 75% response rate. This response rate for the interviews was also very good, as it pointed out that the researcher was able to involve a considerable portion of the intended key informants. Interviews are generally more difficult to conduct because of time and scheduling problems with the participants; thus, a 75% response rate indicates a well-planned and successfully executed interview process.

The high overall response rates, both for the questionnaire-based survey and the interviews, demonstrate the researchers' ability to establish rapport and trust with the study participants, as well as their effective strategies for participant recruitment and retention. This, in turn, enhances the credibility and representativeness of the data collected, which was crucial for drawing reliable conclusions and developing a comprehensive understanding of the working model for CSR-driven rural poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area.

Demographic profile of respondents

This section presents demographic data for the 307 questionnaire respondents. This caution is consistent with Call et al. (2022), who emphasise responsible and transparent handling of demographic data, and with Creswell and Creswell (2023), who explain that participant characteristics assist researchers in interpreting quantitative and mixed-methods evidence.

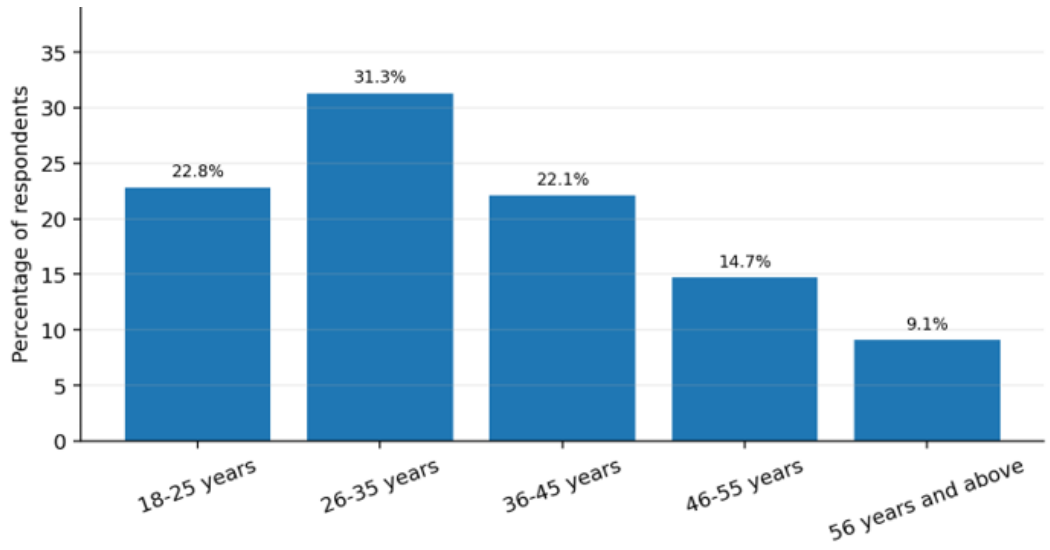


Figure 4.1 a Age distribution of respondents

Source: field data for presentation purposes (2025)

The age Figure 4.1a show that the largest group of respondents fell within the 26-35 age category, representing 31.3% of the sample. This was followed by respondents aged 18-25 years at 22.8% and those aged 36-45 years at 22.1%. The implication is that the sample was dominated by economically active adults who were likely to assess CSR in terms of employment creation, livelihood support, agricultural productivity, household welfare and access to services. This profile strengthens the relevance of the findings because CSR-driven poverty alleviation is most effective when initiatives respond to the livelihood realities and productive capacities of beneficiaries. Purnamawati, Yuniarta and Jie (2023) similarly show that CSR contributes to sustainable village economic development when it is linked to local economic conditions, while Wirba (2023) argues that modern CSR should move beyond philanthropy towards sustainability, accountability and community-centred development.

Table 4.1 b Gender profile of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	168	54.7
Male	139	45.3
Total	307	100.0

Source: field data for presentation purposes (2025)

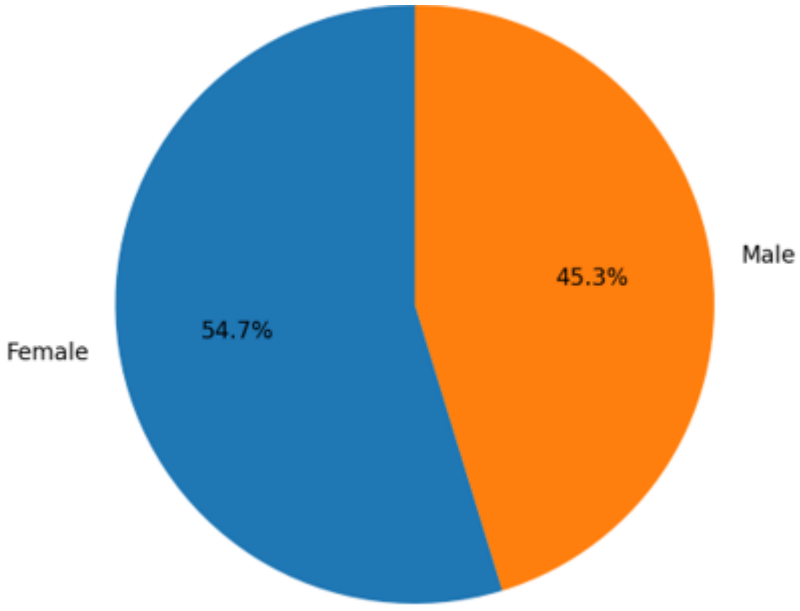


Figure 4.1 b Gender distribution of respondents

Source: field data for presentation purposes (2025)

The gender table and Figure 4.1b indicate that female respondents formed a slight majority at 54.7%, while male respondents accounted for 45.3%. This composition is analytically useful because rural poverty is experienced at household level, where women commonly carry major responsibilities for food security, caregiving, water access and day-to-day household welfare. A higher female share therefore broadens the interpretation of CSR benefits beyond physical infrastructure alone and directs attention to household resilience, social services and inclusive participation. Zemarku et al. (2022) stress that empowerment and participation are central to poverty-focused CSR, while Mamo (2024) emphasises that CSR contributions to community development should be evaluated in relation to social, economic, environmental and ethical outcomes. Accordingly, the gender profile supports the need for CSR projects in Sangwe to be inclusive and sensitive to household welfare realities.

Table 4.1 c Education profile of respondents

Highest level of education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No formal education	15	4.9
Primary education	61	19.9
Secondary education	134	43.6
Certificate/Diploma	72	23.5
Degree and above	25	8.1
Total	307	100.0

Source: field data for presentation purposes (2025)

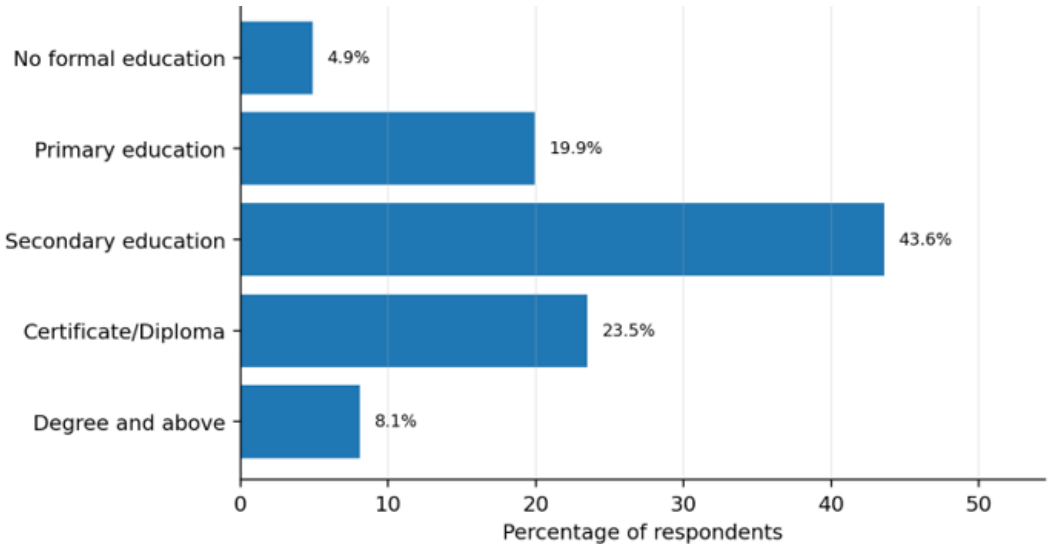


Figure 4.1 c Education distribution of respondents

Source: field data for presentation purposes (2025)

The education table and Figure 4.1c show that secondary education was the dominant category at 43.6%, followed by certificate or diploma holders at 23.5% and primary education at 19.9%. This pattern suggests that many participants had sufficient literacy to understand questionnaire items and articulate opinions about CSR initiatives, while the presence of respondents with primary or no formal education confirms that CSR communication must remain simple, practical and accessible. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2023) note that respondent-profile variables help explain survey findings by showing the characteristics behind aggregated responses. Creswell and Creswell (2023) similarly highlight the value of participant characteristics in interpreting quantitative and mixed-methods results. In Sangwe, the education profile therefore supports the need for CSR programmes that combine community meetings, visual communication, local-language explanation and practical skills training rather than relying only on formal written reports.

Overall demographic

Overall, the demographic profile shows a respondent group that was predominantly economically active, slightly female dominated and mainly educated up to secondary level. This strengthens the interpretation of the CSR findings because the responses were likely shaped by practical livelihood concerns, household welfare responsibilities and varying levels of access to information. The analysis also shows that CSR-driven rural poverty alleviation in Sangwe should not be designed as a uniform intervention for an undifferentiated community. It should instead segment community needs by age, gender and education level so that projects are participatory, inclusive, easy to understand and linked to sustainable local livelihoods. This position is supported by Hasibuan (2023), who associates community and stakeholder participation with stronger CSR impact in rural communities, and by Purnamawati, Yuniarta and Jie (2023), who link CSR effectiveness to sustainable village economic development.

4.2.2 Reliability test scores

The data collection tool (questionnaire) included three constructs. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated for each construct, and the results are summarized in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4. 1 Cronbach Alpha

Item	Number of scalable items	The scalable reliability coefficient (Alpha)
CSR Initiatives	7	0.9423
Challenges	7	0.9571
Framework	7	0.9227
Overall score	21	0.9407

Source: Primary data (2025)

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated for each of the three constructs - CSR initiatives, challenges, and framework - using the questionnaire responses. The outcomes displayed in Table 4.1 indicate that the reliability coefficients of all three constructs were exceptionally high. The Cronbach values exceeded the conventional threshold of 0.7 (Cooper & Schindler, 2021) by a large margin. Thus, it was highly probable that the items that could be clustered in each construct were very much in agreement with one another and hence, could be said to measure the same concept successfully. The remarkable Cronbach's Alpha coefficients achieved in this investigation are a strong indication of the internal consistency and the reliability of the data collection tool. As a result, it also goes on to confirm the trustworthiness and validity of the conclusions reached in the research, as the researcher was confident that the data represented the opinions and experiences of the participants regarding the CSR-based poverty alleviation model in the Sangwe area.

4.3 The current level of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the Sangwe area

Table 4. 2 Responses on current level of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the Sangwe area

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
Local companies in Sangwe regularly engage in activities that benefit the community	41%	39%	2%	8%	10%	1.39

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
Companies in Sangwe prioritize initiatives that improve the quality of life for community members	37%	38%	3%	9%	13%	1.27
Local businesses in Sangwe involve community members in decision-making processes for CSR initiatives	33%	35%	4%	7%	21%	1.21
I have benefited from CSR initiatives implemented by companies in Sangwe	30%	23%	5%	9%	33%	1.67
Companies in Sangwe provide regular updates on their CSR activities and impact	35%	38%	2%	5%	20%	1.71
CSR initiatives in Sangwe are transparent and accountable to the community	42%	33%	9%	11%	5%	1.49

SD=Strongly Disagreed, D=Disagreed, N=Neutral, A=Agreed, SA=Strongly Agreed

Source: Primary data (2025)

4.3.1 Community engagement in activities benefiting the community

According to the statement in table 4.2, "Sangwe's local firms are consistently participating in community-benefiting activities"; a mean score of 1.39 was assigned, with a considerable majority of the respondents expressing strong dissatisfaction (41%) or dissatisfaction (39%) with the above statement. This clearly shows a dominant viewpoint that the businesses in Sangwe are not regularly active in the community and basically to the latter's detriment. Factors such as small CSR budgets, no strategic planning, bad communication, and profit maximization, among others, are part of the reasons for this perception but the comment a local government official made brings to light a deeper issue which is, lack of sincere dedication.

