



ISSN: 2950-8835 © 2022 KODISA & JKR.
JKR website: <http://acomis.kisti.re.kr/jkr>
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13106/jkr.2022.vol2.no1.9>.

The Historical Paradigm of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Korea

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Received: June 02, 2023. Revised: June 21, 2023. Accepted: June 30, 2023.

Abstract

This study will provide an overview of the development of ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ (CSR) in South Korea throughout time, as well as its sources of inspiration and recommendations. The study will also rely on the body of existing research to provide insights into the present condition of CSR in the nation and the measures launched to promote socially responsible practices in the corporate environment. As a result, it will act as a crucial dedication to comprehending corporate social responsibility within the Korean environment. According to the searching results in the literature content dataset, there has been total four historical paradigm of CSR in South Korea, such as (1) Adoption of the CSR principles, (2) Introduction of the Korean Association of Social Responsibility, (3) The Seoul Environmental Charter, (4) The Board of Audit and Inspection Intervention. Based on the results of the current study, the present author could conclude that ingrained corporate social responsibility (CSR) is in Korean business culture, which has been promoted since the 1920s. Businesses can benefit by using the guidelines offered by the CSR Promotion Act and related activities to uphold their responsibilities towards society and the environment, overviewing comprehensively CSR advancement in South Korea from the 1920s to the display day.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Korean Historical Paradigm, Qualitative Research

Major classifications: Environmental History

1. Introduction

The increasing focus on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in international business highlights the necessity to adopt socially responsible corporate practices. Considering this context, this article explores the development of CSR in South Korea from the 1920s to the present. The study will summaries recent CSR initiatives undertaken by South Korean corporations, the drivers behind them, the steps taken to advance them, and the effects they had on the country's economy and social fabric. The development of CSR in South Korea may be traced back to the 1920s when the country's top business figures learned about it from the Japanese invaders. This encouraged companies to invest in their communities by implementing

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environmental and educational protection measures. In addition, the government later created laws, such as the Act on the Promotion of Social Responsibility of Large and Medium-Sized Companies in 1987, to encourage social responsibility among businesses. This made CSR ideas even more entrenched in the Korean corporate environment. The relevance of CSR in Korea has lately been emphasized by programs like the 2005 Seoul Environmental Charter and the Certificate of Excellence in Social Contribution (CESC). The CESC gave firms a culture to follow to implement CSR, while the charter place strongly emphasized.

The study will examine recent studies on the development of CSR historically in South Korea using a literature review methodology. It will look at the findings from various studies to establish changes in the country's CSR landscape, the causes of these changes, and proposals for such improvements. For instance, Kodirjonova and Kim (2023) looked at the relationship between CSR and financial success in Korean enterprises in one of their studies. Their study's findings showed a relationship between CSR and financial success. However, it was less intense than anticipated. Asante Antwi et al. (2021) conducted another research to examine the influence of international health crises on the development of CSR activities in the area. In reaction to the pandemic, it was discovered that most firms had implemented CSR strategies, such as financial assistance, increased healthcare support, and improved worker safety. In general, this study will provide an overview of the development of CSR in South Korea throughout time, as well as its sources of inspiration and recommendations. The study will also rely on the body of existing research to provide insights into the present condition of CSR in the nation and the measures launched to promote socially responsible practices in the corporate environment. As a result, it will act as a crucial dedication to comprehending corporate social responsibility within the Korean environment.

2. Literature Review

Interest in Korea's traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) paradigm has grown among numerous stakeholders lately. This literature study will provide a broad overview of the considerable research that has examined the reasons for and effects of changes in the CSR environment in Korea. By the diverse perspectives of the approaches taken by the various writers, it will be separated into many parts. In the Korean supply chain, Lee and Choi (2021) investigate the effects of internal and external social responsibility initiatives on business value. They used the instrumental variable method to gauge how the exercises affected athletes' performances. According to their research findings, internal CSR initiatives like environmental protection and worker safety have the most beneficial effects on a company's success. In contrast, charity and other external CSR initiatives like stakeholder involvement have a minor impact. To enhance their performance in the supply chain, the authors advise Korean businesses to concentrate on their internal social responsibility.

