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Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Organizational Performance: The Mediating Role of Green Innovation

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainable Organizational Performance (SOP), with particular emphasis on the mediating role of Green Innovation (GI) in the manufacturing industry. Drawing on the strategic sustainability perspective, the study investigates whether organizational commitment to social, ethical, and environmental responsibilities contributes to sustainable performance directly and indirectly through green innovation. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was adopted, and data were collected from 420 employees working in manufacturing organizations. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, regression analysis, and bootstrapping-based mediation analysis. The findings indicate that Corporate Social Responsibility has a significant positive effect on Green Innovation and Sustainable Organizational Performance. Green Innovation also demonstrates a significant positive relationship with Sustainable Organizational Performance. Furthermore, the mediation analysis confirms that Green Innovation partially mediates the relationship between CSR and Sustainable Organizational Performance, indicating that CSR contributes to sustainability outcomes both directly and by encouraging environmentally oriented innovation. The study contributes to the sustainability and CSR literature by highlighting green innovation as an important mechanism through which responsible organizational practices can be transformed into sustainable performance outcomes. The findings suggest that manufacturing organizations should strategically integrate CSR initiatives with green technologies, environmentally friendly products, resource-efficient processes, and broader innovation strategies to achieve long-term economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

Keywords: *Corporate Social Responsibility; Green Innovation; Sustainable Organizational Performance; Manufacturing Industry; Sustainability.*

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Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has increasingly become a strategic priority for organizations seeking to balance economic objectives with social and environmental responsibilities. Growing concerns regarding climate change, resource depletion, environmental degradation, and stakeholder expectations have encouraged organizations to move beyond conventional profit-oriented approaches toward more sustainable business practices. CSR reflects an organization's commitment to responsible conduct toward employees, customers, communities, the environment, and other stakeholders (Sami et al., 2020). When integrated into organizational strategy, CSR can strengthen stakeholder relationships, enhance corporate reputation, improve resource utilization, and create long-term competitive advantages. Consequently, understanding how CSR contributes to sustainable organizational performance has become an important issue in contemporary management research.

Sustainable organizational performance refers to an organization's ability to achieve economic objectives while simultaneously creating positive social and environmental outcomes over the long term. Although CSR is widely recognized as an important driver of organizational sustainability, the mechanisms through which CSR translates into improved sustainable performance remain insufficiently understood. Organizations may adopt socially and environmentally responsible practices, but their contribution to performance depends largely on how effectively these practices are transformed into operational and strategic capabilities (Irfan et al., 2022). This highlights the need to examine intermediary mechanisms that explain the relationship between CSR and sustainable organizational performance.

Green innovation represents a particularly important mechanism in this context. Green innovation involves the development and implementation of new or significantly improved products, processes, technologies, and managerial practices that reduce environmental harm while enhancing organizational value. CSR can encourage organizations to invest in environmentally responsible technologies, develop eco-friendly products, reduce waste and emissions, and redesign production processes. Such initiatives can improve environmental efficiency while also generating economic benefits through cost reduction, enhanced market differentiation, regulatory compliance, and access to environmentally conscious customers. Therefore, green innovation may serve as a critical pathway through which CSR contributes to sustainable organizational performance.

Despite growing scholarly attention to CSR and sustainability, the mediating role of green innovation requires further empirical investigation, particularly in emerging-economy contexts where organizations face distinctive institutional, resource, and environmental challenges (Haroon et al., 2019). Accordingly, this study examines the relationship between corporate social responsibility and sustainable organizational performance, with particular emphasis on the mediating role of green innovation. By investigating this mechanism, the study seeks to contribute to the CSR and sustainability literature and provide practical insights for organizations seeking to transform responsible business practices into sustained economic, social, and environmental value.

Literature Review

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as an important strategic concept through which organizations address their economic, social, ethical, and environmental responsibilities toward diverse stakeholders. Carroll (1991) conceptualized CSR as a multidimensional construct encompassing

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economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities, suggesting that responsible organizations should pursue profitability while simultaneously fulfilling broader societal expectations. More recently, CSR has increasingly incorporated environmental responsibility as sustainability challenges have become central to organizational decision-making. Organizations are therefore expected not only to comply with environmental regulations but also to proactively minimize their ecological footprint and contribute to sustainable development.

The stakeholder perspective provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding CSR. Freeman (1984) argues that organizations depend on relationships with multiple stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, communities, governments, and investors. CSR activities can strengthen these relationships by demonstrating organizational commitment to stakeholder interests. Such commitment may enhance corporate reputation, stakeholder trust, employee engagement, and customer loyalty, ultimately contributing to organizational performance (Rehman et al., 2020). From a resource-based perspective, CSR can also facilitate the development of valuable intangible resources, including organizational reputation, knowledge, stakeholder relationships, and responsible organizational capabilities, which may provide a basis for sustained competitive advantage.

CSR is particularly relevant to environmental innovation because responsible organizations are more likely to recognize environmental expectations and invest in solutions that address ecological challenges. CSR initiatives can encourage firms to adopt cleaner technologies, improve resource efficiency, reduce waste, and develop environmentally friendly products and processes. In this regard, CSR can create an organizational context that supports green innovation by providing environmental awareness, stakeholder pressure, organizational resources, and strategic motivation.

Empirical research generally indicates a positive association between CSR and organizational outcomes; however, the strength and nature of this relationship may vary across institutional and industry contexts. Importantly, CSR does not necessarily improve sustainable performance directly (Usmani et al., 2019). Its effects may depend on organizational capabilities that convert responsible practices into innovative and efficient operations. Consequently, examining green innovation as a mediating mechanism provides a more comprehensive understanding of how CSR can contribute to sustainable organizational performance. This perspective highlights CSR not merely as a philanthropic obligation but as a strategic organizational capability supporting long-term economic, environmental, and social value creation.

Sustainable Organizational Performance

Sustainable Organizational Performance (SOP) refers to an organization's ability to achieve long-term success while simultaneously addressing economic, environmental, and social objectives. Unlike traditional measures of organizational performance that primarily emphasize financial outcomes, sustainable performance adopts a broader perspective by recognizing that organizational success depends on the effective integration of profitability, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility (Manzoor et al., 2021). Elkington's (1997) Triple Bottom Line framework provides a prominent foundation for this perspective, emphasizing the interconnected dimensions of economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social equity. Accordingly, organizations increasingly evaluate their performance in terms of their ability to create value for multiple stakeholders while preserving resources for future generations.

The growing importance of sustainability has transformed SOP from a peripheral concern into a strategic

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organizational objective. Stakeholder expectations, environmental regulations, climate-related risks, resource scarcity, and increasing demand for responsible products have encouraged organizations to incorporate sustainability into strategic planning and operational activities. Sustainable organizations seek to improve resource efficiency, minimize waste and emissions, enhance employee and community well-being, and maintain financial viability. Such practices can strengthen organizational legitimacy, reputation, stakeholder relationships, and long-term competitiveness.

The literature suggests that organizational sustainability is closely associated with responsible management practices and innovation capabilities. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), for instance, can contribute to sustainable performance by encouraging organizations to consider the interests of stakeholders and environmental consequences when making strategic decisions. However, responsible practices alone may not be sufficient to generate superior sustainable outcomes. Organizations must possess the capability to translate sustainability commitments into innovative products, processes, and technologies (Razzaq et al., 2019). Green innovation therefore represents an important organizational mechanism for improving sustainable performance through cleaner production, efficient resource utilization, reduced environmental impact, and the development of environmentally friendly products.

Despite increasing scholarly attention, the determinants of SOP remain context-dependent, particularly in emerging economies where organizations may face financial, technological, and institutional constraints. Further empirical investigation is therefore required to clarify how responsible organizational practices contribute to sustainable performance and through which mechanisms these effects occur. Examining green innovation as a mediating mechanism can provide a more comprehensive explanation of how CSR initiatives are transformed into measurable economic, environmental, and social performance outcomes.

Green Innovation

Green Innovation (GI) has gained increasing attention as organizations seek to respond to environmental challenges while maintaining competitiveness and long-term growth. Green innovation refers to the development or adoption of new or significantly improved products, processes, technologies, and organizational practices that reduce environmental harm, improve resource efficiency, and support sustainable development. Unlike conventional innovation, which primarily emphasizes technological advancement and economic value, green innovation incorporates environmental considerations into the innovation process (Laraib et al., 2020). It may include the development of eco-friendly products, cleaner production technologies, energy-efficient processes, waste reduction practices, and environmentally responsible organizational systems.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding the contribution of green innovation to organizational performance. From this perspective, green innovation can represent a valuable and difficult-to-imitate organizational capability that enables firms to utilize resources more efficiently and respond effectively to changing environmental and market conditions. Organizations adopting green innovation may reduce operational costs through efficient energy and material consumption, improve compliance with environmental regulations, strengthen corporate reputation, and differentiate their products in increasingly environmentally conscious markets. Consequently, green innovation can contribute simultaneously to environmental improvement and economic performance.

The literature also suggests that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can serve as an important

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antecedent of green innovation. Organizations committed to CSR are more likely to recognize environmental and stakeholder expectations and allocate resources toward environmentally responsible innovation (Sami et al., 2021). CSR can promote environmental awareness, stakeholder engagement, organizational learning, and managerial commitment, thereby creating favorable conditions for the development and implementation of green innovations. In this respect, CSR may influence organizational performance not only directly but also indirectly through innovation-oriented environmental practices.

Green innovation is particularly relevant to Sustainable Organizational Performance (SOP) because it provides organizations with practical mechanisms for integrating environmental objectives into business operations. Through cleaner technologies, sustainable products, efficient resource utilization, and reduced environmental impacts, green innovation can enhance environmental and economic outcomes while supporting broader social expectations (Irfan et al., 2022). Therefore, green innovation may function as a critical mediating mechanism linking CSR with sustainable organizational performance. Examining this mediating role can provide deeper insight into how organizational responsibility is transformed into tangible and sustainable performance outcomes.

Methodology

Research Design and Population

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainable Organizational Performance (SOP), with Green Innovation (GI) as a mediating variable. The target population comprised employees working in manufacturing organizations, where environmental practices, resource utilization, production processes, and innovation activities are particularly relevant to organizational sustainability. The population included managerial and non-managerial employees who had sufficient knowledge of their organization's CSR initiatives, environmental practices, and operational performance. Manufacturing organizations were considered an appropriate research setting because their production activities have direct implications for environmental sustainability and provide a meaningful context for investigating green innovation.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study targeted approximately 10,000 employees working in selected manufacturing organizations. Following the commonly used sample-size determination approach for finite populations, a minimum sample of approximately 370 respondents was considered adequate at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. To compensate for potential non-response and unusable questionnaires, approximately 420 questionnaires were distributed. Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique, ensuring that participants had adequate organizational experience and awareness of CSR and sustainability-related practices. Employees with at least one year of organizational experience were considered eligible for participation.

Data Collection and Measurement

Primary data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section captured demographic information, including gender, age, education, organizational tenure, and job position. The second section measured the study constructs using previously validated measurement scales adapted from established studies. CSR was measured through items assessing the organization's economic, social, ethical, and environmental responsibilities. Green Innovation was assessed through items reflecting green product innovation, green process

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innovation, and environmentally oriented organizational innovation. Sustainable Organizational Performance was measured through indicators representing economic, environmental, and social performance. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics, employing descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and mediation analysis to examine the proposed relationships among Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Green Innovation (GI), and Sustainable Organizational Performance (SOP). A total of 420 valid responses from employees of manufacturing organizations were included in the analysis. Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were screened for missing values, outliers, and normality. The analysis indicated that the dataset was suitable for subsequent statistical analysis.

Descriptive statistics showed that the mean scores for CSR, Green Innovation, and Sustainable Organizational Performance were 3.71 (SD = 0.68), 3.64 (SD = 0.71), and 3.69 (SD = 0.66), respectively, indicating generally favorable perceptions of CSR and sustainability practices among respondents. Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated significant positive associations between CSR and Green Innovation ($r = .50$, $p < .001$), CSR and Sustainable Organizational Performance ($r = .60$, $p < .001$), and Green Innovation and Sustainable Organizational Performance ($r = .59$, $p < .001$).

Regression analysis was subsequently conducted to test the direct relationships. The results indicated that CSR had a significant positive effect on Green Innovation ($\beta = .44$, $t = 10.29$, $p < .001$), explaining approximately 20.2% of the variance in Green Innovation ($R^2 = .202$). Furthermore, CSR significantly predicted Sustainable Organizational Performance ($\beta = .59$, $t = 15.46$, $p < .001$), with CSR explaining 36.4% of the variance in organizational performance.

To examine the mediating role of Green Innovation, a bootstrapping procedure involving 5,000 resamples was performed. When both CSR and Green Innovation were entered into the regression model, CSR remained significantly related to Sustainable Organizational Performance ($\beta = .44$, $t = 11.07$, $p < .001$), while Green Innovation also exerted a significant positive effect ($\beta = .36$, $t = 8.79$, $p < .001$). The indirect effect of CSR on Sustainable Organizational Performance through Green Innovation was $\beta = .157$, with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of [.113, .207]. Since the confidence interval did not include zero, the mediating effect was statistically significant. The findings therefore provide evidence that Green Innovation partially mediates the relationship between CSR and Sustainable Organizational Performance.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Green Innovation (GI), and Sustainable Organizational Performance (SOP) in the manufacturing industry. Overall, the results demonstrate that CSR is positively associated with both green innovation and sustainable organizational performance, while green innovation also contributes significantly to sustainable organizational performance. These findings highlight the strategic importance of integrating social and environmental responsibility into organizational decision-making rather than treating CSR solely as a philanthropic or compliance-oriented activity.

The positive relationship between CSR and Green Innovation indicates that organizations demonstrating stronger commitment to social, ethical, and environmental responsibilities are more likely to develop and

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implement environmentally oriented innovations. This finding suggests that CSR can create an organizational climate in which environmental awareness, stakeholder expectations, and responsible resource utilization encourage firms to invest in cleaner technologies, environmentally friendly products, and more efficient production processes. In the manufacturing context, where production activities can generate substantial environmental impacts, CSR may therefore provide an important foundation for innovation aimed at reducing ecological consequences.

The significant positive effect of CSR on Sustainable Organizational Performance further demonstrates that responsible organizational practices can generate broader performance benefits. CSR may enhance organizational performance by strengthening stakeholder relationships, improving corporate reputation, increasing employee commitment, supporting regulatory compliance, and encouraging efficient resource utilization. These benefits are particularly relevant to manufacturing organizations that increasingly face pressure from customers, regulators, communities, and other stakeholders to demonstrate responsible and sustainable operations.

The findings also confirm a significant positive relationship between Green Innovation and Sustainable Organizational Performance. This result indicates that organizations can translate environmental innovation into tangible economic, environmental, and social benefits. Green innovation can reduce material and energy consumption, minimize waste, improve production efficiency, and facilitate the development of environmentally responsible products. These outcomes can simultaneously strengthen environmental performance and contribute to cost efficiency and competitive advantage.

Most importantly, the mediation analysis demonstrates that Green Innovation partially mediates the relationship between CSR and Sustainable Organizational Performance. This finding indicates that CSR influences sustainable performance through two complementary pathways: a direct pathway and an indirect pathway through green innovation. Thus, organizations may obtain greater sustainability benefits when CSR commitments are converted into concrete innovation-oriented environmental practices. The findings reinforce the view that CSR should be strategically integrated with innovation capabilities to achieve sustainable organizational outcomes.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainable Organizational Performance (SOP), with particular emphasis on the mediating role of Green Innovation (GI) in the manufacturing industry. The findings demonstrate that CSR significantly enhances both Green Innovation and Sustainable Organizational Performance. The results further indicate that Green Innovation has a significant positive effect on Sustainable Organizational Performance, highlighting the importance of environmentally oriented innovation in transforming responsible organizational practices into sustainable outcomes.

Importantly, the mediation analysis confirms that Green Innovation partially mediates the relationship between CSR and Sustainable Organizational Performance. This finding suggests that CSR contributes to organizational sustainability through both direct effects and indirect effects generated through green innovation capabilities. Therefore, organizations should move beyond viewing CSR as a compliance or philanthropic activity and strategically integrate CSR initiatives with innovation, environmental management, and operational decision-making.

The study contributes to the sustainability literature by identifying Green Innovation as an important

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mechanism through which CSR can generate broader organizational value. For manufacturing organizations, investment in cleaner technologies, resource-efficient processes, eco-friendly products, and environmentally responsible practices can simultaneously support environmental objectives and organizational performance. Overall, the findings emphasize that strategically implemented CSR, supported by green innovation, can provide a viable pathway toward achieving long-term economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

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