As the local government official noted, "S*ometimes, it feels like companies only do the bare minimum to tick a box. We need more genuine commitment to long-term community development*" **(*Respondent LG01).*** This sentiment suggests that CSR activities are often viewed as perfunctory, designed to satisfy regulatory requirements or enhance public image rather than to create meaningful social change. The "ticking a box" mentality implies that companies may be engaging in superficial activities with limited long-term impact, failing to address the underlying needs and

challenges of the community. This lack of genuine commitment can erode trust and undermine the potential benefits of CSR initiatives.

4.3.2 Prioritization of initiatives improving quality of life

The data in table 4.2 indicates that the assertion "Sangwe companies give top priority to initiatives that better the community" received a mean score of 1.27, with 37% of the respondents strongly disagreeing and 38% disagreeing. This suggests that the companies in Sangwe are generally believed not to be addressing the needs of the community and improving its overall situation through their actions. The reasons are not only the aforementioned misalignment of CSR objectives but also the absence of community needs assessment, limited stakeholder engagement, and a short-term focus. Still, the confession from a CSR manager brings to light the coexistence of business goals and community needs as a problem.

A CSR manager from a local company admitted, "*We try to align our CSR with our business goals, but sometimes it's difficult to balance that with the immediate needs of the community. We need to do better at understanding what the community really wants*" ***(Respondent CSRM1).*** This quote reveals a critical challenge: the difficulty in reconciling the often-competing demands of profitability and social responsibility. While companies may genuinely desire to contribute to community well-being, they are also driven by the need to generate profits and satisfy shareholders. This can lead to a prioritization of CSR initiatives that align with business objectives, such as enhancing brand reputation or securing access to resources, even if these initiatives do not directly address the most pressing needs of the community. The CSR Manager's acknowledgement of the need to "do better at understanding what the community really wants" suggests recognition of this misalignment and a desire to improve community engagement.

4.3.3 Community involvement in decision-making

From table 4.2 above, the statement "Local businesses in Sangwe involve community members in decision-making processes for CSR initiatives" received a mean score of 1.21, with 33% strongly disagreeing and 35% disagreeing. This reveals a strong perception that companies in Sangwe do not involve community members in the planning and implementation of CSR initiatives. While a top-down approach, a lack of trust, power imbalances, and limited capacity contribute to this lack

of participation, the statement from an NGO Representative underscores the detrimental impact of imposing pre-determined solutions on the community.

An NGO representative working in the area stated, "*Companies often come in with pre-determined ideas about what the community needs, without really listening to the people themselves. This leads to projects that are not sustainable or relevant*" ***(Respondent NGOR1).*** This quote highlights the importance of participatory approaches to CSR. When companies fail to involve community members in decision-making, they risk implementing projects that are not aligned with local needs, priorities, or cultural contexts. This can lead to a lack of ownership, limited sustainability, and ultimately, a failure to achieve meaningful social impact. The NGO representative's emphasis on the need to "really listen to the people themselves" underscores the importance of empowering communities to define their own development priorities and participate actively in shaping CSR initiatives.

4.3.4 Personal benefit from CSR initiatives

From table 4.2, the statement "I have benefited from CSR initiatives implemented by companies in Sangwe" received a mean score of 1.67, with 30% strongly disagreeing and 23% disagreeing. While a slightly larger percentage agreed or strongly agreed (42%), the overall sentiment suggests that a significant portion of community members do not perceive themselves as benefiting from CSR initiatives in the area. This could be due to limited reach, inequitable distribution, a lack of tangible impact, and poor targeting. The relatively low mean score, even with a higher percentage agreeing, indicates that the perceived benefits are not widespread or substantial enough to significantly shift overall community sentiment. This suggests that even when initiatives are implemented, their impact may be concentrated among a select few, failing to address the broader needs of the community.

A development agency representative highlighted this issue of limited reach and impact, stating, "*We've seen some companies focus on very specific projects, like building a single classroom or donating a few computers. While these are helpful, they don't address the systemic issues that keep people in poverty. We need to see more comprehensive programs that benefit a larger segment of the community*" ***(Respondent DAR1)***. This quote underscores the need for CSR initiatives to move beyond isolated projects and address the root causes of poverty and inequality. It also points to the

importance of conducting thorough needs assessments to ensure that CSR activities are aligned with the priorities of the community.

4.3.5 Regular updates on CSR activities and impact

The statement "Companies in Sangwe provide regular updates on their CSR activities and impact" received a mean score of 1.71, with 35% strongly disagreeing and 38% disagreeing. This suggests a widespread perception that companies in Sangwe do not provide regular updates on their CSR activities and their impact on the community. This lack of transparency could be attributed to poor communication strategies, a lack of monitoring and evaluation, a fear of accountability, and limited resources. The lack of regular updates creates an information vacuum, making it difficult for community members to assess the effectiveness of CSR initiatives and hold companies accountable for their performance. This lack of transparency can further erode trust and undermine the potential benefits of CSR.

A CSR Manager from a local company acknowledged the communication gap, stating, "*We haven't been very good at communicating what we're doing and what impact it's having. We need to find better ways to share information with the community, perhaps through regular meetings or newsletters. We also need to be more open about our challenges and failures, not just our successes*" ***(Respondent CSRM2).*** This quote reveals a willingness to improve communication but also highlights the challenges involved in doing so. It suggests that companies may need to invest in dedicated communication channels and develop a more transparent and honest approach to reporting on their CSR activities.

4.3.6 Transparency and accountability of CSR Initiatives

As illustrated in table 4.2, the statement "CSR initiatives in Sangwe are transparent and accountable to the community" received a mean score of 1.49, with 42% strongly disagreeing and 33% disagreeing. This indicates a strong belief that CSR initiatives in Sangwe are not transparent and accountable to the community. This lack of transparency and accountability could be due to a lack of clear objectives, an absence of monitoring mechanisms, a lack of independent audits, and limited community oversight. Without transparency and accountability, CSR initiatives can be perceived as self-serving or even exploitative, further damaging the relationship between companies and the community.

A local government official emphasized the need for greater accountability, stating, "*We need to see more independent audits of CSR projects to ensure that the money is being spent effectively and that the benefits are reaching the intended beneficiaries. We also need to involve community representatives in the monitoring and evaluation process*" ***(Respondent LG02)***.This quote underscores the importance of establishing robust mechanisms to ensure that CSR initiatives are implemented transparently and accountably. It suggests that independent audits and community oversight are essential for building trust and ensuring that companies are held responsible for their commitments.

4.3.7 Overall interpretation

The results presented in table 4.2, coupled with the insights from key informants, paint a concerning picture of the current state of CSR in the Sangwe area. The quantitative data reveals a widespread perception that companies are not actively engaging in meaningful and impactful CSR practices, while the qualitative data sheds light on the underlying reasons for this perception. The lack of genuine commitment, the misalignment of objectives, the lack of community participation, and the lack of transparency and accountability all contribute to a sense of disillusionment and distrust among community members. The key informants' quotes add depth to this analysis, highlighting the need for companies to move beyond superficial gestures and engage in more comprehensive, participatory, and transparent approaches to CSR.

This negative perception has significant implications for the long-term sustainability of businesses and the overall development of the Sangwe area. As one key informant from a development agency summarized, *"CSR in Sangwe is often seen as a public relations exercise rather than a genuine commitment to community development. Companies need to move beyond token gestures and invest in long-term, sustainable solutions that address the root causes of poverty and inequality."****(Respondent DAR1)*** This quote encapsulates the core challenge: the need for companies to shift from a transactional approach to CSR to a more transformational approach that prioritizes community well-being and fosters genuine partnerships. The current perception of CSR as a PR exercise undermines its potential to contribute to meaningful social and economic development.

Several factors contribute to these challenges. The Zimbabwean economic environment, characterized by instability and limited resources, makes it difficult for companies to prioritize and sustain CSR initiatives. A lack of clear CSR guidelines and regulations further exacerbates the problem, leading to ad hoc and unstructured approaches. Furthermore, traditional power dynamics and a lack of community participation undermine the effectiveness of CSR efforts. Economic instability can lead to a focus on short-term survival, making it difficult for companies to invest in long-term CSR initiatives. The lack of clear guidelines creates ambiguity and allows companies to engage in "greenwashing" or superficial CSR activities without being held accountable. Traditional power dynamics can marginalize the voices of vulnerable groups, ensuring that their needs are not adequately addressed in CSR planning.

4.4 Challenges in fostering CSR activities for poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area

Table 4. 3 Responses on challenges in fostering CSR activities for poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area

Statements	**SD**	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**	**Mean**
Local companies in Sangwe lack sufficient resources to implement effective CSR initiatives.	4%	9%	2%	43%	42%	4.71
There is inadequate communication between companies and community members about CSR initiatives in Sangwe	8%	8%	3%	39%	42%	4.65
CSR initiatives in Sangwe often do not address the most pressing needs of the community.	2%	15%	5%	47%	31%	4.52
Corruption hinders the effectiveness of CSR initiatives in Sangwe.	30%	3%	5%	29%	33%	4.29
Local companies in Sangwe prioritize profit over community development.	9%	8%	7%	35%	41%	4.38
There is a lack of collaboration between companies and other stakeholders in	15%	3%	2%	29%	51%	4.63

implementing CSR initiatives in Sangwe						
CSR initiatives in Sangwe are often not sustainable in the long term	13%	7%	4%	21%	55%	4.59

SD=Strongly Disagreed, D=Disagreed, N=Neutral, A=Agreed, SA=Strongly Agreed

Source: Primary data (2025)

4.4.1 Resource constraints and financial limitations

From table 4.3, the most significant challenge identified by respondents relates to inadequate resources available to local companies for implementing effective CSR initiatives, with a mean score of 4.71 representing the highest level of agreement among all challenges examined. An overwhelming 85% of respondents either agreed (43%) or strongly agreed (42%) that local companies in Sangwe lack sufficient resources to implement effective CSR initiatives, while only 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this assertion. This finding indicates that resource scarcity represents a fundamental barrier to CSR implementation in the area.

A CSR Manager from one of the local companies operating in Sangwe explained the severity of this challenge, stating: "*We operate on very tight margins, and while we understand the importance of giving back to the community, the reality is that we simply don't have the financial capacity to undertake large-scale CSR projects that would make a real difference in people's lives. We're constantly balancing between staying profitable and meeting community expectations*."***(Respondent CSRM3)*** This quote reveals the inherent tension that local companies face between economic survival and social responsibility. The manager's acknowledgment that their company operates on "very tight margins" suggests that many local enterprises in Sangwe are themselves struggling financially, which fundamentally limits their capacity to allocate substantial resources toward community development initiatives. The phrase "large-scale CSR projects that would make a real difference" indicates an awareness that superficial or token CSR activities are insufficient to address poverty, yet the companies lack the financial strength to undertake transformative interventions.

A Local government official corroborated this perspective, noting, "*Most of the businesses here are small to medium-sized enterprises that are barely breaking even. They want to help the community, but when you're struggling to pay your workers and keep the lights on, CSR becomes*

a luxury rather than a priority" ***(Respondent LG03).*** This statement provides important context regarding the business environment in Sangwe. The official's characterization of CSR as "a luxury rather than a priority" for struggling businesses highlights how poverty and underdevelopment create a vicious cycle where the companies that could potentially contribute to poverty alleviation are themselves constrained by the same economic conditions they might otherwise help to address. The emphasis on businesses "barely breaking even" suggests that the economic base in Sangwe may be too weak to support robust CSR activities without external support or intervention.