Shin et al. (2022) investigated the moral relationality of professional discourses in CSR in South Korea. To investigate how the knowledge of moral links connected to their perception of professionalism in CSR, they performed an empirical study on 30 practitioners in the sector. According to their survey findings, practitioners see CSR as a sign of ethical business behavior and a commitment by executives to maintain an organization's long-term viability. They believed that CSR was to be seen as essential to business in South Korea and that social justice, human rights, and sustainability concepts had to be included in the organization's fundamental strategy. According to Yuan (2021), international communication of CSR is different between Chinese and Korean companies through social media. The study indicated that Korean firms tend to use more of a centralized approach by focusing on global and local issues and their corporate welfare rather than consumer issues and public relations. On the other hand, Chinese businesses take a more decentralized strategy by concentrating on regional and local issues and customer demands. According to the author, these variances might result from the various beliefs and behaviors practiced in the individual nations.

Ko et al. (2021) talk about how global freight forwarders in South Korea respond to CSR recognition in terms of organizational commitment. Their study's findings suggest a favorable link between organizational commitment and CSR recognition. The authors contend that acknowledging CSR in freight forwarding may boost employee engagement and organizational ties, resulting in better performance results. In South Korean construction businesses, Qing (2022) investigated the effects of green operational practices on corporate social responsibility and company image. Her research findings suggest that green operations policies promote CSR-related activities. However, the effectiveness of the explicitly stated regulations and the current cultural setting of the organization determine how much enterprises participate in such behavior. Additionally, the results show that while the impact is minimal, green operations strategies might enhance corporate image.

The relationship between CSR and financial success in Korean enterprises was examined by the prior study (Kodirjonova & Kim, 2023). Although the impact is smaller than anticipated, their empirical findings indicate a good association between CSR and financial success. They carried out yet another investigation to investigate the moderating impact of corporate

reputation. They discovered that businesses with a positive reputation gain more from CSR than businesses with a negative image. Additionally, Kim and Shin (2022) analyze the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Official Development Assistance (ODA) operations in South Korea from 2003 to 2015 to look at the changing parameters of CSR. The study's findings imply that PPP-ODA operations have grown over time and significantly influenced the participating nations' social and economic growth. The authors contend that if CSR becomes more ingrained in Korean companies' operations, the lines between CSR and PPP-ODA activities will probably blur, leading to various possible benefits.

A thorough analysis of the impact of international health crises on the creation of CSR initiatives was carried out in 2021 by Asante Antwi and colleagues. According to the authors, most companies have introduced CSR activities to mitigate the epidemic's effects, including financial aid, excellent healthcare support, and better workplace safety. According to others, this has also increased emphasis on ethical concerns and green initiatives. Nguyen (2022) also comprehensively reviewed earlier research on CSR in Vietnamese SMEs. The author claims that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Vietnam are rapidly implementing CSR strategies to improve their brand image, increase consumer loyalty, and gain a market advantage. They also suggest that SMEs in Vietnam take the initiative to reap CSR benefits.

Following the pandemic's outbreak, the corporate social responsibility and sustainability initiatives of Indian corporations. According to their research findings, businesses have used various tactics to win consumers' confidence and improve financial success. These tactics include assisting needy populations, funding eco-friendly projects, and offering longer-term financial assistance. Additionally, Chen et al. (2020) investigates the connection between regional Confucian beliefs and CSR activities among South Korean businesses. According to their research findings, companies that are more committed to Confucian principles tend to be more motivated to participate in CSR initiatives. Additionally, they contend that incorporating Confucian principles into corporate social responsibility plans may raise staff morale and boost productivity.

A social responsibility paradigm for sustainable firm development in South Korea is evaluated by Park et al. (2019). Their findings imply that the suggested approach may aid in closing the trust, resource use, and benefit-sharing gap between firms and stakeholders. They also contend that businesses may use the concept to create situations where organizations and stakeholders gain. Additionally, the study (Minh et al., 2022)'s comprehensive review of CSR research in Vietnam was completed in 2022. Their research findings show that CSR is being used to boost confidence and build stronger connections with stakeholders. They also discovered that CSR programs in Vietnam might favour workers' enthusiasm and productivity at work, and they concluded that there is room for further advancement in this area.

