

CASE STUDY

The COVID-19 pandemic and corporate social responsibility of Korean global firms: from the perspective of stakeholder theory [version 1; peer review: 1 approved, 1 approved with reservations]

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Abstract

Background: The ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has caused tremendous socio-economic problems. All societies worldwide were faced with an emergency situation, and many were puzzled by the implementation of various countermeasures to overcome this situation. Such events call for active engagement and support from the private sector. Noting the expected social role of the private sector, this study builds on stakeholder theory and investigates the corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities of Korean global firms facing the difficulties of this situation.

Methods: This study collected and analyzed news reports about the CSR activities of three representative Korean global firms (Samsung Electronics, LG Electronics, and Hyundai Motors). News reports posted from January 2019 and after January 2020, when the COVID-19 outbreak occurred in Korea, were collected. From the reports, the main keywords illustrating their CSR activities were extracted, and the frequency of each company was analyzed.


Results: Findings showed that their CSR activities during the COVID-19 pandemic were conducted in a prompt and systemic way. They maintained focus on their main CSR activities, which were closely aligned with their business and CSR visions; simultaneously, they rapidly identified the areas needing support from their daily business activities and responded to them immediately and discretionary. This highlights their genuine motives in their CSR activities and good citizenship, as well as their significant role as rescuers during nationwide disasters.


Conclusions: Supporting stakeholder theory, this study shows the broadly defined CSR activities of Korean global firms focusing on their target stakeholders. The agile and systemic approach to the companies' CSR activities can benefit both society and businesses,

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contributing to creating social values and sustained co-prosperity with society. Furthermore, this study suggests that a close collaborative relationship with the government can produce a synergistic effect on community building recovering from a nationwide disaster.

Keywords

Corporate social responsibility, stakeholder theory, COVID-19 pandemic, social value, Korean global firms, sustainability, disasters



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Introduction

The ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has caused a serious economic downturn and countless social problems and losses worldwide. This global crisis has put individuals and companies at risk, pushing numerous low-income earners and small-business owners to the verge of bankruptcy. According to the [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) \(2020\)](#), the gross domestic product (GDP) in South Korea fell 3.3% in the second quarter of 2020, which reduced the employment rate by 1.3%, particularly in the wholesale, retail trade, accommodation, and food sectors, and small business owners in general. Facing the economic risks of COVID-19, the Korean government has taken prompt and proactive measures to alleviate the economic problems at hand. Initially, the government measures appeared to be successful ([Lim et al., 2021](#); [Shin & Lee, 2020](#)). However, increases in continuing and evolving cases of coronavirus variants have rendered the actions taken by the government futile; it has had to ask for support from the private sector. Although COVID-19 has affected the business activities of large enterprises, their social engagement is required during the emergencies caused by this national disaster, considering their enormous economic, social, and environmental impact on society and, accordingly, an increase in social expectations about their roles ([García-Sánchez & García-Sánchez, 2020](#); [Mahmud et al., 2021](#)). Large enterprises may be more capable of disaster management than governments since they are systematically structured and have resources that can be mobilized promptly ([Ballesteros et al., 2017](#); [Johnson et al., 2011](#)). Utilizing such resources and dynamic capabilities ([Teece, 2007](#)), they can effectively capture social needs and expectations and satisfy them efficiently.

Stakeholder theory ([Freeman, 1984](#)) clarifies why companies have to take a voluntary and strategic approach to implementing their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Stakeholders defined as “those groups who can affect or are affected by the achievement of an organization’s purpose” ([Freeman, 1984, p. 49](#)) are important participants in companies’ business activities; thus, satisfying their expectations is directly related to the achievement of a business’s goals. Companies gain financial and nonfinancial benefits from fulfilling their economic, social, legal, and environmental obligations, and such fulfillment is expected from their stakeholders ([Farooq et al., 2017](#); [Kim, 2015](#); [Orlitzky et al., 2003](#)). This suggests that companies have to clearly define their primary stakeholders and take a strategic approach to CSR activities to meet their expectations.

