

## Determinants of Effective CSR Strategy Implementation in Sports Organisations

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### Abstract

This paper explores the determinants of effective Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy implementation within sports organisations in the eThekweni region. Sport serves as a powerful tool for bridging social and economic disparities, fostering unity, and promoting gender and racial equality. Previous research indicates that hosting sporting events can create employment opportunities and generate economic benefits (Valeri, 2019). The increasing focus on leveraging sports for CSR purposes calls for an understanding of the factors influencing implementation. Through a qualitative research approach, this study identifies determining factors for successful CSR implementation, drawing on insights from four sports organisations. This study illustrates that successful CSR implementation can be attained through a high level of CSR awareness, organisational embeddedness, effective communication with stakeholders, continuous evaluation, and the strategic leveraging of specific organisational strengths. Overall, the research contributes to existing literature clarifying the dynamics of CSR in sports organisations and the factors that influence effective implementation of CSR strategies.

**Keywords:** corporate social responsibility, CSR strategy, strategy implementation, CSR awareness, CSR embeddedness, CSR communication, evaluation

### 1. Introduction

Chatzopoulou and de Kiewiet (2021) affirm that with consumers becoming more socially conscious, there is an increasing demand for corporations to behave in a manner that demonstrates social responsibility. According to Carroll and Brown (2018) corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to an organisation's ethical and social responsibility to society that goes beyond its financial obligations. From a societal perspective, CSR is important because it holds companies accountable for their actions and encourages them to act in the interest of the common good. It also promotes sustainable practices that can benefit the environment, local communities, and society. From an organisational perspective CSR can have the following benefits; it can positively affect business performance by developing a positive image among stakeholders and enhancing customer satisfaction (Ali et al., 2020; Chen & Lin, 2020). Rahman et al. (2017) and Wang et al. (2015) state CSR engagement can create brand value and increase market share via consumers buying more products and services. According to Kim et al. (2021) CSR engagement may provide a sustainable competitive advantage by improving the organisation's image and brand reputation.

Walzel et al. (2018) explain that there has been an increase in the use of socially responsible programs in the world of sport. The increased wealth and influence of sports organisations is the result of the professionalisation of sports, which has been made possible by commercialisation and globalisation. The responsibility and expectations of stakeholders to give back to society have increased along with this wealth and influence (Carlini et al., 2021). According to Valeri (2019) sport offers a way to bridge social and economic gaps, it achieves this by promoting unity, gender and racial equality; the hosting of sporting events may create employment and generate profits for host cities and nations. Sports also teach

positive values such as promoting fairness, respect, inclusion, and equality. These positive values are seen as useful elements for enriching the content of traditional CSR and even as a tool for companies to implement social responsibility. Due to its high socially responsible and community-embedded nature, the implementation of CSR through sports has been widely adopted during the last decade (Chen-Yueh & Yi-Hsiu, 2021).

As CSR becomes increasingly important in organisational strategies, it is vital to understand how to implement it effectively. The objective of this study is to examine the determinants influencing the effective implementation of CSR within four sports organisations in eThekweni. This study aims to provide an analysis of the procedures through which these organisations adopt CSR strategies while also assessing the impact of strategic CSR implementation on organisational practices and its significance in informing the decision-making processes.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The concept of CSR has been extensively researched and implemented worldwide for six decades, however there is ongoing debate regarding its definition and rationale for its implementation. Barauskaite and Streimikiene (2020) report the term's interchangeability and overlap with other terms like "corporate citizenship," "the ethical corporation," "corporate governance," "corporate sustainability," "socially responsible investment," and "corporate accountability" may be a contributing factor to the lack of consensus on the concept. Marco-Lajara et al. (2022) propose the lack of consensus is due to the differences in interpretations offered by different definitions, scholars, national and international organisations. In contrast Arsić et al. (2017) argue that the absence of a consensus definition could be found in the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of the idea of CSR and the growth of its applications to meet growing societal demands and urgent development concerns.

Dahlsrud (as cited in Moratis, 2016) points out because CSR as a concept is perceived as a social construction, it is impossible to define objectively. As a result, numerous interpretations of CSR exist. Barauskaite and Streimikiene (2020) conclude while there are many definitions of CSR, the core principle is that businesses that practice social responsibility balance their own interests with those of their community, shareholders, workers, customers, and the environment. They also must accept accountability for their actions and acknowledge their impact on the environment.