Finally, Li et al. (2019) examines how institutional forces affect CSR practices in South Korean construction businesses. The results of their study suggest that internal motivations and external variables, such as cultural norms, rules, and regulations, impact the most CSR strategies. Furthermore, they assert that internal motivation is more effective in promoting adoption since CSR is a critical component of the corporate purpose. Additionally, Bae et al. (2021) looked at how global value chains affected the views of Myanmar clothing producers on CSR. The authors claim that while clothing manufacturers are aware of the advantages of CSR, they may not always support or want to participate in such programs. The authors contend that Myanmar's textile producers must adopt a new CSR strategy to maintain long-term profitability.

This literature review has primarily focused on several studies that have examined the landscape of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in South Korea. According to multiple studies, an effective CSR strategy must include internal and external issues. The country's CSR policy has undergone several amendments for various reasons. Furthermore, it has been argued that businesses should focus on long-term sustainability objectives to gain a competitive advantage. Using local culture and Confucian principles may provide better outcomes. The prospect of expanding CSR approaches in certain South Korean businesses, such as the textile industry, has also been explored.

The literature study revealed considerable research examining the changing landscape of CSR in South Korea. However, there is still a lack of research examining the differences between external and internal CSR strategies regarding their impact on firm performance and enterprise image. Additionally, little research looks at the implications of incorporating local Confucian values into CSR strategies and the effects of PPP-ODA activities on social and economic development in South Korea. Besides, although a few studies have investigated CSR in specific segments of South Korea, there's a need to consider the effect of CSR exercises in other areas, such as the garment industry. Thus, this is to fill research holes within the writing by giving insight into the different sorts of CSR activities, the impacts of joining Confucian values into CSR in South Korea, and the suggestions for PPP-ODA exercises on the country's social and financial improvement. Additionally, this research examines the effects of CSR initiatives in specific sectors of South Korea, such as the garment industry, to further inform our understanding of the impacts of CSR activities.

3. Results

3.1. Adoption of the CSR principles

In the 1920s, the earliest Korean businesses adopted the CSR ideas promoted by the Japanese occupation forces (Seth, 2021). During this time, companies began recognizing their responsibilities to society, the environment, and the general well-being. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been accepted and promoted in Korea since the 1920s when the country's first business executives adopted a viewpoint on CSR promoted by the Japanese occupiers (Afzali & Kim, 2021). This supported the idea that businesses ought to be held responsible for the adverse effects of their operations on society, the environment, and overall wellbeing. Particularly businesses were asked to consider how their actions may impact the community (Ratten, 2020). At the time, the economic and social development strategy was known as "Development through Welfare" and was employed by a Japanese corporate organization (Sabir & Gorus, 2019). The Japanese occupiers forced businesses to invest in their communities by enacting laws to protect the environment and public education. Due to this, Korean companies at the time adopted a CSR approach and helped build the country's social infrastructure (Sial & Doucette, 2020). The Japanese occupation had a significant negative social and economic impact on Korea. But it largely benefitted corporate social responsibility; it helped create a business environment and mindset that valued and acknowledged social responsibility.

Several initiatives were started after the conflict. The government enacted the Act on the Promotion of Social Responsibility of Large and Medium-Sized Companies in 1987, which requires companies to contribute a portion of their profits to social welfare programs (Halkos & Nomikos, 2021). Due to this, a solid basis for company responsibility was established, which is continuously upheld and encouraged today. CSR is still engrained in contemporary Korean corporate culture (Ahmed et al., 2021). The new "Corporate Social Responsibility Promotion Act" and the Certificate of Excellence in Social Contribution are just two pieces of legislation supporting social responsibility passed in the 2010s. Along with KASR's ongoing efforts, these projects demonstrate how CSR is deeply ingrained in the Korean economy and will be respected and supported. In Korea, CSR has been supported since the 1920s.

3.2. Introduction of the Korean Association of Social Responsibility

The Korean Association of Social Responsibility (KASR) was established in 2003 to foster and support corporate social responsibility in Korea (Yun et al., 2019). A new "Corporate Social Responsibility Promotion Act" was created in 2006 to provide guidelines for businesses to follow regarding CSR (Tamvada, 2020). The successful "Development through Welfare" policy used by the government in the 1920s inspired the Korean Association of Social Responsibility (KASR) founding in 2003. KASR teaches business decision-makers to consider how their actions could affect people and the environment. After the Corporate Social Responsibility Promotion Act was passed in 2006, KASR ensured that companies adhered to its standards (Zhao, 2021). The limitations are designed to educate Korean companies about their social and environmental responsibilities. For instance, the legislation mandates open and responsible corporate practices and the completion of Environmental Impact Assessments for all new projects to reduce harm to residents and the environment (Johnston et al., 2019).