Companies have to design their CSR strategies, which should be aligned with their business strategies ([Galbreath, 2009](#); [Nave & Ferreira, 2019](#)). This is also true of companies’ disaster-relief CSR activities. [Madsen and Rodgers \(2015\)](#) argued that companies’ disaster-relief CSR activities can lead to improved corporate performance only when these initiatives draw the attention of and gain legitimacy from their target stakeholders. This implies that companies’ CSR activities in the crisis of a disaster should be strategically designed to meet

their primary stakeholders’ expectations, and the activities should be properly communicated with target stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of their current and future business successes.

Building on stakeholder theory and the strategic significance of CSR during disasters, this study intends to illuminate the strategic choices and directions of Korean global firms regarding their disaster-relief CSR activities in the age of COVID-19. By investigating the CSR activities of Korean global firms before and after the COVID-19 outbreak, this study intends to clarify their defined social roles and positions in society and the strategic CSR approaches implemented during the COVID-19 crisis. The study illustrates how companies behaved during this crisis and identifies the CSR approaches they should adopt to increase their stakeholders’ awareness of their CSR activities and gain social capitals, which will ultimately influence their future business successes.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

CSR refers to “actions on the part of the firm that appear to advance or acquiesce in the promotion of some social good, beyond the immediate interests of the firm and its shareholders and beyond that which is required by law” ([Waldman et al., 2006, p. 1703](#)). As one of companies’ main activities, CSR initiatives have been highlighted and studied in various business disciplines ([Nave & Ferreira, 2019](#); [McWilliams & Siegel, 2001](#)). Grounded in stakeholder theory ([Freeman, 1984](#); [Parmar et al., 2010](#)), the concept of CSR underscores companies’ responsibilities toward their stakeholders. That is, companies are expected to implement the expected obligations of their internal and external stakeholders, including customers, employees, partners, a community, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. CSR extends the boundaries of a company’s economic responsibility to include legal, ethical, and discretionary responsibilities ([Carroll, 1979](#)). In line with this, researchers have argued that companies should be like citizens ([Moon et al., 2005](#)) and that companies’ CSR activities should not be restricted to narrowly defined activities, such as voluntary donations or the display of concern for social and environmental problems, by supporting interest groups. Rather, they must be organized systemically and strategically to create social benefits, which can produce business benefits by achieving their business competitiveness ([Bernal-Conesa et al., 2017](#); [McWilliams & Siegel, 2011](#)).

CSR activities add financial and nonfinancial value to companies ([Buchanan et al., 2018](#); [Fombrun & Shanley, 1990](#); [Servaes & Tamayo, 2013](#)). Active involvement in CSR activities raises companies’ reputations and, thus, customers’ willing to purchase the product or service provided by socially responsible companies and show loyalty to their brands, which improves their financial performance ([Fombrun & Shanley, 1990](#); [Orlitzky et al., 2003](#)). Also, CSR is effective to companies internally by influencing their current and future employees. An empirical test conducted by [Farooq et al. \(2017\)](#) showed that CSR contributes to the shaping of employees’ organizational identification, which results in improving positive work outcomes, such as the internally- and externally-focused citizenship behaviors. Another study found that younger generations

are aware of social issues, and they are attracted to socially responsible companies, which implies that such companies have higher possibility of finding and recruiting talent (Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2019). As such, CSR and a company's performance are closely and positively associated (Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2019; Farooq *et al.*, 2017; Kim, 2015; Orlitzky *et al.*, 2003).

Companies need to take a strategic approach in implementing CSR, not only because of the expected positive values of CSR but also because of its increasing social regulations and expectations. This suggests a necessity to set a clear CSR vision and direction in companies. The CSR direction should be established strategically by the alignment with the business strategy of companies, which contributes to achieving their market growth and sustainable business. As argued in previous studies, companies can benefit from their strategically devised CSR plans and activities (Bernal-Conesa *et al.*, 2017; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001; Siegel & Vitaliano, 2007). CSR endeavors should be incorporated into daily business activities as part of an enterprise's business strategy (Galbreath, 2009; Nave & Ferreira, 2019; Orlitzky *et al.*, 2003). Companies' CSR strategies, incorporated with their business strategies, improve product quality and processes through innovation, which can be differentiated by competing companies; thus, they can heighten reputation assets and gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

CSR in disasters

Disaster-related emergency management is considered as a domain that governmental organizations have to deal with (Ballesteros *et al.*, 2017; Johnson *et al.*, 2011). However, doubts have been raised about the effectiveness of disaster management by governmental organizations (Edwards, 2007). Researchers have argued that governments are incapable of executing disaster management effectively because of their lack of capabilities in leadership and collaborative efforts, and their rigid organizational structures which delay prompt implementation of some rescuing measures (Kusumasari *et al.*, 2010; Neal & Phillips, 1995; Waugh & Streib, 2006). This government incapability calls for more active involvement from the private sector in disaster relief, and their engagement in society has become more common and important (Johnson *et al.*, 2011; McKnight & Linnenluecke, 2016).

During disasters, overall society and local communities have emergent needs and require prompt assistance for a full recovery. Contrary to governmental organizations, companies have the capacity and resources to promptly and systemically mobilize; thus, they can be especially effective in executing disaster relief and recovery management (Ballesteros *et al.*, 2017; McKnight & Linnenluecke, 2016). Companies participate in various relief- and recovery-related CSR activities during disasters, and their activities are broadly implemented to satisfy stakeholders' needs. Such implementation ranges from responsive and episodic-based measures to proactive activities,

such as raising funds and partnering with relevant organizations in disaster relief (Johnson *et al.*, 2011). Given the emergent situations that arise during disasters, companies' disaster relief CSR activities have particular importance to society, benefiting many people and local communities in need (Ballesteros *et al.*, 2017; Johnson *et al.*, 2011; McKnight & Linnenluecke, 2016).

Engaging in disaster-relief CSR activities can be challenging for companies because they generally require some revision to existing CSR plans and a reconfiguration of resource allocation otherwise directed to their original CSR activities. Nevertheless, given the emergency nature of disasters and the subsequent pressing social needs and expectations, companies are duty bound to respond to these events (Edwards, 2007; Johnson *et al.*, 2011; McKnight & Linnenluecke, 2016). As illustrated in the previous section, because companies can benefit from planned strategic CSR activities, a proactive and systemic approach should be devised and implemented, even during disasters. Companies should therefore design target-specific and strategic CSR activities during disasters, as these activities will increase social values and awareness of the enterprises in society; this could ultimately support their long-term business (Johnson *et al.*, 2011; Madsen & Rodgers, 2015).

CSR and COVID-19

Studies have indicated that business sectors around the world are actively participating in relief and recovery activities necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic; this participation has taken the immediate and appropriate form responding to social and stakeholder needs (García-Sánchez & García-Sánchez, 2020; Mahmud *et al.*, 2021). For instance, U.S. companies with esteemed CSR reputations are carrying out various CSR activities that focus on building stewardship relations with employees, customers, and communities (Mahmud *et al.*, 2021). In Spain, companies are demonstrating their commitments to society through various types of CSR practices that entail economic and legal responsibilities, as well as commercial, ethical, and altruistic CSR approaches (García-Sánchez & García-Sánchez, 2020).

As illustrated above, large enterprises' social participation is distinctive during the COVID-19 pandemic. They are responding to the various emergent social needs actively to overcome the complex risks surrounding this pandemic. Although most businesses are challenged by COVID-19, they have continued to reach out to society and show citizenship behaviors (García-Sánchez & García-Sánchez, 2020; Mahmud *et al.*, 2021). These companies have both voluntarily and purposefully implemented these endeavors. The high public awareness of large enterprises makes them feel obligated to implement CSR activities and be recognized as good corporate citizens in society (Servaes & Tamayo, 2013). They believe that involvement in CSR activities during difficult times is not only expected from the society but is also a useful foundation from which to obtain positive business outcomes in the future (Farooq *et al.*, 2017; Johnson *et al.*, 2011). This implies the particular

meaning and importance of strategic CSR initiatives during disasters in relation to companies' business continuity.