Archie B. Carroll proposed a four-part definition of CSR, Carroll proposed that the "CSR of business encompassed the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society had of organisations at a given point in time" (Herciu, 2021, p. 297). Carroll would later revise his four-part definition of CSR and create a model that became known as the "CSR pyramid" (Saleh, 2022). The pyramid illustrates four types of responsibilities corporations have to society: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic (previously discretionary). Since the best instances of the discretionary practice were humanistic, humanitarian endeavors undertaken by businesses to further their own interests while also benefiting society, Carroll started referring to them as philanthropic (Carroll & Kolb, 2018). Each level of the CSR pyramid is explained further below.

The economic dimension assumes that the primary goals of the organisation are to meet societal demands for goods and services and to make a profit that investors may be satisfied with at every stage of the production and management process. This core principle is the basis for all other organisational responsibilities and obligations. The second dimension is the legal one. This component relates to the legal compliance requirements placed on organisations by various normative bodies, regulatory agencies, state, local, and federal governments. Related to the first dimension, businesses are supposed to operate inside this legal framework to achieve their financial goals. The organisational commitment to upholding moral and ethical standards, especially in the absence of explicit legislative regulations or codifications, is what constitutes the ethical dimension. The ethical dimension is a representation of the societal values that establish what is acceptable and unacceptable as well as what is fair and unjust. Finally, the philanthropic dimension includes organisational acts that fulfil society's expectation that companies behave like good corporate citizens. Consequently, it's expected of companies to work toward raising the standard of living for society by outlining their legal, ethical, and economic responsibilities and by implementing philanthropic endeavours (da Silva Junior et al., 2022).

Since it considers the majority of the identified elements in CSR definitions, including the voluntariness, social, economic, ethical and stakeholder dimensions; Carroll (2021) definition will be adopted for this study. The environmental dimension is not included since the concept is too broad. Nonetheless, as environmental expectations are a subset of the ethical obligations' society may anticipate, the environmental dimension can therefore be considered a component of the ethical dimension.

### 2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility in South Africa

Globally, the phrase "Corporate Social Responsibility" is frequently used to describe the actions of responsible corporate citizenship. Something unique to South Africa is the usage of the term "Corporate Social Investment" (CSI). Mersham

and Skinner (2016) attribute the use of the term CSI to South Africa's apartheid history. Put simply, the idea of "investment" elicited a more favourable response from businesspeople than the concept of "responsibility," which associated business with the negative aspects of apartheid. CSR and CSI are often used interchangeably, however Tshabalala (2024, para. 1 & 2) describes CSR as the process by which a firm aligns its activities to maximise profits, minimise environmental impact, and support the community. And CSI as any form of community development that is not related to the company's core business and therefore not meant to generate revenue. The author states CSI is among the components that make up CSR. Trialogue Knowledge Hub (2024, para. 2) that CSI programs are just one way that businesses fulfil their social responsibility requirements; as such, they are only one component of the larger CSR agenda, even though they work in tandem with other CSR issues.

The history of apartheid has had a profound impact on the development of CSR in South Africa. According to Amondou (2020) by suppressing wealth and skill endowments within black communities and promoting black social and economic exclusion in corporate South Africa, the apartheid regime caused a structural divide in the country's economy. To support the historically marginalised racial group, the government has implemented several affirmative action measures since apartheid was abolished in 1994. The most prominent example is the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act of 2003, which aims to empower Black employees through skill development and human resources, as well as to promote Black ownership of commercial businesses. By awarding licenses and procurement advantages to BBBEE-compliant companies, the government encourages businesses to practice social responsibility through the this act (Lin, 2020).

The 1994 King Report on Corporate Governance adopted an innovative stance, holding that directors should be accountable to society as well as to shareholders, in an effort to establish sound corporate governance norms in South Africa (Lin, 2020). The King II and King III Reports that followed specifically addressed the importance and significance for businesses to recognise all stakeholders and to embrace a "triple-bottom line" strategy in corporate governance, with an emphasis on social, environmental, and economic issues. While not mandated, the King reports' use a "comply/apply or explain" strategy that "forces corporations to apply CSR programs or justify why they have not adopted them" (Mersham & Skinner, 2016).