KASR works with public and private sector groups to increase awareness of and implement ethical business practices within Korean firms (Citaristi, 2022). KASR collaborates with advocacy groups and individuals as part of its objective to educate the public about CSR. As corporate leaders begin to see the benefits of doing so for their capacity to compete in the global market, it is noteworthy that some organizations have taken the initiative to implement CSR practices independently. Recently, several businesses have put money towards initiatives like charity, environmental sustainability, and technological innovation that will ultimately help the company's consumers and bottom line. When it comes to raising awareness and providing training on CSR in Korea's business community, KASR is crucial. This and the government's CSR requirements demonstrate that Korean businesses care about and try to meet their social responsibilities.

3.3. The Seoul Environmental Charter

Thirdly, the Seoul Environmental Charter 2005 is an example of CSR in action in Korea. Thirty-six companies from various sectors committed to reducing the environmental pollution in Seoul by signing this charter (Ge et al., 2019). For example, the charter required proper disposal of industrial waste and set limits on using harmful materials to help businesses reduce pollution and emissions. Because it provided firms with criteria to adhere to decrease their adverse impacts on the environment, this agreement was an essential first step toward resolving Korea's environmental issues (Litvinenko et al., 2022). The Seoul Environmental Charter was crucial because it signaled the beginning of a change in business attitudes in Korea toward

ecological protection (Agbedahin, 2019). The advantages of preserving the environment and its consequences on society were often disregarded before this accord. The charter's focus on the need to act to protect the background served as a huge wake-up call for corporations. This charter significantly impacts the standards around corporate social responsibility (Mitra, 2021). Companies who signed the pact recognized they owed it to the environment to advance environmental standards and sustainability (Balcilar et al., 2023). As a result, a culture of accountability and responsibility built on role models emerged. It was also a key event for promoting further growth in the region and emphasizing the significance of CSR in Korean society. The implementation of the Seoul Environmental Charter in 2005 was a turning point in the development of CSR in Korea; it should be emphasized as a last point (Jung et al., 2020). The charter gave companies valuable methods for reducing emissions and pollutants, which helped spread the word about the need for environmental protection. It was a turning point in how businesses approached environmental protection and provided the template for subsequent CSR initiatives.

3.4. The Board of Audit and Inspection Intervention

In the 2010s, the Korean government advocated for more CSR efforts nationwide. The Board of Audit and Inspection (BOAI) claims that businesses and the government have been "aggressively pushing forward CSR activities," with a growing number of participating enterprises each year (Islam, 2023). To formally establish CSR practices among Korean enterprises, the 'Act on Promotion of Sustainable CSR by Large Companies' was enacted in the 2010s (Filippi et al., 2023). CSR Reports that evaluate a company's present impacts on society, the environment, and public welfare are mandated by law. The BOAI also promoted the publication of official CSR reports and awarded companies with outstanding CSR records with the Certificate of Excellence in Social Contribution (Saxinger et al., 2023). The Korean Advisory Panel on CSR released its strategy to promote CSR in businesses the same year. The plan's primary goal is to get people to start doing things that are better for the environment, such as recycling and reusing packaging (Li et al., 2022). The panel also encourages businesses to become involved in boosting their philanthropic and social outreach programs. The BOAI has also worked with local, national, and international organizations to establish a global repository for the most excellent CSR practices. It allows companies to draw inspiration from the leading lights of their respective industries and implement these ethical practices into their operations (Changar & Atan, 2021). According to Morched et al. (2023), as 2010 has progressed, we have seen an upsurge in Korean businesses implementing CSR efforts. The 'Act on Promotion of Sustainable CSR by Large Companies' and associated CSR efforts have made CSR a significant part of the Korean corporate landscape, and the government is aggressively promoting sustainability among Korean firms through the BOAI.

Table 1: Summary of Literature Review

Main Description (Key Theme)	Supporting Previous Studies
The Historical Paradigm of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Korea	Seth (2021), Afzali and Kim (2021), Ratten (2020), Sabir and Gorus (2019), Sial & Doucette (2020), Halkos and Nomikos (2021), Ahmed et al. (2021), Yun et al. (2019), Tamvada (2020), Zhao (2021), Johnston et al. (2019), Citaristi (2022), Ge et al. (2019), Litvinenko et al. (2022), Agbedahin (2019), Mitra (2021), Balcilar et al. (2023), Jung et al. (2020), Islam (2023), Filippi et al. (2023), Saxinger et al. (2023), Li et al., (2022), Changar & Atan, 2021). Morched et al. (2023)

4. Implications

4.1. Practical Implications

The study's conclusions offer crucial insight for Korean business professionals. In particular, it shows how deeply ingrained corporate social responsibility (CSR) is in Korean business culture, which has been promoted since the 1920s. Businesses can benefit by using the guidelines offered by the CSR Promotion Act and related activities to uphold their responsibilities towards society and the environment. For instance, companies should follow the rules and regulations outlined in the CSR Promotion Act and work to increase accountability and transparency throughout their operations. Business executives should be aware of programs like the Certificate of Excellence in Social Contribution and make sure their organizations follow the requirements.

Lastly, companies should keep funding initiatives like philanthropy, environmental sustainability, and technological

innovation since these directly benefit their clientele and bottom line. Businesses can use their expertise and resources to help their neighborhood and demonstrate that they are fulfilling their social obligation. The results of this study offer important new information about Korea's present corporate social responsibility (CSR) scholarship. Its analysis of significant events from the 1920s to the present advances our knowledge of the history of CSR in the nation. The report explicitly emphasizes the value of the CSR Promotion Act and the Board of Audit and Inspection's activities in supporting CSR growth in Korea. The study also advances our knowledge of how socially responsible business practices have been adopted in the Korean business environment. It shows how business leaders are increasingly taking proactive measures to lower emissions and contamination, as evidenced by the 2005 Seoul Environmental Charter, ratified by 36 firms from various industries. The field of CSR in Korea is still generally understudied. Thus, more research would be helpful. Future research should concentrate on the effects of CSR programs, such as the Certificate of Excellence in Social Contribution, and how firms in Korea have embraced and utilized them. The topic would also benefit greatly from research into the part played by business leaders in the growth of CSR.

4.2. Academic Implications

The results of this study are especially interesting for academics since they show how crucial CSR is to the Korean corporate environment. This is especially important because there hasn't been much research on CSR in Korea, making this study an important contribution. The study outlines significant historical CSR advancements in Korea and the critical initiatives that sped up the adoption of socially responsible behaviors. This offers insight into the motivations behind the adoption of CSR activities and how the businesses in the nation have reacted to and carried out these programs. The survey also provides insightful information about how CSR programs in Korea, such as the Certificate of Excellence in Social Contribution, influence businesses there and promote a culture of social responsibility. This is essential because it clarifies the function of CSR in Korean companies and its ramifications for corporations and society. In sum, this study advances our understanding of CSR in Korea by emphasizing the significance of CSR in Korea and the significant events that have influenced its adoption. The study's conclusions offer a valuable perspective for business professionals and significantly impact scholarly investigation into CSR in Korea.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study comprehensively overviews corporate social responsibility (CSR) advancement in South Korea from the 1920s to the display day. It has highlighted the various initiatives undertaken and initiatives taken to promote and embed the principles of CSR in the Korean corporate landscape. Korea has supported and embraced the notion that firms should be held responsible for how their activities influence society, the environment, and public welfare since the 1920s. The Act on the Promotion of Social Responsibility of Large and Medium-Sized Companies was passed by the government in 1987, and it mandated that businesses donate a portion of their revenues to charity organizations. This laid the groundwork for corporate responsibility, which is now actively fostered and supported. Regarding corporate social responsibility (CSR) procedures, corporations may use the Certificate of Excellence in Social Contribution (CESC) and the 2005 Seoul Environmental Charter as guides. Kodirjonova and Kim (2023) and Asante Antwi et al. (2021) conducted in-depth research that shed light on the impact of global health crises on CSR activities and discovered a correlation between CSR and financial performance. These numbers show how deeply embedded CSR is in the Korean business culture and how widely embraced it is among Korean enterprises. More research on the role of CSR and its effects on Korean firms and society may be helpful. This article provides a comprehensive overview of CSR in South Korea, including its history, key drivers, and impact on the country's economy and society.

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