In Korea, the first case of pneumonia induced by COVID-19 was detected on January 20, 2020. Despite the initial systemic preventive measures taken by the Korean government (Lim *et al.*, 2021; Moradi & Vaezi, 2020; Shin & Lee, 2020), over 80,000 cases have since been confirmed, with the case fatality rate reaching 1.8% in February 2021. This pandemic has left society in a panic, generating enormous economic and social losses. To mitigate these losses and recover from economic and social risks, countrywide cooperation in every sector and at every level has been solicited (OECD, 2020). Responding to the call, enterprises in the private sector, particularly large companies, participated in this disaster-relief. They found areas that need support and conducted various rescuing CSR activities to reduce the harm derived from the pandemic.

In South Korea, large enterprises are closely related to the government, building economically and socially close relationships (Chang, 1988; Le *et al.*, 2016). They were a driving force of remarkable economic growth in South Korea and also, they have involved tackling economic and social issues. The attribute of emergency and broad coverage of disasters requires the Korean government to have close and open partnerships with large enterprises (Bang & Kim, 2016; Park & Chung, 2021). Accordingly, large companies cooperate with the Korean government and are actively involved in society to tackle various social and environmental problems. Their engagement in society was manifested during the COVID-19 pandemic. Correspondingly, this study noted Korean large enterprises' CSR activities and strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic by investigating three representative Korean companies.

Methods

Data collection and analysis

This research investigated Korean global firms, namely Samsung Electronics (<https://www.samsung.com>), LG (<https://www.lg.com>), and Hyundai Motors (<https://www.hyundai.com>). These corporations were selected because they are the top three global manufacturing companies in Korea. They have tremendous economic and social effects on Korean society, with solid cooperation from the Korean government (Chang, 1988; Le *et al.*, 2016).

The news reports prepared by these companies for the press were obtained from their official websites (Samsung Electronics, n.d., Newsroom section (<https://news.samsung.com/kr/>); LG, n.d., Newsroom section (<https://live.lge.co.kr/news/newsroom>); Hyundai Motors, n.d., News and announcement section (<https://www.hyundai.com/kr/ko/company-intro/pr-department/news-focus/news>), respectively. This study used news reports for the analysis because they are an official and prompt way that companies can convey information about their CSR activities and advertise it to a broad range of stakeholders. Thus, all news reports released one year before (January 2019–January 2020) and one year after (February 2020–January 2021) the initial outbreak of COVID-19 in South Korea were investigated.

Because the first COVID-19 case in Korea was confirmed in January 2020, news reports released from January 2019 to January 2021 were collected and read thoroughly¹.

Only news reports from this period about CSR activities that included companies' diverse CSR activities and programs to support their stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, employees, local communities, and so forth, were selected for the analysis. The news reports were read thoroughly by the author and analyzed to identify keywords describing CSR activities implemented by the companies before and after the pandemic. Specifically, using the text analysis program KoNLPy which is operated in Python, (<https://konlpy.org/en/latest/>), morphemes used in news reports were extracted, and the main keywords related to CSR activities were found for each company.

Results

A total of 167 news reports were chosen: 50 news reports (24 and 26 news reports one year before and after January 2020, respectively) from Samsung Electronics; 57 news reports (31 and 26 news reports one year before and after January 2020, respectively) from LG; and 60 (32 and 28 news reports one year before and after January 2020, respectively) from Hyundai Motors (Kim, 2022).

CSR activities of Korean global firms

The findings from the analysis show the patterns and strategies of CSR activities. The details of each company are provided below.

Samsung Electronics. The CSR mission of Samsung Electronics is stated on its webpage: "We empower and support the next generation to achieve their full potential and pioneer positive social changes." (Samsung Electronics, n.d. Sustainability section). Guided by this mission, the company has mainly focused on education as its core CSR beneficiary.

Table 1 shows the frequency of keywords arising from the text analysis of 50 news reports on Samsung Electronics' CSR: 24 and 26 news reports one year before and after January 2020, respectively. The highest-ranking keywords (i.e., appearing most frequently) both pre- and post-pandemic were 'support,' 'education,' 'start-up,' 'student,' and 'C-Lab Outside,'² which reflect the company's efforts to educate and nurture future generations. This result indicates that the company's pre-pandemic CSR direction was sustained after the occurrence of the disaster.