An NGO representative added further dimension to this challenge: "*The resource constraints go beyond just money. Many local companies lack the technical expertise, human resources, and infrastructure needed to design and implement effective CSR programs. Even when they have some budget allocated, they don't know how to maximize its impact*" ***(Respondent NGO02).*** This observation extends the understanding of resource constraints beyond purely financial limitations to encompass capacity deficits in terms of knowledge, skills, and organizational infrastructure. The statement that companies "don't know how to maximize impact" suggests that even limited resources could potentially be used more effectively if companies possessed greater technical competence in CSR program design and implementation. This indicates that addressing the resource challenge requires not only financial injections but also capacity-building initiatives that enhance local companies' ability to strategically deploy whatever resources they do have available.

4.4.2 Communication Gaps and Information Asymmetries

In table 4.3 overhead, the second most important challenge was poor communication between companies and community people about CSR initiatives, with a mean score of 4.65. By this a large number (81%) of the voters stated their opinion with going (39%) or strongly agreeing (42%) while only 16% were in the offing, disagreeing, or strongly disagreeing with the statement of communication gaps as a major obstacle. This indicates that even if the companies are doing CSR activities, the effect might be lessened by the flow of information and the limited engagement of stakeholders in the drafting and carrying out of the process.

A CSR Manager from a manufacturing company in Sangwe reflected on this challenge: "*We've launched several initiatives that we thought would benefit the community but later discovered that people didn't even know about them or didn't understand how to access the services we were*

providing. There's a huge gap between what we're doing and what the community knows about or values." ***(Respondent CSRM2)*** This admission reveals a critical disconnect between corporate CSR activities and community awareness and participation. The manager's realization that community members "didn't even know about" initiatives or "didn't understand how to access services" indicates fundamental failures in communication strategy and stakeholder engagement. The phrase "what we thought would benefit the community" suggests a top-down approach to CSR where companies make assumptions about community needs without adequate consultation, leading to initiatives that may not align with actual community priorities or circumstances. This communication gap not only reduces the uptake and impact of CSR programs but also represents a waste of the already limited resources that companies have allocated to social responsibility.

A local government official expanded on this issue: "*Companies come in, do their projects, take their photos for publicity, and leave without proper consultation or follow-up communication with the community. The community members often feel like CSR is something being done to them rather than with them, and this creates resentment rather than partnership*." ***(Respondent LG02)*** This statement highlights how inadequate communication goes beyond mere information deficit to create problematic power dynamics and community alienation. The characterization of companies taking "photos for publicity" suggests that some CSR activities may be more oriented toward corporate image-building than genuine community development, which becomes particularly problematic when combined with poor communication. The official's observation that community members feel CSR is "done to them rather than with them" indicates that communication failures undermine the participatory principles that should underpin effective community development, creating a sense of disempowerment rather than partnership. The resulting "resentment rather than partnership" fundamentally undermines the potential for CSR initiatives to build social capital and create sustainable community change.

An NGO representative provided additional insight: "*There's no systematic communication channel between companies and communities in Sangwe. Information about CSR programs spreads through informal networks, which means many vulnerable groups who could benefit most are left out simply because they're not well-connected. This defeats the whole purpose of poverty alleviation.*"(**Respondent *NGOR1)*** This observation identifies structural communication deficits that create exclusion and inequity in CSR benefit distribution. The reliance on "informal networks"

for information dissemination means that CSR programs inadvertently favor those who are already better connected and more socially integrated, while marginalizing the most vulnerable populations who often lack strong social networks. This creates what the representative calls a defeat of "the whole purpose of poverty alleviation," as the intended beneficiaries the poorest and marginalized are systematically excluded from accessing CSR benefits due to information barriers. This suggests that effective poverty-focused CSR requires deliberate communication strategies that proactively reach marginalized groups rather than relying on general information dissemination that reinforces existing inequalities.

4.4.3 Misalignment Between CSR Initiatives and Community Needs

Table 4.3, the issue of CSR initiatives not being able to address the most urgent community needs was rated with an average of 4.52, while 78% of the people who took part in the survey expressed their concern either by agreeing (47%) or supporting it strongly (31%). This result reveals a large dissimilarity between the CSR offered by companies and the real needs of the communities for support in overcoming poverty, thus indicating that numerous CSR practices might be inefficient or less optimal in their attempt to meet the local development priorities.

A CSR manager acknowledged this misalignment candidly: "*Honestly, we sometimes choose CSR projects based on what's easy for us to implement or what looks good in our annual reports, rather than conducting thorough needs assessments in the community. It's faster and cheaper to build a borehole than to support sustainable livelihood programs, even though livelihoods might be what people need more.*" ***(Response CSRM1)*** This frank admission reveals how corporate convenience and reporting considerations often take precedence over genuine community needs assessment. The manager's contrast between building "a borehole" versus supporting "sustainable livelihood programs" illustrates how companies may favor visible, one-off infrastructure projects that are "faster and cheaper" and generate immediate publicity over more complex, time-intensive interventions that might have greater long-term impact on poverty. The acknowledgment that companies choose projects based on "what looks good in annual reports" suggests that CSR may sometimes function primarily as a public relations tool rather than a genuine poverty alleviation strategy, leading to initiatives that serve corporate image-building objectives more than community development needs.

A local government official provided a community perspective on this challenge: "*We've seen companies build schools in areas where there are already enough schools but a critical shortage of health facilities. They donate computers to communities without electricity. These mismatches happen because companies don't involve local authorities or community leaders in identifying where intervention is really needed*." ***(Respondent LG02)*** This statement provides concrete examples of how CSR misalignment manifests in practice, with initiatives that may appear valuable in principle but fail to address actual community priorities or practical realities. The example of building "schools in areas where there are already enough schools" while health facilities are critically lacking demonstrates how companies operating without local knowledge or coordination can duplicate existing services while leaving genuine gaps unaddressed. Similarly, the image of donating "computers to communities without electricity" powerfully illustrates the absurdity that can result when CSR initiatives are designed without understanding local conditions. The official's emphasis that these "mismatches happen because companies don't involve local authorities" points to the failure to leverage existing community development planning and local knowledge in CSR design.

An NGO representative elaborated: "*The community's most pressing needs are often things like sustainable income generation, skills training, and access to markets for their products. But these are complex, long-term interventions that require sustained commitment. Companies prefer quick, visible projects that don't require ongoing engagement, so there's a fundamental mismatch between corporate CSR approaches and what would actually reduce poverty*." ***(Respondent LG01)*** This analysis identifies a deeper structural mismatch between corporate CSR preferences and effective poverty alleviation strategies. The representative's identification of "sustainable income generation, skills training, and access to markets" as priority needs contrasts sharply with companies' preference for "quick, visible projects," revealing a fundamental tension between corporate timelines and reporting cycles versus the longer-term horizons required for meaningful poverty reduction. The characterization of effective poverty interventions as "complex, long-term" and requiring "sustained commitment" highlights why companies seeking rapid, tangible results often gravitate toward initiatives that may be more visible but less transformative. This suggests that bridging the gap between CSR activities and community needs requires not just better needs assessment but fundamental changes in how companies conceptualize and structure their social responsibility commitments.

4.4.4 Corruption and governance challenges

As exhibited in table 4.3 above, corruption surfaced as a major, albeit less consistently recognized, obstacle through a mean score of 4.29. The data showed that 62% of the respondents either agreed (29%) or strongly agreed (33%) that corruption hampers the effectiveness of CSR, however, a significant 30% came out strongly against this idea indicating some divergence in the views on the role of corruption. The differences in views may be due to variations in the degree of exposure to corruption, different CSR initiatives, or just a general reluctance to speak out about corruption.

A CSR Manager spoke cautiously about this issue: "*There are instances where we've had to deal with demands for kickbacks from officials or intermediaries who claim they can facilitate our CSR projects. Sometimes community leaders want a share of the resources before they support the initiative. It's not universal, but it happens enough to increase our costs and reduce what actually reaches the beneficiaries.*"***(Respondent CSRM1)*** This testimony reveals multiple manifestations of corruption affecting CSR implementation. The reference to "demands for kickbacks from officials or intermediaries" indicates corruption at the implementation level where gatekeepers extract rents in exchange for facilitating CSR activities. The mention of "community leaders" wanting "a share of resources" before providing support suggests that corruption may occur even at the grassroots level, where local power holders exploit their position to divert CSR benefits. The manager's careful language "instances," "sometimes," "it's not universal" reflects either the genuinely sporadic nature of corruption or, more likely, reluctance to make sweeping accusations that could damage relationships or expose the company to legal risk. Nevertheless, the acknowledgment that corruption "happens enough to increase costs and reduce what actually reaches beneficiaries" confirms that even occasional corruption has material negative impacts on CSR effectiveness.

A local government official provided a more systemic perspective: "*Corruption in CSR implementation takes many forms. Sometimes it's outright theft where resources meant for community projects are diverted. Other times it's more subtle contracts going to well-connected individuals rather than through transparent processes, or beneficiary selection being influenced by political or family connections rather than actual need. All of this undermines trust and effectiveness.*"***(Respondent LG02)*** This statement identifies corruption as a multifaceted phenomenon ranging from blatant theft to more subtle forms of patronage and favoritism. The

official's distinction between "outright theft" and more subtle forms like contract manipulation and beneficiary selection based on "political or family connections" reveals how corruption can pervade various stages and aspects of CSR implementation. The observation that contracts go "to well-connected individuals rather than through transparent processes" indicates governance failures in procurement and implementation that allow corruption to flourish. Importantly, the official notes that corruption "undermines trust," highlighting how even when corruption doesn't eliminate CSR benefits, it damages the social capital and community confidence that are essential for effective poverty alleviation efforts.

An NGO representative offered a structural analysis: "*The root cause of corruption in CSR is often weak oversight and accountability mechanisms. When companies operate without proper monitoring, when there's no community scorecard or transparent reporting of how resources are used, opportunities for corruption multiply. Some companies actually prefer this opacity because it gives them flexibility. Still, it comes at the cost of effectiveness and community trust*." ***(Respondent NGOR2)*** This analysis shifts attention from individual corrupt actors to the systemic conditions that enable corruption to occur. The representative's emphasis on "weak oversight and accountability mechanisms" suggests that corruption thrives in environments where proper monitoring and transparency are absent. The reference to "community scorecards" and "transparent reporting" points to specific governance tools that could reduce corruption but are often missing in CSR implementation in Sangwe. Particularly striking is the claim that "some companies actually prefer this opacity because it gives them flexibility," which implies that lack of transparency may sometimes serve corporate interests by reducing accountability and allowing companies to manipulate CSR narratives without rigorous external verification. This suggests that addressing corruption requires not just punishing corrupt actors but fundamentally strengthening governance structures and transparency in CSR implementation.

4.4.5 Profit prioritization over community development

According to the data presented in table 4.3, the issue of companies prioritizing profit over community development received a mean score of 4.38, and 76% of the respondents expressed their agreement with the statement that this is a major barrier to effective CSR, with 35% agreeing and 41% strongly agreeing. The result indicates that there is a basic conflict between business motives and social responsibility obligations, which allows one to conclude that a lot of businesses

consider CSR to be a minor issue compared to profit-making rather than a part of their business model.

A CSR Manager articulated this tension: *"Let's be honest—we're a business first and foremost. When there's a conflict between an investment that will generate returns for shareholders and a CSR initiative that benefits the community, the shareholders usually win. CSR gets whatever is left over after business priorities are met, and in tough economic times, that can mean very little."* ***(Respondent CSRM3)*** This candid acknowledgment reveals the hierarchical relationship between profit and social responsibility in corporate decision-making. The manager's assertion that "we're a business first and foremost" establishes profit generation as the primary corporate purpose, with CSR occupying a secondary, residual status. The characterization of CSR as getting "whatever is left over after business priorities are met" indicates that social responsibility is treated as discretionary rather than essential, subject to being scaled back or eliminated when economic conditions tighten. The reference to shareholder returns typically "winning" when conflicts arise with CSR initiatives reflects broader corporate governance structures that legally and practically prioritize shareholder value maximization over broader stakeholder interests, creating structural barriers to robust CSR even when individual managers might personally support greater community investment.

A local government official expressed frustration with this dynamic: "*Companies extract significant value from our area they use our resources, benefit from infrastructure that public funds have built, employ local people at low wages but when it comes to reinvesting in community development, they suddenly claim poverty. The amount they spend on CSR is a tiny fraction of their profits. It feels exploitative rather than partnership-oriented*." ***(Respondent LG01)***This statement frames profit prioritization not merely as a neutral business reality but as a form of exploitation and imbalance in the relationship between companies and communities. The official's enumeration of ways companies "extract value" using resources, benefiting from public infrastructure, employing people "at low wages" constructs a picture of corporations as net beneficiaries from the community rather than contributors to it. The characterization of companies claiming "poverty" when it comes to CSR spending, juxtaposed with the reality that CSR represents "a tiny fraction of their profits," suggests perceived hypocrisy and bad faith in corporate claims about resource constraints. The official's conclusion that the relationship "feels exploitative rather than partnership-oriented"

indicates that profit prioritization damages the social license of companies operating and creates community resentment that undermines the collaborative relationships needed for effective poverty alleviation.

An NGO representative provided analytical context: "*The problem is that most companies operating in Sangwe view CSR as a cost center rather than as strategic investment in their operating environment. They don't see how poverty in their workforce and surrounding community ultimately affects their own sustainability and productivity. Until CSR is integrated into business strategy rather than treated as an add-on, it will always be the first thing cut when profits are under pressure." **(Respondent NGOR2)*** The study uncovers a basic conceptual limitation in the company's perspective on CSR's relationship with business success. The difference in treating CSR as "a cost center" or "strategic investment" signifies different paradigms for viewing corporate-community relations. The representative's claim that companies do not see community poverty "affecting their own sustainability and productivity" implies that the focusing on profit may be economically irrational in the long run, as it disregards the ways in which community wellness supports business performance via human resource quality, market expansion, social stability, and social license to operate. The demand for CSR to be "integrated into business strategy rather than treated as an add-on" indicates the way to more refined models of shared value creation where community development and business success are seen as interrelated rather than opposing objectives. Nevertheless, the representative's remark that under the present situation, CSR is "the first thing cut when profits are under pressure" supports the argument that such integration has not yet been achieved in Sangwe.

4.4.6 Inadequate stakeholder collaboration

As depicted in Table 4.3 above, the challenge of insufficient collaboration between companies and other stakeholders in implementing CSR initiatives received a mean score of 4.63, making it the second-highest ranked challenge. An overwhelming 80% of respondents agreed (29%) or strongly agreed (51%) that lack of collaboration represents a major obstacle, while only 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This finding indicates that CSR in Sangwe is largely characterized by fragmented, uncoordinated approaches rather than collaborative partnerships that could multiply impact and effectiveness.

A CSR Manager acknowledged: "*We tend to work in isolation, designing and implementing our CSR programs without much coordination with government agencies, NGOs, or even other companies working in the same area. This means we sometimes duplicate efforts, miss opportunities for synergy, and fail to address issues that require coordinated action. But collaboration requires time and relationship-building that we often don't prioritize*."***(Respondent CSRM1)*** This statement uncovers the harsh truth of isolation in present-day CSR practice and also what is seen as barriers to cooperation. The manager's admission of operating "in isolation" and "without much coordination" to key stakeholders reiterates that CSR is still done in silos even though coordination is advantageous to all parties involved. The acknowledgment of this isolation resulting in "duplicating efforts" and "missing opportunities for synergy" reflects an understanding of the situation that lack of collaboration acts as a hindrance to both efficiency and effectiveness. Nonetheless, the manager's remark that "collaboration requires time and relationship-building that we often don't prioritize" indicates a major contradiction: even when companies are aware of the benefits of teamwork, they still do not allocate the time and effort required because there are other corporate priorities that are more urgent. This implies that bringing about change in the area of collaboration will not only necessitate raising awareness about the issue but also entail making changes in corporate resources allocation and setting new timelines for CSR work that are more aligned with the expected collaboration quality.

A local government official emphasized the consequences of poor coordination: "*We have a district development plan that identifies priority areas for intervention, but companies rarely consult this plan when designing their CSR programs. NGOs are doing certain types of work, government is focusing on particular sectors, but companies come in with their own ideas without checking what's already happening or where gaps exist. The result is overlap in some areas and complete neglect in others."****(Respondent LG02)*** This testimony reveals how lack of coordination undermines both efficiency and equity in development intervention. The official's reference to an existing "district development plan" that companies "rarely consult" indicates that frameworks for coordinated action exist but are ignored by companies pursuing autonomous CSR agendas. The description of companies coming "with their own ideas without checking what's already happening" illustrates how corporate independence, while potentially stemming from legitimate business autonomy, creates inefficiencies in the broader development ecosystem. The consequence—"overlap in some areas and complete neglect in others"—demonstrates how lack of coordination creates both waste

(through duplication) and injustice (through gaps in coverage), neither of which serves poverty alleviation objectives effectively.

An NGO representative elaborated on the potential of collaboration: "*When companies, government, and civil society work together, the impact multiplies exponentially. NGOs have grassroots connections and technical expertise, government has coordination capacity and local knowledge, companies have resources—but in Sangwe these complementary strengths rarely come together. We've seen a few instances where collaboration happened, and the results were dramatically better than isolated initiatives, but these are exceptions rather than the rule*." ***(Respondent NGOR1)*** The statement conveys an interesting idea about the combination of different stakeholders' strengths in terms of collaboration to get an outcome that would otherwise be impossible to achieve by working alone. The processes and capabilities of NGOs ("grassroots connections and technical expertise"), the government's ("coordination capacity and local knowledge"), and companies' ("resources") are listed by the representative as different stakeholder contributions, which indicates how they might all join their forces and together through collaboration. When he mentions situations in which collaboration led to "dramatically better results" he is empirically backing up the argument for the partnership. On the other hand, the claim that such successful collaborations are "exceptions rather than the rule" indicates that the CSR landscape of Sangwe is still mostly fragmented. This, in turn, implies that the establishment of systematic collaboration would require the setting up of deliberate institutional mechanisms and incentive structures that would make partnership the default approach instead of an occasional innovation.

4.4.7 Sustainability challenges in CSR Initiatives

As shown in table 4.3 above, the sustainability of CSR initiatives emerged as a critical challenge, with a mean score of 4.59. A substantial 76% of respondents agreed (21%) or strongly agreed (55%) that CSR initiatives in Sangwe are often not sustainable in the long term, while 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This finding indicates widespread concern that even when CSR initiatives are implemented, they often fail to create lasting change, potentially representing wasted investments that do not achieve meaningful poverty alleviation.

A CSR Manager reflected on this challenge: "*We've built facilities that fell into disrepair after a year, trained people in skills they couldn't use because there was no market and started programs that collapsed as soon as our funding ended. The problem is we focus on inputs and outputs—what we build or deliver without ensuring that there's local capacity and commitment to sustain these initiatives after we withdraw. It's frustrating because we invest resources but don't create lasting change.*" ***(Respondent CSRM1)*** This forthright evaluation unveils numerous aspects of the sustainability crisis. The cited cases of facilities going "into disrepair," skills training being rendered unusable because of lack of market openings, programs breaking down "the moment financing finished" vividly demonstrate the presence of unsustainability through various CSR interventions. The manager's observation that businesses "concentrate on inputs and outputs" while neglecting "local capacity and commitment" discloses a major defect in CSR planning: stressing what the companies give rather than what the communities are able to self-sustain. The manager's voiced exasperation "we put in resources but don't get lasting change" suggests that unsustainability robs not only the community of its good but also the company of its satisfaction with CSR, thus possibly making a vicious circle where the disappointment of outcome further discourages any meaningful CSR investment.

A Local Government Official provided context on why sustainability proves elusive: "*Companies come in with a short-term mentality. They want to complete their CSR activities within a budget year, take their photos, and move on. But real community development requires long-term commitment—building local institutions, developing sustainable funding mechanisms, creating maintenance systems. When companies don't invest in these sustainability factors, their projects become white elephants that actually burden the community rather than help*." ***(Respondent LG02)*** This assertion identifies very correctly sustainability failures as issues resulting from temporal mismatches that exist between corporate cycles and development timelines. The description of corporates as having a “short-term project mentality” concentrating on the completion of activities “within a budget year” demonstrates quite well how corporate planning horizons are in fact, totally incompatible with the longer term processes that are needed for sustainable development. The official's listing of what sustainability consists of "building local institutions, developing sustainable funding mechanisms, creating maintenance systems" indicates foundational work that does not fall under the normal project deliverables but is necessary for lasting impact. The very strong picture of unsustainable CSR projects turning into "white elephants that actually burden the

community" illustrates how the poorly designed interventions can bring about negative outcomes, leaving the communities with the assets that they cannot keep up or use, and perhaps using up with the campaigns to sustain them the scarce local resources that they cannot afford.

An NGO representative offered a structural analysis: "*Sustainability requires community ownership from the beginning. When communities are not involved in designing CSR initiatives, when the initiatives don't align with their priorities and capacities, when there's no plan for local management and funding after initial implementation, failure is almost guaranteed. The issue is that genuine sustainability requires more time, more consultation, and more complexity than most companies are willing to invest in. They want simple, fast, visible results, but sustainable poverty alleviation is none of those things*.**"(*Respondent NGOR1*)** The analysis conducted points out customer engagement as the key to sustainability while at the same time highlighting reasons such ownership is hard to come by in present-day CSR practices. The representative's conditionals—"when communities are not involved," "when initiatives don't align," "when there's no plan"—forming a causal chain that reveals participation failure, misalignment, and planning poor have no other consequences but to produce unsustainability. The comment at the end of the article that sustainability "requires more time, more consultation, and more complexity than most companies are willing to invest" whilst firms are pursuing "simple, fast, visible results" sums up the major incompatibility between the prevailing CSR strategies and effective poverty alleviation. The representative's claim that "sustainable poverty alleviation is none of those things"—not simple, not fast, and not immediately visible—squares up to the reality that no significant development work can be done through the short-term, project-based methods that are similar to those of many CSR activities. The implication is that to attain a sustainable impact CSR has to be completely reconceptualized from distinguished projects into long-term co-operations and systems-level interventions.

4.4.8 Interconnected challenges creating systemic barriers

The challenges identified in Table 4.3 do not exist in isolation but form an interconnected system of barriers that collectively undermine CSR effectiveness in poverty alleviation. Resource constraints limit companies' capacity to invest in proper needs assessment, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability planning. Poor communication compounds resource limitations by reducing the efficiency of whatever investments are made. Profit prioritization creates the

underlying logic that relegates CSR to secondary status, while corruption diverts even limited resources away from intended beneficiaries. Lack of collaboration means that scarce resources are inefficiently deployed through duplication and gaps, while sustainability failures ensure that even well-intentioned initiatives fail to create lasting change.

Together, these challenges suggest that improving CSR's contribution to poverty alleviation in Sangwe requires not merely addressing individual obstacles but fundamentally reimagining how corporate social responsibility is conceptualized, structured, and implemented in the area. The high mean scores across all challenges indicate that superficial reforms will be insufficient; rather, systemic transformation is needed in the relationships between companies, communities, government, and civil society to create the conditions for effective, sustainable poverty alleviation through CSR.

4.5 Framework that effectively integrates CSR practices to alleviate rural poverty in the Sangwe

Table 4. 4 Responses on Framework that effectively integrates CSR practices to alleviate rural poverty in the Sangwe

Statements	**SD**	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**	**Mean**
A framework for CSR initiatives in Sangwe would help ensure that companies prioritize community needs	5%	11%	3%	48%	33%	4.43
Community members should be involved in designing and implementing CSR initiatives in Sangwe	4%	6%	5%	49%	36%	4.51
CSR initiatives in Sangwe should focus on sustainable development projects that benefit the community in the long term.	5%	3%	2%	37%	53%	4.46
Companies in Sangwe should prioritize initiatives that address poverty alleviation and economic empowerment	3%	4%	2%	39%	52%	4.48
A collaborative approach between companies, government, and community members would be effective	9%	7%	5%	25%	54%	4.39

in implementing CSR initiatives in Sangwe.						
Regular monitoring and evaluation of CSR initiatives would ensure their effectiveness in Sangwe .	11%	9%	4%	25%	51%	4.37
A transparent and accountable framework for CSR initiatives would increase community trust in companies operating in Sangwe.	10%	7%	5%	41%	37%	4.43

SD=Strongly Disagreed, D=Disagreed, N=Neutral, A=Agreed, SA=Strongly Agreed

Source: Primary data (2025)

4.5.1 Prioritizing community needs through a CSR Framework

From table 4.4 above, the first statement, emphasizing the role of a CSR framework in ensuring companies prioritize community needs, garnered significant support, with 81% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing (Mean = 4.43). This strong endorsement underscores a pervasive sentiment within the Sangwe community: that current CSR efforts are often misdirected or fail to address the most pressing local challenges. The high level of agreement suggests a deep-seated desire for a more structured and needs-driven approach to corporate social responsibility.

The quote from a CSR manager from a regional agribusiness, “Without a clear framework, CSR becomes reactive and scattered. We need something that guides us to what matters most to the community,” (Respondent CSRM1) provides valuable context to this quantitative finding. The term "reactive and scattered" implies that current CSR initiatives are often implemented in an ad-hoc manner, responding to immediate crises or pursuing projects that are convenient for the company rather than strategically addressing long-term development goals. The expressed need for "something that guides us to what matters most to the community" reveals recognition among corporate actors of the importance of aligning CSR efforts with local priorities. However, it also suggests that companies may currently lack the tools, knowledge, or resources to effectively identify and address the most pressing needs of the Sangwe community. This highlights the potential value of a well-designed CSR framework in providing guidance, structure, and a clear roadmap for companies seeking to make a meaningful contribution to local development. The

framework can act as a compass, directing corporate resources towards initiatives that are most likely to have a positive and lasting impact on the lives of community members.

4.5.2 Community participation in CSR design and implementation

The statement, which called for the involvement of the community in the design and implementation of CSR activities, received the highest mean score among all the statements—a remarkable 4.51 and 85% of the respondents combined agreeing or being very much in agreement. This large measure of agreement is a clear indication that the Sangwe community is very much convinced that the only way for CSR to be effective and, thus, sustainable is through the use of participatory methods. Furthermore, it implies that the community members, who have not been taking part in the initiatives that have an impact on them, are being considered merely as recipients of the corporate support that is, by nature, generous, and not as active stakeholders who possess the right to participate in the decision-making process. A local government official emphasized this point, stating, "*People in Sangwe know their struggles better than anyone. If they're not part of the solution, CSR will miss the mark*." ***(Respondent LG01)*** This insightful quote underscores the limitations of top-down CSR models that fail to incorporate local knowledge, perspectives, and priorities. The phrase "miss the mark" implies that CSR initiatives designed without community input are likely to be irrelevant, ineffective, or even counterproductive. It also reinforces the idea that community engagement is not just an ethical imperative but also a strategic imperative for effective poverty alleviation. Through involving community members in the design and implementation of CSR projects, companies can tap into a wealth of local knowledge, build trust and rapport, and ensure that initiatives are culturally appropriate, sustainable, and aligned with community values. This participatory approach can lead to more innovative solutions, greater community ownership, and ultimately, a more significant and lasting impact on poverty reduction.

4.5.3 Focus on sustainable development projects

From table 4.4, the third statement, which advocates for CSR initiatives that promote long-term sustainable development, garnered 90% agreement (Mean = 4.46). This reflects a clear preference among community members for enduring solutions over short-term relief efforts. The high level of agreement suggests a recognition that while immediate assistance may be necessary in certain situations, it is not sufficient to address the underlying causes of poverty and inequality.

An NGO representative shared, "*We've seen projects that give food for a month, but what Sangwe needs is food security for years*." ***(Respondent NGOR2)*** This heartfelt quote conveys the community's desire for a complete overhaul rather than just quick fixes. The difference between "food for a month" and "food security for years" brings to light the shortcomings of the short-term, charitable approaches in CSR. It also points out that the CSR initiatives should be aligned with the larger development objectives such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure that can lead to economic empowerment and social advancement that last. The emphasis on sustainability signifies a commitment to building local skills, being environmentally responsible, and making sure that the future generations have the resources and chances to thrive. This means a long-term view must be taken, and the community should be closely involved in the process of creativity as the solutions are consolidated and the development objectives that benefit everyone are set.

4.5.4 Targeting poverty alleviation and economic empowerment

According to Table 4.4, the fourth statement received a mean score of 4.48 and it strongly supports the CSR programs, which mainly focus on poverty alleviation, and economic uplift. Over 90% of the respondents conveyed their favorable opinions by either agreeing or strongly agreeing, this can be interpreted that these matters are to be dealt with by any CSR strategy in Sangwe. Such a unanimous agreement shows a common belief that the enhancement of the living conditions of the poorest population and their inclusion in the economy through participation should be the primary goal of CSR.

A development agency representative remarked, "*Empowerment means giving people tools to thrive, not just survive. CSR must invest in skills, jobs, and enterprise*."(***Respondent DAR1)*** This profound interpretation indicates the necessity of CSR programs that are focused on building capacity rather than merely handing out donations. The highlighting of "tools to thrive," indicates a shift towards long-term economic development, which would enable the individuals to be self-sufficient and to take part in their communities' growth. By the same token, it would mean building partnerships that are CSR wise, investing in education and training, providing small loans and grants, and also giving support in anti-poverty programs, in other words, the skills and resources of the start-up business class would be reduced by learning, acquiring, and training the proper skills and resources to set up a business of their own and even employ others. The accent on economic

empowerment also signifies a pledge to confront the systemic obstacles to participation in the economy like discrimination, unavailability of credit, and limited access to the marketplace.

4.5.5 Collaborative implementation with stakeholders

The fifth statement scored an average of 4.39 and had 79% of the respondents in agreement, as can be seen in table 4.4 above. This implies that the respondents acknowledge the importance of the collaboration among the three pillars: companies, government, and community. The strong consensus is a signal that the stakeholders recognize the necessity of working hand in hand and the pooling of different skills, resources, and viewpoints of all parties involved to make CSR efforts really effective. A CSR manager commented, "*We can't do this alone. Government policies and community buy-in are critical for scale and sustainability*." ***(Respondent CSRM2)*** The quote underscores the interconnectedness of everyone who participates in the CSR (corporate social responsibility) ecosystem. With the statement "We can't do this alone" it is making evident that companies can't tackle the complex social and economic issues in isolation, and therefore, they must share in the task with partners and other stakeholders. The emphasis on "government policies and community buy-in" to develop CSR points to a key need for both a legal and social environment to support CSR. It is necessary to establish clear rules, incentives, and means for public participation. A viable model would also establish mechanisms for communication, co-decision making, and shared responsibility so that stakeholders are engaged and aligned in their respective contributions and decision making, while working towards mutually reinforcing CSR initiatives. This collaboration could build on the inherent strengths and resources of each partner in the collaboration, resulting in CSR outcomes that will be more innovative, effective, and sustainable.

4.5.6 Monitoring and evaluation for effectiveness

The sixth statement, which from the regular monitoring and evaluation (M&E) point of view, was ranked with a mean score of 4.37, as per table 4.4, had a little lower impact but was still strong support (76% agreement) so that the opinion of the respondents was that tracking CSR outcomes is very important. Though the agreement is somewhat lower than with other factors, it is still quite high implying that the community appreciates the importance of M&E but it maybe not be completely aware of the contribution of M&E to the success of CSR initiatives in general.A local government official stated, "*We need to know what's working and what's not. Otherwise, we're*

just spending without impact." ***(Respondent LG02)*** This quote highlights the need for data-driven decision-making and adaptive management. The phrase "spending without impact" underscores the importance of ensuring that CSR resources are used effectively and efficiently. It also suggests that the CSR framework should include clear indicators, feedback loops, and reporting protocols, enabling stakeholders to track progress, identify challenges, and adjust as needed. This iterative approach allows for continuous improvement, ensuring that CSR initiatives are constantly evolving to meet the changing needs of the community and to maximize their impact on poverty reduction. The M&E process should be participatory, involving community members in data collection and analysis, ensuring that their voices are heard and that their perspectives are considered.

4.5.7 Transparency and accountability to build trust

As shown in Table 4.4 above, the final statement received a mean score of 4.43, with 78% agreement. This reflects a belief that transparency and accountability are essential for community trust in CSR efforts. The high level of agreement suggests that community members are more likely to support and engage with CSR initiatives that are open, honest, and subject to scrutiny. An NGO representative noted, "*People are sceptical when they don't see where the money goes. Transparency builds credibility*." ***(Respondent LG02)*** The given insight emphasizes the role of open communication, financial transparency, and participatory audits in CSR governance. The statement, "People are sceptical when they don't see where the money goes" puts a spotlight on the issue that corporations need to be open and clear about their CSR activities by releasing easy-to-understand information about the projects they are backing, the money they are putting in, and the results they are getting. This openness not only wins the company's credibility but also creates a bond of trust that is vital for the company to stay engaged and impactful over the long run. Moreover, by having participatory audits, where members of the local community take part in assessing and reviewing CSR programs, the companies' accountability can be further enhanced and they can be made responsible for fulfilling their promises. By maintaining transparency and accountability as their core values, companies would not only be able to prove their sincere dedication towards the upliftment of the community but also cr...

Overall position

The research findings that come from the data, supported by key informant perspectives, point to a strong and practical conclusion. The CSR approach for Sangwe should be built on five inter-related principles that reflect both the aspirations and the realities of the community: community-centred participation, sustainable development, multi-stakeholder collaboration, monitoring and evaluation, and transparency and accountability. The pivotal principle is community-centred participation. The community's strong preference for participatory methods indicates that residents of Sangwe should be involved meaningfully in the planning and implementation of CSR projects. If corporate engagement is to be important and successful, it must be based on the voices, experiences and priorities of community members. The same applies to the areas of focus, where the common ground is sustainable development and economic empowerment. The evidence from the survey shows that there is a clear expectation for CSR to move beyond one-off donations and into projects that improve livelihoods, service access and resilience.

The CSR adoption in Sangwe depends mainly on the partnership among the companies, government, and civil society organizations. The interviewed persons emphasized that no one individual or organization can eradicate poverty; rather, they should create partnerships to handle costs, synchronize their plans, and be responsible together. The involvement of numerous stakeholders not only legitimizes the CSR activities but also makes their impacts more pronounced in terms of coverage. One of the key areas highlighted in the framework was monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Both the respondents and informants underlined the necessity of being informed about the current situation and benefiting from the outcomes of the projects. A strong M&E system could permit the stakeholders to measure the impact, make the necessary adjustments based on the information, and prove that the CSR activities are still pertinent to the people's situation in the area.

Finally, transparency and accountability are major determinants of trust between companies and the community. The data show that people in Sangwe are highly concerned about openness in the use of CSR funds and the way decisions are made. Informants indicated that transparent companies gain credibility and deepen community engagement. Therefore, the recommended model should include financial disclosure, participatory audits and regular stakeholder communication. These principles form the basis of a CSR model that is responsive to Sangwe's context, and the model is presented in Chapter Five as the study's major recommendation in line with the main objective.

4.6 Discussion of results

4.6.1 The current level of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the Sangwe area

As shown in Table 4.2, the consequences of the CSR activities of Sangwe were contrasted with the local communities' expectations and the gap was demonstrated to be very significant. The gap reflects a common critique of the CSR literature, which sometimes considers the CSR activities as only symbolic rather than firm and real. In their study, Adamu, Kente, and Rabiu (2024) take a very pessimistic stance and argue that in numerous under-developed countries, CSR is driven predominantly by the desire for acquiring a good reputation and being in line with regulations while the little intent for goodness towards the society is the least factor. The low average scores in the table for all the statements are a reflection of this critique, pointing to the fact that CSR in Sangwe is being seen as not very effective, very rare, and not corresponding with the needs of the community. The characterization of CSR as a “tick-box exercise,” uttered by a local government official, mirrors the concerns of the academics and emphasizes the necessity of moving from the era of performative CSR to the one of transformative CSR.

The literature highlights the need for stakeholder engagement and participatory development as the core of CSR practices. Freeman’s stakeholder theory (1984) posits that a company’s decision-making process has to take into account the interests of every stakeholder, local residents being one of them. But the research done in Sangwe reveals that community participation in CSR decision-making is negligible and rated by the community at an average of only 1.21. The lack of proper engagement retards the growth of CSR initiatives in terms of both legitimacy and good outcome. The work of Khan and Ahmed (2019) has confirmed that participatory CSR models produce through their very nature the most lasting and impactful results as they not only create feeling of project ownership but also insure that the projects are case specific and acceptably relevant. An NGO representative’s comment in the Sangwe study validates the argument, and he/she talks about risking the implementation of not-so-accepted solutions by the local people and the consequent alienation from the local realities.

Transparency and accountability can be seen as major concerns in CSR-related literature, especially regarding the concepts of trust and impact assessment. According to the Sangwe data, there is a very serious lack of transparency, and the companies are not even providing regular

updates or letting the communities participate in the monitoring and evaluation. This is in accordance with the conclusions of Abebe et al. (2024) and Anam et al. (2024), who maintain that in the absence of clear reporting and accountability mechanisms, corporate social responsibility is in danger of becoming a mere tool for managing corporate image rather than a facilitator of social change. The demand to have independent audits and community oversight in Sangwe mirrors the best practices that are advocated in literature and these practices emphasize that CSR has to be integrated into governance structures that advocate transparency and responsiveness. The overall conclusion of the Sangwe case is that it is very much in line with the obstacles to CSR practices that have been pointed out by scholars and it therefore highlights the imperative need for a more inclusive, transparent, and impact-driven approach.

4.6.2 Challenges in fostering CSR activities for poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area

The difficulties involved in promoting CSR activities for poverty eradication in Sangwe are very much in line with the empirical literature on CSR implementation in developing contexts. Among these difficulties the most noticeable one is the lack of resources, which is consistent with the assertion of Visser (2008) who says that the financial and human capital limitations are the major reasons that constrain CSR in Africa, especially in the case of SMEs. Sangwe's very high mean score of 4.71 is indicative of companies that are having their profits at an extremely low level and at the same time they are not financially able to support huge and radical projects. This modern-day scenario is reaffirmed by Achmad (2022), who, while SMEs may seem to have the willpower to engage in CSR, points out that they are facing the same lack of capacity resulting in CSR practices that are irregular and of small scale, which do not cover the area of systemic poverty. The CSR manager's acceptance of "tight margins" and being unable to fund "large-scale projects" indicates this structural limitation, meaning that if no outside support or management incentives are given, CSR in these circumstances may go underdeveloped.

Another well-documented in the CSR literature issue in Sangwe is the Communication gaps and information asymmetries. Alam and Islam (2021) declare that CSR necessitates not only implementation but also persistent and significant dialogue with the stakeholders. The Sangwe data, with a mean score of 4.65, points to the fact that this has been a failure, where companies do not even inform or involve the communities in the CSR activities such as planning and execution. This is in line with Ogbemi's (2020) observations who reported that in several African societies,

CSR takes the form of a top-down approach with very little input from the community leading to skepticism and the trust deficit. The words of the government official who said that companies "taking pictures for marketing" without further communication, reveals how CSR can be viewed as a mere act for show rather than an engagement. Such a view diminishes the credibility of CSR initiatives and strengthens the position of Khan et al (2021) who argue that CSR should become part of the local environment through continuous interaction rather than handouts.

Another common point in the empirical literature is the misalignment between CSR initiatives and community needs, which is shown by the Sangwe data mean score (4.52). Studies by Ventura and Jauregui (2023) have found that the failure of CSR projects in African countries often occurs due to a lack of proper needs assessments or stakeholder involvement in the planning phase. The CSR manager's admission that projects are selected because they are either "easy to implement" or "look good in annual reports" points to the disconnect between the CSR image and the real social impact. The preference for corporate branding over developmental impact is also a critique made by Siregar (2021), who believes that CSR is often Integrated into corporate Marketing strategies. The case of constructing schools where they are not needed, while disregarding health facilities, is an instance of the inefficiencies that come about as a result of this misalignment. On the other hand, it highlights the need for participatory planning and local knowledge in CSR intervention design.

Ultimately, the factor of corrupt practices and difficulties with governance, while not completely acknowledged by all (mean score 4.29), has nevertheless been recognized as a major hindrance in the literature on CSR. Ekwok and Ogri (2019) report from empirical research how corruption at the government and community levels can disrupt CSR implementation, increase expenses, and misallocate the resources originally planned for the beneficiaries. The CSR manager’s discreet mention of “kickbacks” and demands from middlemen indicates the informal pressures companies undergo, which can compromise the integrity and effectiveness of CSR programs. This reinforces the view that without transparent governance structures and accountability mechanisms in place, CSR initiatives become and remain susceptible to co-optation and inefficiency. In the end, the Sangwe results are not only consistent with but also widely supported by empirical evidence that CSR in areas with limited resources and governance problems demands systemic reform, participatory approaches, and institutional support for poverty alleviation that is not only real but also significant.

4.6.3 Framework that effectively integrates CSR practices to alleviate rural poverty in the Sangwe

The CSR framework that is suggested for Sangwe, which is based on community-centeredness, sustainable development, collaboration, monitoring and evaluation, and transparency, not only coincides but also strongly supports the findings of empirical literature on effective CSR practices in developing contexts. The focus on participatory methods is an indication of the underlying principles of stakeholder theory, especially as explained by Freeman (1984), who claims that organizations should engage all stakeholders—including local communities—substantially in order to gain legitimacy and to be successful in the long run. The empirical research done by Ogbemi (2020) supports this assertion, as it proved that the involvement of communities in the planning and execution of CSR projects makes them contribute more to making the projects sustainable and impactful. The results of the Sangwe study, which reveal an overwhelming preference for community involvement, support these findings and imply that top-down CSR approaches are inadequate for solving the intricate social problems, such as rural poverty.

The framework's focus on sustainable development and economic empowerment also resonates with the broader literature on CSR. Olabisi (2023) argues that CSR in Africa must prioritize development-oriented outcomes, such as education, health, and livelihoods, rather than replicating Western models that emphasize philanthropy or environmental compliance. The Sangwe data support this, with informants calling for long-term investments that build community resilience. This is consistent with empirical work by Tamvada (2020), who cautions against CSR initiatives that offer short-term relief without addressing structural causes of poverty. The call for CSR to foster self-reliance and growth in Sangwe aligns with these critiques and supports a shift toward transformative, rather than transactional, CSR.

Furthermore, the framework's collaborative orientation mirrors findings from empirical studies that highlight the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in CSR implementation. World Bank (2019) emphasizes that effective CSR in Africa often depends on the ability of companies to work alongside governments, NGOs, and local communities. The Sangwe case reinforces this, with informants stressing that no single actor can address poverty alone. Similarly, the inclusion of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms in the framework reflects best practices identified in the literature. According to Abebe et al (2024), the absence of robust M&E systems often leads

to CSR initiatives that are poorly targeted and difficult to scale. The Sangwe findings, which advocate data-driven adjustments and continuous learning, align with this perspective and underscore the need for adaptive management.

Lastly, the emphasis on transparency and accountability in the Sangwe framework is supported by empirical research that links these principles to trust and legitimacy. Studies by Medina and Medina (2020) and Mandevere (2020) show that communities are more likely to support CSR initiatives when companies are open about their objectives, budgets, and outcomes. The Sangwe data, which reveals a strong community preference for financial disclosure and participatory audits, reflects this dynamic. Transparency not only enhances credibility but also fosters deeper engagement, creating a virtuous cycle of trust and cooperation. In sum, the Sangwe CSR framework is well-supported by empirical literature and offers a contextually grounded, evidence-based model for leveraging corporate resources to address rural poverty.

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter presented, analysed and interpreted the empirical findings on CSR-driven rural poverty alleviation in Sangwe. It confirmed a strong field response and added demographic tables and graphs to strengthen the interpretation of the respondent profile by age, gender and education. It also demonstrated that the research instrument was reliable through high Cronbach's Alpha values. The results showed that current CSR initiatives are generally weak, poorly communicated, insufficiently participatory and only partially beneficial to community members. The chapter further established that resource shortages, communication gaps, corruption, weak collaboration and project misalignment constrain CSR effectiveness. Finally, it interpreted community support for a structured CSR model grounded in participation, sustainable development, partnerships, monitoring and evaluation, and transparency. The next chapter translates these findings into study conclusions, recommendations and the proposed working model.

CHAPTER 5: STUDY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The prior chapter presented detailed findings. This chapter presents key findings. This will be followed by study conclusions. The next section presents the study conclusions. The subsequent section covers study conclusions. The research will wind up by providing directions for further studies.

5.2 Summary of the study and findings

The main aim of this research was to create a working model for the integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into rural development in the Sangwe region of Zimbabwe. The topic of the study was determined by the observation that, despite the Sangwe natural area's resources and the presence of numerous multinational companies in high-profit sectors like agriculture and mining, not many companies seemed to be involved in making the lives of people in the community better. Thus, the research aimed to probe the situation of CSR, analyze the corresponding problems in improving CSR activities for poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area, and ultimately, to come up with a proposal for the integration of the CSR practices targeting such a social issue as rural poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area. The Stakeholder Theory and the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) were the main theories that guided this study. The literature review pointed to the geographical and contextual gaps that this study filled. Following the pragmatic research philosophy, mixed-methods concurrent triangulation design and the deductive and inductive research approaches were applied on a sample of 304 community members and 9 key interview informants that included CSR managers, NGO representatives, and local government officials working in the Sangwe area of Chiredzi district. The main study findings related to each objective are presented in the next section.

5.2.1 The current level of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the Sangwe area.

The survey feedback, along with the views of the important informants, reveal a worrisome situation about CSR in the Sangwe region. The numbers showed a great number of people who

believe that the companies are not taking part in very good and effective CSR practices; on the other hand, the words made clear the reasons behind the belief. The research revealed that the level of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the Sangwe area was extremely low. Besides the factors mentioned above, the community members also pointed to the absence of transparency and accountability as contributing to their frustrations and mistrust. The quotations from the key informants not only support this theory but also bring out the necessity for companies to move with simple gestures rather than resort to more inclusive, participatory, and transparent approaches to CSR.

5.2.2 The challenges in fostering CSR activities for poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area.

Questionnaire and interview results confirmed a myriad of challenges faced in fostering CSR activities for poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area. The barriers collectively undermine CSR effectiveness in poverty alleviation. They include the following. *Resource constraints* limit companies' capacity to invest in proper needs assessment, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability planning. Another challenge relates to *poor communication,* which compounds resource limitations by reducing the efficiency of whatever investments are made. The other challenge relates to *profit prioritization,* which creates the underlying logic that relegates CSR to secondary status, while *corruption* diverts even limited resources away from intended beneficiaries. Another challenge was the *lack of collaboration,* which means that scarce resources are inefficiently deployed through duplication and gaps, while *sustainability failures* ensure that even well-intentioned initiatives fail to create lasting change.

5.2.3 Working model/framework that effectively integrates CSR practices to alleviate rural poverty in the Sangwe area

The findings from both the questionnaire and the interview came to the same conclusion that a CSR framework for Sangwe, which is strong and sustainable, should be built on the present-day realities and the aims of the community. The emphasis has to be on the participation of the community, sustainable development, and economic empowerment. Both the questionnaire and the informants supported the idea of investing in long-term resilience-building initiatives like education and livelihoods, instead of opting for relief that is only temporary. Moreover, respondents thought that the framework should create avenues for the involvement of companies, the government, and civil

society so that there is a coordinated and accountable action. The participants also pointed out that for monitoring and evaluation to be effective, they must be part of the process of development and, therefore, requirements such as transparency and financial accountability should be readily available to build trust and legitimacy among stakeholders. These principles, taken together, constitute a CSR model that is responsive, inclusive, and impactful, thus enabling the community of Sangwe to take the lead in its own development, as was illustrated in Figure 4.1 in the previous chapter.

5.3 Study Conclusions

5.3.1 The Current Level of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives in the Sangwe Area

The research ultimately establishes that the status quo of CSR initiatives in Sangwe is severely lacking both in terms of their frequency and impact. The quantitative results from the survey reflect that the majority of the community perceives that companies are not engaged in any meaningful CSR activities and that none of the respondent groups are in agreement that CSR activities are normal, inclusive, or beneficial. This perception is complemented with qualitative input from the informants, who indicated, among others, a lack of real commitment, poor fit with the needs of the community, and very little transparency. The results indicate that CSR in Sangwe is predominantly tokenistic, and it has to do more with compliance or public relations than with a genuine desire to promote development. Consequently, CSR does not win over communities nor provide them with the promised benefits, and thus, they turn out to be disappointed and distrustful. The verdict is that unless there is a shift to more genuine, participatory, and accountable CSR practices, companies in Sangwe continue to alienate the local people and lose their legitimacy.

5.3.2 The Challenges in Fostering CSR Activities for Poverty Alleviation in the Sangwe Area

The research found that the effectiveness of CSR in reducing poverty in Sangwe is impeded by a series of interrelated challenges that are complex and difficult to disentangle. Next, it was stated that the main challenge was the lack of resources, which restricted companies to the extent that they could not perform proper needs assessments, stakeholder engagement, and support for long-term initiatives. Ongoing poor communication also magnified these challenges, thereby causing

the disconnection of corporate intention from the community's knowledge or participation. The prioritization of profits over the social impact relegates CSR to a secondary concern, which is often the cause of tokenism, where just the bare minimum is done to comply with the requirement of CSR. Corruption in both the corporate and community sectors takes away resources and creates mistrust, and a lack of cooperation between the parties means that the efforts are scattered and there are no chances of synergy being realized. Moreover, the non-existence of sustainability planning renders even well-meaning projects incapable of producing the desired change. It is ultimately concluded that CSR in Sangwe cannot be successful unless these systemic barriers are dealt with through the opening of new areas of investment, the enlargement of the planning process, and governance reforms.

5.3.3 Working Model/Framework That Effectively Integrates CSR Practices to Alleviate Rural Poverty in the Sangwe Area

The paper cites a community-based, responsive, and empowered CSR framework for Sangwe as the main recommendation. Soon after, community participation was declared as the first and foremost pillar among the few that included environmental protection and economic empowerment, with long-term commitment to education, infrastructure, and job creation, all of which the community fully supported through the questionnaires and interviews. Nongovernmental organizations need to always be part of the picture as the government and companies do the closed-off procedures across the various sectors. Having monitoring and evaluation systems in place is a must, for they will help in progress checking, experience gathering, and changing when necessary. Trust and legitimacy are the results of transparency and financial accountability. Therefore, an integrated, participative, and dynamic CSR approach is presented through the new framework, which not only fights poverty but also empowers the Sangwe community to determine its own development path.

5.4 Recommendations of the study

5.4.1 The Current Level of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives in the Sangwe Area

- The study recommends CSR managers adopt genuine, community-driven CSR strategies to address the issue of superficial and non-impactful CSR practices.
- The study urges local government officials to establish clear CSR guidelines and monitoring mechanisms to tackle the lack of regulatory oversight and accountability.
- The study encourages NGOs and development agencies to facilitate platforms for dialogue to overcome the communication gap between companies and communities.
- The study recommends that community leaders advocate for inclusive CSR planning to address the exclusion of local voices and lack of transparency.

5.4.2 The Challenges in Fostering CSR Activities for Poverty Alleviation in the Sangwe Area

- The study recommends that CSR managers allocate dedicated budgets for stakeholder engagement to resolve underfunding and poor planning of CSR initiatives.
- The study urges local government officials to streamline anti-corruption measures to confront governance failures undermining CSR effectiveness.
- The study encourages NGOs and development agencies to support capacity-building to address the lack of technical skills in CSR implementation.
- The study recommends that community leaders participate actively in CSR oversight to correct inequitable resource distribution and limited community involvement.

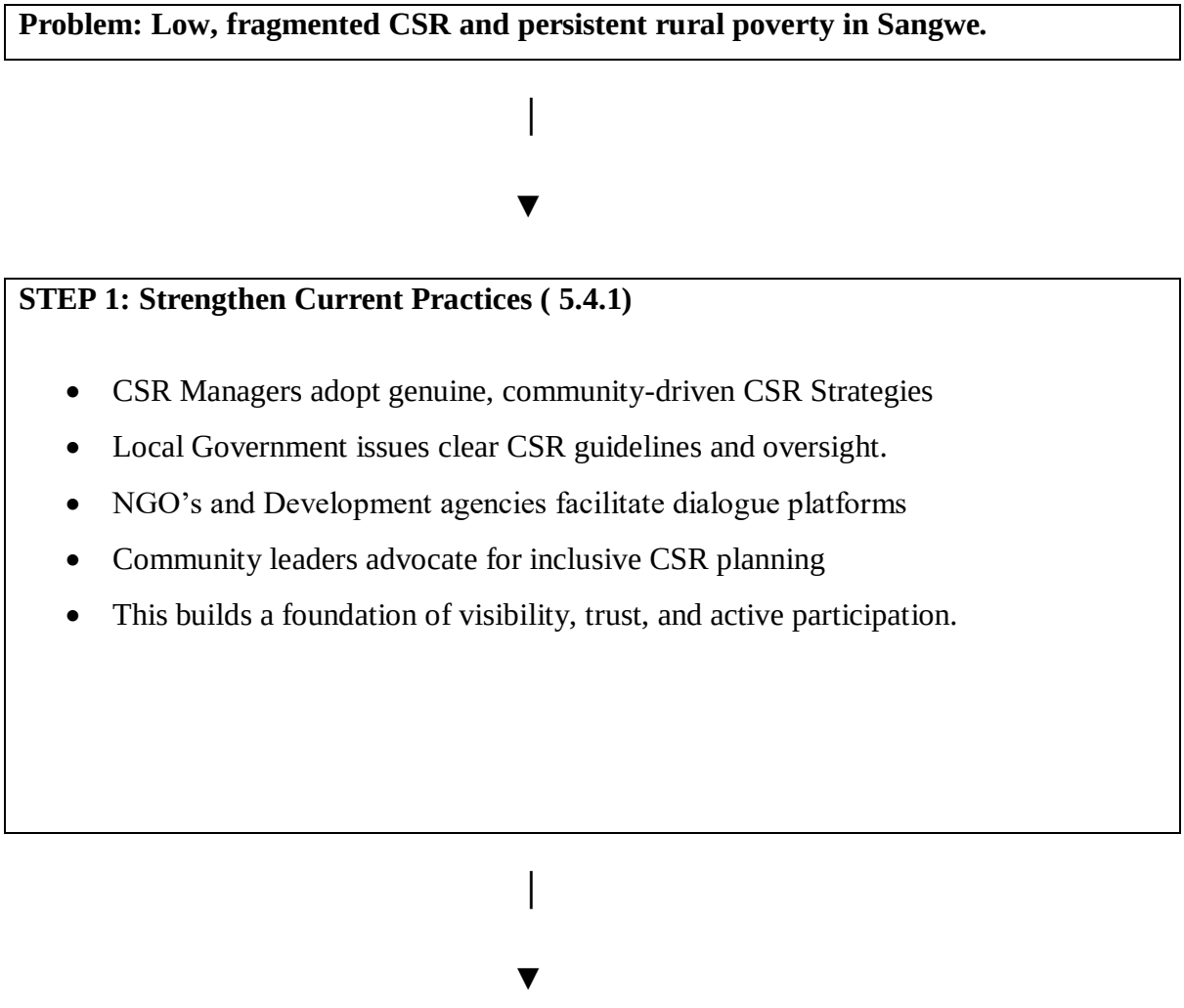
5.4.3 Working Model/Framework That Effectively Integrates CSR Practices to Alleviate Rural Poverty in the Sangwe Area

- The study recommends CSR managers co-design CSR initiatives with community members to solve the problem of misaligned and top-down project planning.
- The study encourages local government officials to coordinate multi-stakeholder partnerships to address fragmented efforts and poor collaboration.
- The study recommends NGOs and development agencies to provide technical support for monitoring and evaluation to fill gaps in impact tracking and adaptive learning.

- The study urges community leaders to ensure transparency through participatory audits to combat mistrust and lack of accountability in CSR processes.
- Lastly, the study recommends the adoption of a CSR framework presented in Figure 4.1 in the prior chapter to alleviate poverty in the Sangwe area.

To clarify how the strategies interact to solve the study problem, Figure 5.1 presents a diagrammatic CSR implementation pathway. It shows how the recommendations in 5.4.1, 5.4.2, and 5.4.3 build on each other in a sequential method to address low, fragmented CSR and persistent rural poverty in Sangwe.

Figure 5. 1 A Working Model for Corporate Social Responsibility-Driven Rural Poverty Alleviation in the Sangwe Area



STEP 2: Address Systematic Challenges (5.4.2)

- Dedicated CSR Budgets for stakeholder planning engagement
- Anti-Corruption and governance reforms for CSR processes
- Capacity Building on CSR design, implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation.
- Activity community oversight to correct unequal distribution.
- Creates an enabling environment for effective CSR delivery.



Step 3: Implement the Integrated CSR framework

- Co-Design CSR Initiatives with community members
- Coordinate multi-stakeholder partnerships with private companies, government, and NGO's
- Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning systems
- Ensuring transparency through financial disclosure and audits.
- Implement the Sangwe CSR framework into operation.



Outcome: Sustainable, community-owned CSR that alleviates Rural poverty in Sangwe and improves livelihoods, trust, and services.

Step 1: Strengthen Current Practices 5.4.1

The process is initiated by dismantling the relationship and cultural deficit, which is evident in the lack of genuine trust and participation that plagues fragmented CSR. This step is essential to rebuild trust and social capital through three core actions.

a) CSR Managers moving from charity investment to strategic investment using Shared value mapping. This is a long-term commitment approach that maps and improves corporate credibility
b) All key stakeholders should reduce heavy reliance on ad hoc interactions and make use of MoUs between local government and Open Forum meetings initiated by NGOs and development agencies, which force all stakeholders to the table under structured conditions.
c) Community leaders should conduct literacy trainings on CSR legislations to ensure the community input is constructive and focused on long-term leveraging of assets.

The success of Step 1 is measured by the creation of fixed, consistent communication channels and a preliminary agreement that current practices are inadequate and require reform. The output is social capital and Trust, which is the essential input for Step 2.

Step 2: Address Systematic Challenges (5.4.2)

Upon establishment of the trust, Step 2 addresses the weaknesses of the structure. These include the issues of funding, skills, and governance that allow corruption and fragmentation to thrive. Key actions include

a) Ring Fence Budgeting -The resources are supposed to be secured through ring-fencing the CSR Budget. This ensures that funds are available for capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, as well as governance, rather than mere implementation of projects.
b) Independent audit mandates to ensure and introduce financial accountability. This initiative of public audits eradicates corruption and elite capture, which is the major barrier to systematic reform.
c) Skills Building through M&E Workshop trainings for community representatives. The capacity building is essential for ensuring the community can participate as an

equal and knowledgeable partner in the complex governance discussions of the next step 3

The success of Step 2 is measured by the availability of resources that are dedicated to the initiatives and the availability of skilled personnel. The output is institutional capacity and a high degree of transparency, which is a high requirement for the input of the integrated framework in Step 3

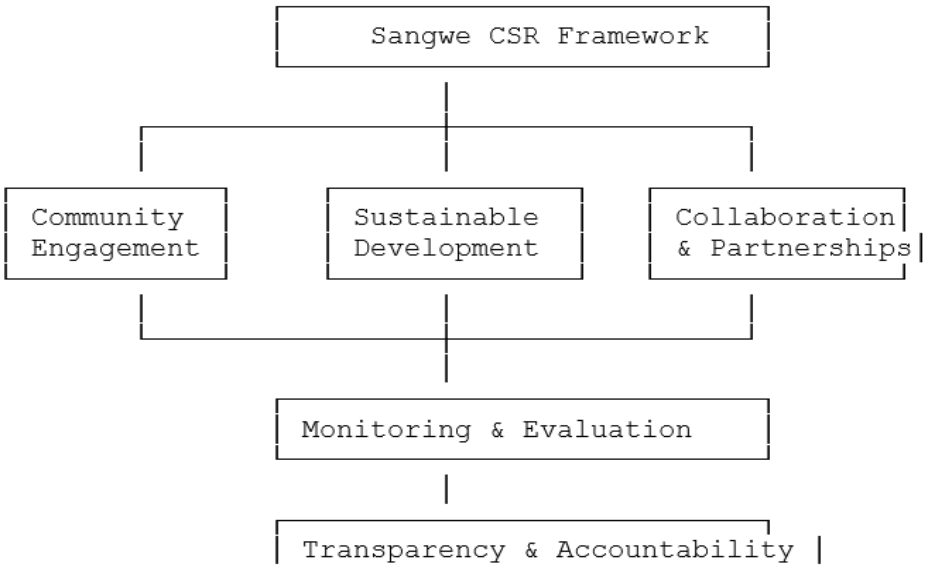
STEP 3: Implement the Integrated CSR Framework (5.4.3)

The final phase translates the trust built and the capacity enhanced in the first two steps into a permanent and legally mandated structure. Key actions include

- Implementing the skills built in Step 2, key stakeholders collaborate in designing idea sprints to move from basic needs to final project blueprints that are co-owned. This is evidence of the ability of stakeholders to work in unity.
- Creation of a mandate partnership is crucial. The process includes the signing of the Founding Charter or the partnership agreement. The document is the culmination of all prior efforts, legally binding all stakeholders, including companies, the government, and community representatives.
- Establishing an automated feedback channel which ensures that M&E, Financial reports, and important information are shared seamlessly, fulfilling the mandate of transparency and learning

As illustrated in **Figure 5.1,** the outputs of Steps 1 to 3 mutually support the reinforcement. Social capital from Step 1 supports the institutional capacity and skills built from Step 2, which in turn support the implementation of the integrated CSR Framework. The three steps change CSR from being fragmented, short-term projects to being longer-term instruments. It is the clearly defined progression that enables emerging sustainable community-owned CSR that is capable of alleviation rural poverty and improving livelihoods, trust, and service delivery in the Sangwe area.

Figure 5. 2 Framework that effectively integrates CSR practices to alleviate rural poverty in the Sangwe area.



Source: Primary data (2025)

This diagram illustrates the interconnected pillars of the CSR framework, with community engagement as the foundation and transparency as the trust-building capstone.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

The long-term effects of CSR-driven poverty alleviation programs on specific socio-economic indicators like education, health, and income levels of Sangwe could be investigated further by research. In addition, comparisons between Sangwe and other rural areas in Zimbabwe could help to reveal factors that affect the success of CSR in different contexts. Moreover, the impact of digital technologies and innovations on CSR outreach and transparency might be evaluated in future research, while at the same time, the views of corporate stakeholders could be analyzed to grasp the internal limitations and incentives that are responsible for the CSR behavior. These paths would not only facilitate a deeper comprehension but also lead to the creation of more adaptable and larger-scale CSR models for the rural areas.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Introduction

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
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31 July 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

REF: REQUEST TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH: CHIEDZA LAUREL SITHOLE B240099A], MASTER OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP DEGREE (MBL), PART 2.2 STUDENT

This letter serves to confirm that **CHIEDZA LAUREL SITHOLE [B240099A],** is a Master of Business Leadership Degree student in the Graduate School of Business at Bindura University of Science Education.

The student is in the final stage of study which requires her to carry out a research. Her dissertation is titled ***"A Working Model Towards Fostering Corporate Social Responsibility as a Means of Alleviating Rural Poverty in the Sangwe Area of Chiredzi District, Masvingo Province."***

We would be grateful if you could give her any assistance she may require.

For more details, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,

COORDINATOR
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
FACULTY OF COMMERCE
PRIVATE BAG 1020, BINDURA
OFFICIAL

Dr. J. Mwenje
Director, Graduate School of Business

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Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Key Informants - CSR Managers, Local Government Officials & NGO Representatives

To explore CSR strategies, implementation processes, effectiveness for poverty alleviation, coordination challenges, and recommendations in the Sangwe context.

BACKGROUND

1. Please describe your role and your organisational involvement in CSR/community development in Sangwe.
2. Which CSR programs/projects are currently active (or recently completed) in Sangwe? Briefly outline their objectives and target groups.

STRATEGY & MOTIVATION

3. What guides your organisation's CSR priorities (e.g., policy, stakeholder input, SDGs, corporate strategy)?
4. What are the main motivations for undertaking CSR in this area (ethical duty, licence to operate, risk management, shared value, philanthropy, other)?

DESIGN & COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

5. How are community needs identified (assessments, meetings, liaison with traditional leaders/local government, NGO partners)?
6. To what extent are community members involved in planning, implementation, and monitoring? What works well/less well?

IMPLEMENTATION & COORDINATION

7. Please walk us through the typical implementation process (partners, timelines, procurement, local labour).
8. How do you coordinate with other actors (local government, NGOs, community structures)? What facilitates or hinders coordination?

RESOURCING, M&E

9. What resources are typically allocated (funds, staff, in-kind)? Are they sufficient?

10. How do you monitor and evaluate outcomes? What indicators do you track for poverty alleviation? Any recent findings?

EFFECTIVENESS & SUSTAINABILITY

11. In your view, how effective have the CSR initiatives been in improving livelihoods/reducing poverty? Examples?
12. What factors explain success or limited impact? (relevance, scale, duration, skills transfer, market linkages, climate shocks, etc.)
13. How is sustainability planned (community ownership, O&M plans, exit strategies, capacity building)?

CHALLENGES & RISKS

14. What key challenges/bottlenecks have you encountered (regulatory, logistics, seasonality, cultural protocols, trust, transparency, grievance handling)?
15. Any risks or unintended consequences observed (dependency, elite capture, conflicts, environmental trade-offs)?

LESSONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

16. What would you do differently next time?

17. What policy or partnership changes would most improve CSR effectiveness in Sangwe?

18. If resources increased by 25%, where would you invest to maximise poverty reduction? If decreased by 25%, what would you protect?

CLOSING

Is there anything we didn't ask that you feel is important? May we follow up if needed? Thank you for your time.

Appendix C: Structured Survey Questionnaire Community Members (Sangwe Ward)

SECTION A: ENUMERATOR DETAILS

A0. Enumerator Name _____ A1. Date (YYYY-MM-DD): _____ A2. Village: _____

For section B, use the following key to tick the appropriate responses.

1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly agree

SECTION B1: Objective 1: Examining the current level of CSR Initiatives

	CSR Initiatives	1	2	3	4	5
CSR1	Local companies in Sangwe regularly engage in activities that benefit the community.					
CSR2	I have seen companies in Sangwe supporting local development projects.					
CSR3	Companies in Sangwe prioritize initiatives that improve the quality of life for community members.					
CSR4	Local businesses in Sangwe involve community members in decision-making processes for CSR initiatives.					
CSR5	I have benefited from CSR initiatives implemented by companies in Sangwe.					
CSR6	Companies in Sangwe provide regular updates on their CSR activities and impact.					
CSR7	CSR initiatives in Sangwe are transparent and accountable to the community					

SECTION B2: Analyzing challenges in fostering CSR Activities

	Challenges	1	2	3	4	5
CHAL1	Local companies in Sangwe lack sufficient resources to implement effective CSR initiatives.					
CHAL2	There is inadequate communication between companies and community members about CSR initiatives in Sangwe.					
CHAL3	CSR initiatives in Sangwe often do not address the most pressing needs of the community.					
CHAL4	Corruption hinders the effectiveness of CSR initiatives in Sangwe.					
CHAL5	Local companies in Sangwe prioritize profit over community development.					

CHAL6	There is a lack of collaboration between companies and other stakeholders in implementing CSR initiatives in Sangwe.					

CHAL7	CSR initiatives in Sangwe are often not sustainable in the long term					

SECTION B3: Objective 3: Developing a working model/framework

	Framework	1	2	3	4	5
FRM1	A framework for CSR initiatives in Sangwe would help ensure that companies prioritize community needs.					
FRM2	Community members should be involved in designing and implementing CSR initiatives in Sangwe.					
FRM3	CSR initiatives in Sangwe should focus on sustainable development projects that benefit the community in the long term.					
FRM4	Companies in Sangwe should prioritize initiatives that address poverty alleviation and economic empowerment.					
FRM5	A collaborative approach between companies, the government, and community members would be effective in implementing CSR initiatives in Sangwe.					
FRM6	Regular monitoring and evaluation of CSR initiatives would ensure their effectiveness in Sangwe.					
FRM7	A transparent and accountable framework for CSR initiatives would increase community trust in companies operating in Sangwe.					

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

Appendix D: Consent Form

Survey & Interviews (Sangwe Study)

INFORMATION (for all participants)

Study title: **A working model for Corporate social responsibility-driven rural poverty alleviation in the Sangwe area in Zimbabwe.**

Researcher: _____Institution: _____ Contact: _____

Purpose: To understand how CSR initiatives affect poverty alleviation in Sangwe and how they can be improved.

- Voluntary participation: Your participation is voluntary. You may decline any question or stop at any time without penalty.
- Risks/Benefits: Minimal risk; potential benefit is contributing to improved community programs.
- Confidentiality: We will not use your name in any report. Data will be anonymised and stored securely.
- Audio-recording: With your permission, we will record to ensure accuracy.
- Questions: You may ask questions now or later using the contact above.

A) SURVEY CONSENT (to be signed before questionnaire)
I have read the information above. I agree to take part in the survey.
Name (print): _____ Signature/Thumbprint: _____ Date: _____ Witness (if needed): _____ Signature: _____

B) INTERVIEW CONSENT (key informants- CSR managers/officials/NGOs)
I consent to participate in a semi-structured interview. I understand my views will be anonymized.
I agree/do not agree (circle) to audio-recording.
Name (print): _____ Role/Org: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

For Researcher Only

I have explained the study in a language understandable to the participant and answered questions.
Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E: Content Analysis / Secondary Data Analysis Guide

This guide outlines the approach used to analyze qualitative data and secondary sources relevant to the study titled:

1. Purpose of Analysis

The goal was to identify themes, perceptions, and patterns regarding the design, implementation, and perceived effectiveness of CSR initiatives in rural poverty alleviation.

2. Data Sources

- Transcribed interviews from key informants (CSR managers, NGO officials, local government representatives)
- Community member responses from open-ended questionnaire items
- Public documents, reports, and CSR statements from relevant companies and institutions

3. Analysis Process

- **Manual coding and NVivo 12 software** were used to manage and interpret qualitative data.
- Data were coded inductively by reading transcripts and responses line-by-line, identifying keywords, phrases, and recurring ideas.
- These initial codes were organized into broader categories aligned with the study's research questions and objectives, including:
    - Types of CSR activities
    - Community participation
    - Barriers to CSR effectiveness
    - Perceived impact on livelihoods
    - Stakeholder collaboration and governance

4. Validation and Triangulation

- Findings from interviews were cross-checked against questionnaire responses and secondary materials.
- This triangulation helped ensure consistency and credibility in theme development.

5. Output

- Thematic summaries and illustrative quotes were presented in Chapter 4.
- NVivo-coded categories and large data tables were included to support transparency and improve flow in the main results section.

Appendix F: Turnitin Report

turnitin

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