Lin (2020) states as per the regulations, the establishment of a social and ethics committee is mandatory for state-owned enterprises, publicly traded corporations, and companies that fulfil the public interest standard. Although there is not a legally enforceable framework for CSR in South Africa, there are mandatory documents like the King III Report and the Constitution of South Africa that offer guidelines.

### *2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility in Sport Organisations*

The public has grown more conscious of the impact that businesses have on societal issues. This has led to the increase of the use of CSR in the sports industry, primarily to preserve the integrity of sports and conduct business in a manner that is ethical. This increase in CSR in the sports industry is due to both external and internal societal factors. Social problems such as poverty, marginalisation, inequality, and restricted access to healthcare and education have remained persistent societal challenges over time (Tabar, 2021).

A sport organisation can be defined as a "social entity involved in the sport industry; it is goal-directed, with a consciously structured activity system and a relatively identifiable boundary" Slack and Parent (as cited in Ruihley & Li, 2021) . According to Pedersen and Thibault (2024) the sport industry is organised into three sectors: public, nonprofit, and commercial. These are critical classifications for many types of sports organisations, and they are required for the development and production of sports-related goods, services, initiatives, and infrastructure.

Many sports leagues and their regulatory bodies frequently support socially conscious projects. The principles of CSR have been modified by the sports business to better serve local communities and match its highly prominent character (Miller & Balsam, 2018). Moyo et al. (2020) affirm that organisations have embraced CSR as a valuable component of their superior business operations. A lot of CSR activities are carried out by sport organisations, and the majority of teams approach CSR more from a philanthropic than from a sustainable strategic perspective. The discussion for sports organisations now centres on how to organise, carry out, oversee, and manage CSR while also showcasing the benefits of CSR to the association and society from both a strategic and operational standpoint.

### *2.4 Implementation Strategies for CSR Initiatives*

CSR awareness, communicating, embedding, and evaluating CSR were identified as four separate elements of CSR implementation by Fatima and Elbanna (2023). Creating CSR awareness includes making an organisation and its members more responsive to CSR issues. The target audience for CSR communication includes both internal and external stakeholders, therefore it is critical to choose the appropriate channels and communication materials. Embedding CSR entails using tools like CSR policies, procedures, mission, and vision to teach organisational members CSR principles to

promote CSR compliant behaviour in operational functions. Gutterman (2020) states following the finalisation and publication of the CSR commitments, focus must shift to the actual implementation of those commitments, encompassing the daily decisions, procedures, practices, and activities necessary for the organisation to fulfil its overall CSR obligations. Additionally, Gutterman (2020) indicates that CSR implementation commitments are not standardised, and companies' approaches will differ based on the specifics of their commitments, their current organisational structure, organisational culture, resources, the CEO's and the other senior management team members' priorities, and other factors.

### 3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design. Tumen-Akyildiz and Ahmed (2021) states that in qualitative research, researchers attempt to identify the conditions under which behaviours occur. Qualitative methodology is a methodology that aims to comprehend the real-life experiences of participants by describing the phenomenon under study using their own words or the researcher's words. This method involves conducting in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence the participants' decision-making process and how those decisions come to be (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). Eligibility criteria are essential for determining the participants in a study. This includes both inclusion and exclusion criteria, which specify the specific groups within the target population that can or cannot participate in a research study. Establishing these criteria helps researchers conduct accurate studies on the needs of a relatively homogeneous group (Nikolopoulou, 2023, para. 1). For this study, the target population consisted of sports organisations. The eligibility criteria required that these organisations prioritise sports as their primary focus, be engaged in ongoing CSR initiatives, and be located within the eThekweni region.

This study focused on a purposive sample of four public relations and communication managers from these four sports organisations. Purposive sampling, also known as judgement sampling, is a method that involves selecting a group of knowledgeable individuals based on their expertise and relevance to fulfil a specific research objective (Rahi, 2017). Participants were selected based on their roles in overseeing the organisation's CSR initiatives and possessing direct knowledge of the projects undertaken by the sports organisation. These specific individuals were selected based on the key informant technique. Pahwa et al. (2023) states the selection of key informants is based on their capacity to assist the researcher in comprehending cultural patterns; they frequently supply background data that is difficult, implicit, or ineffective to discern through document examinations or other incomplete descriptions. The expertise of these individuals was deemed important for effectively addressing the aims and objectives of the study.

A semi structured interview guide was developed to ensure consistency across interviews, while allowing for the flexibility to explore emerging themes in greater details. The interview schedule consisted of five main sections:

- Section A: This section contained questions aimed at gathering general information about the sports organisation and the participants.
- Section B: Participants were asked to define CSR, the types of CSR initiatives the sports organisations were engaged in, specify which departments managed CSR within the sports organisation, describe the implementation procedures and outline the decision-making processes.
- Section C: Questions in this section were designed to understand how organisational factors such as organisation size, staff involvement in the board, professionalism of individuals, financial autonomy, innovative capacity and knowledge of CSR influence implementation of CSR initiatives.
- Section D: Participants were asked about the benefits and challenges encountered in CSR implementation.
- Section E: This section was aimed to identify the how sports organisations communicate their CSR efforts to both internal and external stakeholders, including the specific communication channels used for each group.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with one person per organisation who holds the position of public relations and communications manager of CSR within the sports organisation. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or via MS Teams depending on the participant's availability. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants.

This research study employed thematic analysis as a qualitative data analysis technique to examine the data collected. Verbatim transcriptions of data from semi-structured interviews were made using Microsoft Word. To facilitate the organisation and categorisation of the data, qualitative data analysis software, NVivo (version 15) was utilised. The interview transcriptions were systematically categorised into distinct codes, which were developed through a thorough analysis of the differences, similarities, and underlying meanings that emerged from the transcribed material. These codes were systematically organised, this methodological approach allowed the researcher to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the data and significantly contributed to the overall analysis, thereby enabling the identification of emerging themes.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

This section offers a thorough analysis of the data collected from interviews with employees of four sports organisations based in eThekweni that participated in this study. The information gathered from these interviews helped identify key themes, which will be discussed in detail.

##### *Theme 1: CSR awareness in sports organisations*

CSR awareness involves enhancing the understanding of CSR issues among an organisation and its members. This initiative can be driven by managers through a top-down approach or by employees adopting a bottom-up strategy, motivated by either strategic objectives or altruistic intentions. Furthermore, it encompasses the integration of CSR into policy documents as a demonstration of the organisation's commitment to these values (Fatima & Elbanna, 2023). Antanaityté (2022) reports that in sports organisations management prioritizes participation in social programs and demonstrating respect for the community. In contrast employees believe that the most important aspect for which the organisation is accountable is operational transparency. This theme examines CSR awareness in sports organisations.

There was a consensus among the participants that sports organisations have an obligation to engage in socially responsible practices. Participant 2 emphasises this point, stating:

*“I think when you in a position to help you you've got that it's not a right, I think it's a responsibility I think a lot of our programs in itself is actually giving back”.* (Participant 2)

Participant 3 articulates a similar sentiment; the participant further explains the measures implemented by the sports organisation to contribute positively to the community.

*“I think the most important part about it is giving back to the community or not even giving back, but helping a community grow, helping individuals learn different aspects about themselves, providing a pathway for them to, you know, to realise their potential. In our case, providing a pathway for those that were interested to explore the sport of tennis. A career path either in the tennis admin side or tennis coach. So, in essence, building a community”.* (Participant 3)

Participant 1 provided insights regarding social responsibility as it pertains to his sports organisation, noting:

*“Corporate social responsibility is one of our core values. We have quite a few of those values because it is a game of integrity. It is a game of upliftment and a game of developing the characteristics of an individual from young. So, it is one of the main core values of our organisation and we do it through our junior development program with our coordinate”.* (Participant 1)

In a similar vein participant 4 noted that CSR was integral to the sports organisation, representing a core mandate rather than merely a secondary initiative.

*“By virtue, KZN netball it is a nonprofit. It's involved with development that on its own is CSR enrolled into the organisation. It's not like they do... manufacture netball equipment, then when they get time, they engage in CSR initiatives. The organisation's mandate is that all young girls and boys at some point must play netball. That's development. The organisation's very existence is CSR”.* (Participant 4).

##### *Theme 2: Embedding CSR in sport organisations*

Organisations play distinct roles in society, which are reflected in their core values. To effectively implement CSR strategies, they must cultivate a shared understanding of these core values or adjust their actions to align with the accepted behavioural norms of their social environment (Barchiesi & Fronzetti Colladon, 2021). Embedding CSR involves the strategic integration of CSR policies, procedures, mission statements, and vision into the operational functions of an organisation. This approach aims to cultivate and reinforce CSR-compliant behaviour throughout the organisation, ensuring that CSR principles are consistently applied in daily operations and decision-making processes (Fatima & Elbanna, 2023). The data collected indicates that CSR is inherently integrated within sports organisations, particularly through their core values. This integration reflects the organisations' commitment to CSR in their operations and practices. Two of the study's participants shared the sentiment that integrity was a core value. Participant 2 noted:

*“So basically, core values are I think the one of the biggest one for me is integrity. I can share that. We are honest and transparent with everything we do. Yeah. And integrity it's probably the main thing for me. Just make sure you can trust people and people can trust us because we are public again, we are running... We are the custodians of cricket in KZN”.* (Participant 2)

Participant 2 stresses the importance of honesty, transparency and trust with stakeholders and highlights the sports organisation position as custodians of the game. Participant 1 commented:

*“Corporate social response is one of our core values, of the organisation, we have quite a few of those values*

*because it is a game of integrity. It is a game of upliftment and a game of developing the characteristics of an individual from young, from young. So, it is one of the main core values of our organisation".* (Participant 1)

Participants' 3 and 4 responses differed from the above responses. Participant 3 stated

*"The organisations main value that they have is to introduce tennis. Uh. And by and large that that they've introduced tennis to approximately three thousand individuals that wouldn't have access otherwise".* (Participant 3)

And participant 4 commented

*"KZN Netball lives as a CSI as what from what I said earlier on. Netball, as a federation exists as a CSR project".* (Participant 4)

Participant 3 believes that the core values of the organisation include successfully planning and implementing CSR initiatives. Participant 4 states that sports organisation considers CSR as their primary initiative and a fundamental reason for their existence and operation. Overall, these responses support Barchiesi and Fronzetti Colladon (2021) observation that managers should critically evaluate the objectives of their organisations and the ethical obligations they hold towards stakeholders when it comes to core values. These core values guide the sports organisation's CSR implementation.

The effective execution of a CSR strategy necessitates meticulous planning and the development of internal capacity. To identify key values and develop actionable plans, management may seek assistance from individuals who are knowledgeable about CSR-related topics (Fet & Knudson, 2017). Commenting on the implementation process, Participant 2 provides specifics

*"I mean it will be a project management effort where you'll have a project leader, you will basically get the planning templates going, calendars then what resources do we need and how are we going to find the, the money. To whom are we partnering with. So, I do think it's a whole project management template that you will basically apply with the, with the checklist of firstly the resources, the timelines and, and, and obviously the operations of everything and, and with most of these initiatives, we also try, and we try and partner with, with all our sponsors and all our different stakeholders".* (Participant 2)

According to Barchiesi and Fronzetti Colladon (2021) stakeholders' perspectives on particular issues not only helps in addressing different opinions on how to tackle CSR issues, but it also reveals new insights that may have been overlooked. Several participants indicated internal and external stakeholder involvement when it comes to implementation. Participant 2 notes that the sports organisation employs individuals from regions where CSR initiatives are being implemented.

*"So, for us, we've got ten hubs like I mentioned. We've got a coaching department at each of these hubs, so we'll basically liaise with our staff based in those areas to help us activate the, the initiative".* (Participant 2)

Commenting on working with external stakeholders when implementing CSR initiatives, Participant 3 states

*"To an extent where we mostly follow their guidelines because as I said, we want to get people who we know that we can ask who know about what they're doing. Yeah. And our thing isn't to dictate but to more to aid them. And see how we can better implement it there because the different districts, the different people have different needs".* (Participant 3)

### *Theme 3: CSR communication in the sports organisation*

CSR communication is directed towards both internal and external stakeholders, necessitating a thorough understanding of the appropriate channels, content, and characteristics of such communication. It is essential to strategically define these elements to ensure the effectiveness and clarity of the message communicated. An organisations social and environmental performance can be communicated to external stakeholders through advertisements, annual reports, and CSR reports. For internal stakeholders, such as employees and board members, communication channels include meetings, corporate newsletters, and training sessions (Fatima & Elbanna, 2023).

#### *Internal CSR Communication*

According to Troise and Camilleri (2021) each stakeholder group exhibits unique preferences regarding communication styles and the channels through which they prefer to engage. All participants indicated that they utilised email and conducted meetings as methods of communicating CSR internally. Participant 2 stated

*"Yeah, probably emails. And then as and when we have projects coming up, there will be meetings."* (Participant 2)

Commenting on the organisation's internal communication channels, Participant 3 said

*"So, once we decide on a program, there is there's weekly meeting, weekly updates to see where we are, if*

*anything happens. Uh, we send out an e-mail. Uh, immediately to the respective people involved.*" (Participant 3)

Participant 1 presents an in-depth explanation of CSR communication within the sports organisation.

*"We have quarterly board meetings where all are present. And we have an annual general meeting. We have audited documents, financials."*

*"We also do emails... as an organisation the emails are sent out."* (Participant 1)

Another participant elaborated further when a follow-up question was asked about how often CSR-related meetings were held.

*"You could say a minimum; it depends on the time. If things are quiet, then we will meet perhaps once a month. If things are busy, we meet more frequently."* (Participant 4).

Participants indicated that a combination of emails and meetings was employed to solicit feedback on CSR initiatives.

*"Well, feedback it's, it's e-mail through meetings and yeah so, so, so, a person can send an e-mail and say, "in relation to this, I think this and this and this"."* (Participant 4)

*"Weekly meetings. Emails."* (Participant 3)

Other responses to the question about internal CSR communication channels for feedback included:

*"Well, you'll have meetings, and I think then everybody will give their feedback."* (Participant 2)

*"Through the same system, it's definitely e-mail system communication is ongoing".* (Participant 1)

#### *External CSR communication*

Effective CSR communication is essential for companies to make a meaningful impact with their CSR initiatives (Pérez et al., 2020). According to the interview responses, social media, email, and the corporate website were the most utilised channels for communication with external stakeholders. Social media platforms enable businesses to enhance customer relationships and communicate their CSR initiatives without the influence of gatekeepers or traditional media. Social media provides stakeholders with a platform to disseminate their opinions to a broader audience, so organisations should monitor it closely (Kim et al., 2018).

Participants were asked to identify the most utilised channels for communicating CSR externally and to articulate their reasoning behind the effectiveness of these channels. Participants commented

*"I think the corporate website and emails because it's immediate and there's response. It's a two-way type of communication in fact."* (Participant 1)

*"At the moment it's emails, it's social media. Yeah. Those two are our most used... Because they are the busiest, there's a lot of, yeah of back and forth."* (Participant 4)

Participant 2 shared a similar view

*"Well, I think those two (social media and e-mails) because I think also probably the two platforms we will use, I mean emails we speak directly to our partners and then social media. It is to the broader fan base."* (Participant 2)

In one case, a participant thought that a face-to-face meeting was the most effective and efficient way to communicate with external stakeholders. (mention something about sponsors)

*"A face-to-face meeting with them because you get to understand some of the nuances, something that an e-mail can't capture, possibly a phone call may not capture, you get to sit with them. Possibly most effectively at the venue. And it also gives you a chance to get to know the, the stakeholders involved personally."* (Participant 3)

The channels employed for external CSR communication feedback were consistent with those utilised for internal CSR communication feedback.

*"Uh, once again, weekly meetings, emails."* (Participant 3)

#### *Theme 4: CSR Evaluation by the sports organisation*

The evaluation of CSR entails monitoring of progress towards established CSR objectives, an assessment of the effectiveness with which these objectives have been attained, and an exploration of strategies to enhance overall CSR performance. This process is vital for ensuring accountability and fostering continuous improvement within organisations' CSR initiatives (Fatima & Elbanna, 2023). This theme explores how evaluation is carried out after each initiative. Participant 2 stated

*“Yeah, the coaches, that's in those areas will give us feedback on it and obviously it's normally very positive so. Yeah, but yeah, we'll get it from the people that's on the ground there.”*

*Yes. Yeah, you, you figure out what worked well and what didn't for instance the delivery of these grocery packages. Where's the ideal space is?”* (Participant 2)

Participant 3 shares a similar approach to post initiative evaluation,

*“If those goals aren't reached, we, we think about why? So, we analyse it and then implement an, an intervention together with the stakeholders.”* (Participant 3)

Participant 4 presented an example of a potential modification that could be implemented as a result of insights gained from the evaluation process.

*“We will try to. Yeah, we always strive to do so. When, for example we decide this year, we are going to need a bigger venue for the awards ceremony or a venue with a stage. That is because of something we would have picked up previously.”* (Participant 4)

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that the sports organisation's perceived obligation to engage in socially responsible practices, coupled with a commitment to making a positive societal impact, significantly influence the implementation of CSR initiatives. This obligation includes efforts to give back to the community, facilitate community growth, and establish career pathways for individuals within the community. Furthermore, the core values of the organisation serve as critical determinants in shaping the approach and effectiveness of CSR practices. This study revealed that CSR is integrated in sports organisations through their mission, vision and core values. This integration is evident in organisational practices and CSR strategies. Additionally, integrity emerged as a shared value among the participating sports organisations, as they prioritise honesty and transparency to build trust with their stakeholders. Successfully implementing a CSR requires careful planning and the enhancement of internal capabilities. The sports organisations involved in this study frequently collaborated with employees and community members where CSR initiatives were conducted. Instead of imposing solutions, the sports organisations sought to understand the community's needs and relied on guidance from employees and local individuals on how to implement CSR initiatives effectively.

CSR was communicated to both internal and external stakeholders by the sports organisations. Sports organisations recognised the need for different communication channels to effectively convey their CSR message and ensure clarity. For internal stakeholders, communication strategies included emails and face-to-face meetings, while interactions with external stakeholders primarily utilised emails, complemented by social media platforms and the corporate website. This approach aimed to ensure that stakeholders receive coherent and accessible information regarding the sports organisations' CSR initiatives. The study indicates that each sports organisation conducted a thorough evaluation following each CSR initiative. Feedback was gathered from both internal and external stakeholders regarding these initiatives. This feedback was instrumental in enabling the sports organisation to assess areas of success, identify shortcomings, and determine strategies for enhancing future CSR initiatives.

For successful implementation of CSR within sports organisations, it's essential to have a strong understanding of CSR issues. Before planning CSR initiatives, sports organisations need to establish clear objectives that reflect their interests and those of the stakeholders, these must align with the vision and mission of the organisation. This alignment is vital for effective execution and maximising the impact of CSR initiatives on the community. The CSR strategy should be integrated into the organisation's operational functions. The integration of CSR practices into organisational operations ensures consistent application of CSR principles in day-to-day activities and decision-making processes.

Effective and efficient communication is crucial. To improve transparency and engagement, sports organisations should dedicate a section of their corporate websites to highlight their CSR efforts. Additionally, they should utilise social media regularly to update external stakeholders about these initiatives, rather than only communicating when a major event is approaching. Organisations could also profile the athletes involved in these initiatives or the beneficiaries of their CSR programs. By sharing updates on athletes' progress and accomplishments within CSR programs, they can keep external stakeholders informed and engaged.

It is important to embark on a consistent journey of monitoring and evaluating CSR program effectiveness. This ongoing assessment not only serves as a barometer to gauge the impact of these initiatives, but it also provides a comprehensive understanding of its performance over time. By doing this the sports organisation can gain invaluable insights that inform its decision-making strategies. Moreover, the insights gained from this evaluation process can be instrumental in justifying funding and establishing partnerships. If the sports organisations can provide concrete evidence of their CSR initiatives' positive impact, they will be better positioned to secure financial support from sponsors and attract partnerships



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**Authors contributions**

Ms. Hlatshwayo was responsible for designing the study and revising it, and she also drafted the manuscript. Dr. Hussain and Dr. Naidoo contributed numerous ideas and assistance during the writing process. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript. No special agreements were made on writing this report.

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**Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

**Open access**

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