¹ News sources used in this study were published in Korean and analysed by the author in Korean. Any translations in this paper were completed by the author.

² Launched in 2018, this program supports young entrepreneurs whose ideas or projects have the potential to grow into a business. Samsung Electronics helps them by providing financial aid and the required infrastructure, technical and managerial consultation, and an opportunity to collaborate with them (<https://www.claboutside.com/>).

Table 1. Keyword analysis of Samsung Electronics’ news reports in the period January 2019–2020 (before COVID-19) and February 2020–January 2021 (after COVID-19).

	Before COVID-19		After COVID-19	
	Keyword	Freq.	Keyword	Freq.
1	Support	102	Support	123
2	Startup	87	Startup	97
3	Education	72	Business	57
4	C lab outside	65	Education	56
5	Attend	50	C lab outside	55
6	Program	44	Teenager	54
7	Solution	42	Mask	39
8	Participation	36	Prevention	34
9	Smart School	36	Activity	32
10	Social contribution	36	Progress	32
11	College student	36	Offer	28
12	Development	36	Domestic	27
13	Software	33	Nurture	26
14	Student	32	Corona	25
15	Offer	29	Program	24
16	Progress	28	Participation	24
17	Samsung Dream Class	27	Technology	24
18	Ideas	26	Local	23
19	Nurture	22	Supplier	22
20	Opportunities	22	Blue elephant	22

Figure 1 depicts the keywords extracted from the text analysis; it represents the characteristics of Samsung’s CSR activities during the first year after COVID-19 emerged. The large words denote the CSR activities highlighted and accorded more focus. The main feature of Samsung’s post-pandemic CSR is community building through supporting education and start-up business. The CSR activities have included donating masks to local communities (Samsung Electronics, 2020a) and providing educational opportunities to teenagers in environments isolated from information technology services (Samsung Electronics, 2020b). Being aware of the increasing social problem of cyberbullying among younger generations, the company initiated the Blue Elephant project (Samsung Electronics, 2020c) to solve the problem and prevent future harm arising from this issue. Supporting start-ups through the C-Lab Outside initiative is also the main component of the company’s CSR. The findings suggest that the main stakeholder of Samsung Electronics’ CSR is the community, particularly young talent with great potential and capabilities. This further represents that the company intends to secure business growth and



Figure 1. CSR word cloud showing the frequency of keywords in news items on Samsung Electronics after the COVID-19 outbreak (February 2020–January 2021).

sustainability by discovering and nurturing current and future talent and pursuing potential business opportunities by investing in education and start-ups.

LG Electronics. LG Electronics implements CSR activities in line with its CSR vision: “LG is committed to the development of society and the community,” (LG, n.d., CSR section), which is founded on the following philosophy: “LG aims to create the values needed by society through constant interaction with society” (LG, n.d., CSR section).

The top 20 keywords extracted from the analysis showed that before the spread of COVID-19, LG engaged with society by building healthy relationships with business partners and communities, initiating various campaign activities, caring for the environment, and providing products to disabled populations. Table 2 indicates this pattern, as ‘partners,’ ‘support,’ ‘environment,’ ‘activity,’ ‘the disabled,’ and ‘campaign’ were ranked high among the keywords.

LG’s CSR activities after the COVID-19 breakout highlight their company-wide initiatives and concerted CSR projects that support society. LG’s executives and employees not only donate quality products but also provide financial aid to the vulnerable and to institutions that particularly need support (LG, 2020a). LG recognizes the suffering of its affiliated business partners and focuses on supporting them under the mindset of coexistence with partners (LG, 2020b). Figure 2 illustrates clearly how LG places importance on building partnerships with its suppliers by supporting them. Notably, its social involvement creates customer value via the provision of customer-friendly and life-improving products, the cultivation of trustworthy partnerships, and sharing with a community.

the target stakeholders as supporters and problem solvers, Samsung Electronics have raised brand awareness among them, which is expected to lead even more business success.

LG's main CSR activities indicate a focus on value creation for target stakeholders, including suppliers, communities, and employees. With an orientation toward win-win situations and partnerships, LG actively has supported its suppliers by implementing various assistance and collaboration programs. The company has been also actively engaged in providing 'untact'⁷ products and services in support of the government policy of social distancing after the breakout of COVID-19. By providing AI CLOi robots to employees and communities during the pandemic, LG has intended to raise awareness of its brand in the market of 'untact' business while doing good for society. These CSR endeavors clearly show the intended strategies through which they have utilized this social challenge as business opportunities. The main characteristic of LG's disaster-relief CSR activities is that they have been implemented company-wide. As shown in Table 2, 'executives and employees' and 'donate' were highly ranked keywords. The relevant news reports indicate that all LG employees joined CSR activities by volunteering and donating money and products. This approach has raised employees' awareness of the company's CSR activities, which would possibly contribute to increasing their identification with LG.

The primary CSR initiatives taken by Hyundai Motors reflect its care for a community with the vision of contributing to human lives. In line with its business of mobility, the company has been involved mainly in projects concerning safety, the environment, and safety-related education. Under the main CSR initiatives of mobility, safety, and an environment for humanity, the company has initiated various campaigns and projects during the pandemic and conveyed its efforts to care for the environment and a community to improve human life in a healthy and safe manner. Aligned with their core business, such CSR activities easily have raised stakeholders' awareness due to the close association of CSR initiatives with the automotive business. Also, their CSR activities have been implemented mainly via building partnerships with relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations. This approach is strategic and systematic, as the company is able to promptly achieve the intended goals of its CSR activities by collaborating with parties whose resources and capabilities could easily be mobilized for disaster relief.

These companies have continually implemented their primary CSR activities under their CSR visions and initiatives. The findings illuminate that companies benefit communities and society by effectively and systemically implementing strategic disaster relief CSR activities aligned with their CSR initiatives. Capturing and promptly responding to the needs of their target stakeholders in various philanthropic ways, the companies

strategically used and allocated their resources and capabilities, which contributed to raising their stakeholders' awareness of their CSR activities and increasing their legitimacy (Madsen & Rodgers, 2015). The findings confirm that these Korean firms are broadly involved with society, reaching out to and benefiting the target stakeholders through their strategic disaster-relief CSR activities. This lends support to the argument that the business sector performs effectively in disaster management due to its systemic organizational structures and governance, and its dynamic capability to mobilize and combine resources (Ballesteros *et al.*, 2017; Johnson *et al.*, 2011).

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented disaster, has left the world in chaos. During this disaster, more active and responsible actions from the business sector have been required. Companies' systemic CSR activities during the disaster benefit their businesses by increasing stakeholders' awareness of the CSR activities and, accordingly, increasing trusts toward companies and their reputation, which finally contributes to achieve business sustainability (Madsen & Rodgers, 2015; Qiu *et al.*, 2021). In this study, the target companies implemented consistent and strategic CSR activities and this strategic approach implies their intention to leverage the risks surrounding COVID-19 as opportunities for their future sustainable businesses. The finding also suggests the Korean large enterprises' important role as rescuers who can solve the economic and social problems that the COVID-19 pandemic have caused.

This study highlights that companies should maintain a stakeholder- and community-centric view when designing their CSR plans. Companies' CSR strategies should be incorporated into their business strategies, and they should be improved and evolve corresponding to the anticipations of social needs and expectations. Such an agile and systemic approach to businesses' CSR activities will benefit society, contributing to creating social values and sustained coprosperity with society.

The motive of companies' CSR activities has been argued to be mainly self-serving, ultimately pursuing certain economic benefits (Crane & Matten, 2020); however, the study finding suggests that CSR activities are not just for their own interests but rather for common economic and social benefits, with a good and genuine motive. The companies in the investigation showed that they consistently implemented CSR activities designed in alignment with their CSR visions and goals during the pandemic, and they also reached out to and engaged in society with prompt philanthropic CSR activities.

As argued by researchers (Johnson *et al.*, 2011; McKnight & Linnenluecke, 2016), the role of the private sector is important and effective during disasters. Their business capabilities of resources and experiences, as well as the systematic mobilization and transformation of resources, can fill in the area that government alone cannot cover. