

THEORETICAL DIMENSION OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) ACTIVITIES IN TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT

¹Arpita Bhardwaj, ²Dr. Satendar

¹Research Scholar, ²Associate Professor

^{1,2}Department of Sociology, Banasthali Vidyapith

Abstract

From ancient times, tribal communities have experienced socio-economic challenges because of this they have limited growth, development and participation in the mainstream of the society. Long term segregation, inadequate policy attention, deprivation of economic advantages has led to poor access to health care services, education, employment opportunities and infrastructure development.

Marginalization is one of the major concerns in their socio-economic development. Ineffectiveness of development policies have deprived them from the benefits of economic growth and modernization. Because of this, tribal population level of experience of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy is higher in comparison to non-tribal population.

Limited healthcare facilities, lack of educational institution, insufficient transportation facilities have intensified their problems. Poor transport connectivity cause hindrance to reach out to market which ultimately reduces their source of income and economic stability.

Economic exploitation is another major concern. Though their inhabit is mother nature, they should be rich in terms of natural resources, they still remain deprive of fair benefits. Reason behind is large scale industrialization activities like deforestation, mining, inducement upon tribal lands. It leads to environment

degradation and causes displacement. And many times, government policies suppress tribal welfare and their rights over the industrial and corporate profits.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, tribal development, sustainable development, Marginalisation.

Introduction

Earlier, primary focus of the Indian companies was on profit as well as shareholders' wealth. But, the emergence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) provides it a new direction. Business gradually expanded their objectives to the welfare of society as well in order to make a balance between economic goals and ethical responsibilities.

The concept of CSR can be related with Mahatma Gandhi's Doctrine of Trusteeship. It highlights that the wealth and resources of business organizations should be utilized for the welfare of society. According to the doctrine, business owners are regarded as trustees of societal resources and are expected to use a portion of their profits for public welfare activities rather than specifically for personal gain. The remaining wealth should contribute towards social development and community well-being.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has increasingly become significant approach in order to reduce socio-economic inequalities, especially in developing nations. Through CSR activities,

corporations work for social welfare and environmental sustainability and support inclusive and balanced development. With respect to tribal regions, CSR activities can significantly contribute towards improving living conditions of tribal communities by focusing on essential sectors such as education, healthcare, skill development, and infrastructure. It will help understand various challenges faced by tribal communities (Dash & Kalamkar, 2016).

Research Objective

- To understand tribal development through CSR activities;
- To understand CSR models and its theoretical framework;
- To analyse its theoretical dimensions with reference to tribal community development.

Literature Review

Souren Bhattacharya, Subhasree Pal, Dr. Parimal Sarkar (March 2023) in their article “*Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Tribal development in India*” said that despite being an important part of the society, tribal communities remain deprived and marginalized and faces challenges in their sociopolitical culture, economy and structure.

Gaitri, Mona Ratnesh and Ebikinei Stanley Eguruze (January 2020) in their paper “*Role of CSR in supporting Tribal handicrafts of Jharkhand*” have mentioned that CSR activities can provide major advantages in promoting local crafts and culture which ultimately leads to socioeconomic development of the community.

Practice of CSR in Canada’s extractive industry: *Identifying the intersection between social responsibility and business profitability* (Aisekhaghe, 2025) analyses CSR in Canada’s extractive sector with respect to indigenous communities, pointing out that while CSR frameworks exist, many companies still struggle to align profit motives with meaningful outcomes for indigenous populations.

Indigenous communities and sustainable development: *A review and research agenda* (Bansal et al., 2024) reviews how indigenous communities contribute to sustainable development and identifies gaps in policy, economy, ecological, and livelihood domains.

Xaxa (2011) stated that tribal communities, especially those living in remote and resource-rich areas, continue to suffer from various structural and socio-economic challenges that limit their development.

Sundar (2016) stated the long history of marginalization experienced by tribal populations, and how it affected their traditional occupations, cultural identity, and social systems.

Fernandes (2008) said inadequate infrastructure and limited access to basic facilities have led to increase their vulnerability, prolong poverty and underdevelopment in many tribal regions.

Chopra (2018) stated that tribal communities have significant potential with regards to sustainable development despite the high level of difficulties they face. Their traditional knowledge, collective resource management practices, and strong sense of community cooperation serve as valuable strengths

that can support economic and social empowerment.

Therefore, the major challenge for policymakers and development agencies is to formulate inclusive development strategies that not only reduce structural inequalities but also preserve and respect the cultural values and social traditions of tribal communities.

Dash & Kalamkar (2016) stated that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an important mechanism for reducing socio-economic inequalities, especially within developing economies. Through CSR activities, business organizations contribute to social welfare and environmental sustainability, helping to supplement areas where public services and government interventions may be inadequate. In tribal regions, CSR initiatives can bring meaningful change by supporting sectors such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and livelihood development, thereby addressing several critical issues faced by tribal communities

Kumar & Singh (2017) stated that CSR interventions related to education and vocational training have contributed to higher literacy levels and improved employment opportunities among tribal youth (Panda, 2014). Likewise, healthcare-related CSR programs have assisted in controlling diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis by improving medical awareness and access to healthcare facilities in tribal areas.

Jenkins (2005) stated that despite these positive contributions, the role of CSR in tribal development has certain limitations. Scholars have argued that many CSR activities are short-term and do not

adequately address the deeper structural causes of socio-economic inequality.

Banerjee (2008) said that some critics believe that corporations occasionally use CSR initiatives more for enhancing their public reputation than for achieving genuine community empowerment and sustainable development

Research Methodology

This research paper is developed by taking the support of secondary data which is available from Journals, Magazines, Newspapers, Books, Reports of the Government, and Websites about CSR.

Analysis of Theoretical Dimensions

Agency Theory by Milton Friedman (1970)

According to the theory, Businesses should focus mainly on profit making and believed that CSR was affected by the managers/ executives who were employees of the shareholders and got positions from themselves, they didn't have the rights of using company money for social activities beyond business purposes. As the manager/ executives, basically agents are accountable to the owner of the company. The idea of CSR activities actually comes for improving company reputations, value addition, maximise benefits, attract customers make connections and relations. According to this theory, shareholders support the business and rather than personal benefits which helps directly to the tribal welfare by providing facilities like job, schools, healthcare, CSE projects in tribal areas and maintain a good public image.

Stakeholder Theory by R.Edward Freeman (1984)

As the theory tells that businesses become successful when it doesn't benefit not only the shareholders but also for everyone connected to it including workers, beneficiaries, society, and unprivileged communities. As social and ethical responsibilities along with economic goals, tribal communities are seen as important stakeholders whose welfare, rights, interests, and developments should be protected along with business growth.

Max B.E Clarkson (1995)

He is one of the important scholars of business ethics and stakeholders' theory. He has explained that company's success is not only single dependent on shareholders but it depends upon how well it manages with the stakeholders. Companies should make profits but also involving the major important activities like protecting communities and environment with their social ethical responsibilities for the Tribals.

Stewardship Theory Donaldson and Davis (1991)

They believed that Managers can be trusted because of having aim like to protect organisations long term interests, managers called to be care takers of a company instead of working only for personal benefit, their decisions directly make a balance business growth with social welfare.

Hart(1995)

Stuart L. Hart believed that companies can achieve both aspects like companies' long-term success and protection of environment. Companies working in tribal areas should protect forests, respect tribal land, contribute to the sustainable developments. As a result, it can see both

business and local people benefit in the long run.

The business in the community model

The Business in the Community model describes the collaborative relationship between businesses and governments in understanding societal needs, mainly those related with community development and social welfare (Albareda et al., 2007, p. 402). In this approach, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is viewed as a voluntary commitment by the organizations and is considered an important additional source of social investment. Governments usually encourage CSR through supportive measures such as policy guidance, incentives, and non-binding regulatory frameworks rather than strict legal necessities. Many countries who have adopted this model have recognized good strategies, institutional mechanisms, and ministerial responsibilities to promote CSR activities (EC, 2014). It also enhances transparency and accountability to investors and other stakeholders (Moon et al., 2011).

Strategic Model of CSR

The Pyramid Metaphor of CSR

Carroll's Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is mainly used to understand the various responsibilities that businesses have toward society. The model presents CSR as a hierarchy of obligations arranged in the form of a pyramid, illustrating the different levels of responsibility that organizations are expected to fulfilled.

At the base of the pyramid is economic responsibility, which represents the essential responsibility of a business to

remain profitable and financially sustainable. Profit generation is essential for organizational survival, growth, and the ability to meet other social responsibilities. An organization may struggle to fulfilled its broader commitments to stakeholders and society without economic success,

The second level is legal responsibility, in which organizations require to operate within the limitations of laws and regulations. This includes compliance with local, national, and international legal requirements, as well as industry-specific standards and regulatory frameworks.

The third level is ethical responsibility. Apart from following the law, organizations are expected to conduct their activities in a manner consist of moral values, fairness, and integrity. It involves making decisions that respect stakeholder interests, promote justice, and uphold accepted standards of ethical behaviour.

At the top of the pyramid is philanthropic responsibility, which consist of voluntary actions undertaken to enhance societal well-being. Such activities may include charitable donations, community development programs, environmental conservation initiatives, educational support, and other contributions that exceed legal and ethical expectations. Philanthropic efforts reflect a company's commitment to being a responsible corporate citizen.

According to Carroll's framework, these responsibilities are interconnected and hierarchical, with economic responsibilities forming the foundation which legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities are made up of. The model suggests that organizations should strive to

balance profitability with broader social obligations.

Intrinsic Profit Model

The key idea behind this model is to earn profit while also helping society, as the profit is important but social responsibility is also important. Organization provides help and solves the communities' concerns and make them out of genuine concerns. Bermans model support tribal communities through education, job creation, healthcare, skill development etc. Model focuses on intrinsic motivation by supporting social development. This concept tells that education is valuable for community development, while profit remains a longterm business objective.

Ethical, Altruistic and Strategic CSR

Lantos (2001) stated the Ethical, Altruistic, and Strategic Model of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which has categorised CSR activities into mainly three categories: *Ethical CSR*, *Altruistic CSR*, and *Strategic CSR*.

Ethical CSR focus to an organization responsibility to fulfil its economic, legal, and ethical requirements during business operations. This responsibility combines compliance with the expectations of society and standards of ethical conduct.

Altruistic CSR is related with philanthropic activities conducted for the welfare of society. According to him, these initiatives include voluntary contributions by the organization to social causes without the expecting direct business benefits. He said that managers must exercise caution when allocating shareholders' resources for purely charitable purposes, as corporations are primarily accountable to their owners. Organization may involve in both private

and public philanthropic activities to support community development and social welfare.

He had also stated about difference between philanthropic and economic rationality. Organization decisions generally profit-oriented and rational considerations, but CSR often requires organizations to follow broader social objectives that cover beyond immediate financial returns. Generosity and social concern are influenced by moral values, empathy, and emotional commitments rather than only economic calculations.

Conclusion

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plays a vital role in improving the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities and promote sustainable development. Although these approaches have produced positive outcomes in many tribal regions, their impact can be further strengthened through coordinated efforts and strategic collaboration. Combining the resources and outreach of CSR programs with the participatory and community-centered nature can contribute to a more inclusive development framework that supports economic empowerment while safeguarding tribal culture and environmental resources. There is the need for further research and help policymakers, corporations, and development agencies design more effective interventions for tribal welfare.

Tribal communities continue to face multiple challenges, including social exclusion, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to opportunities, and economic vulnerability. Addressing these issues requires development strategies that are sensitive to the unique social, cultural,

and economic realities of tribal populations. In this context, the present study focus upon the contribution of CSR activities in promoting tribal development and identifies approaches that can enhance the socio-economic well-being and long-term empowerment of tribal communities.

The socio-economic development of tribal communities has attracted considerable attention from researchers and policymakers due to the persistent challenges of social exclusion, economic deprivation, and inadequate infrastructure. Efforts to improve the living conditions of tribal populations have increasingly focused on identifying sustainable and inclusive development approaches. Within this context, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities have emerged as important instruments for promoting economic growth, social welfare, and community empowerment in tribal regions.

References

1. Banerjee, S. B. (2008). Corporate Social Responsibility: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. *Critical Sociology*, 34(1), 51-79.
2. Chopra, K. (2018). *Tribal Development in India: Challenges and Prospects*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
3. Fernandes, W. (2008). Sixty Years of Indian Independence: The Changing Status of Tribals. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(33), 21-23.
4. Kumar, S., & Singh, R. (2017). CSR in Healthcare: A Case Study of Tribal Areas in India. *Journal of Health Management*, 19(2), 234-248

5. Singh, K., & Singh, R. (2015). Cooperative Societies and Tribal Development: A Case Study of Jharkhand. *Journal of Rural Development*, 34(3), 345-360.
6. Bhat, G. P. R., & Pooja, G. (2022). Corporate social responsibility and tribal development in India: Evolution, issues and challenges. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Technology*, 8(9), 219–224.
7. Dwivedi, J. (2024). *A study on analysis of the impact of corporate social responsibility in burgeoning the tribal areas with reference to SECL and WCL* (Doctoral dissertation, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak).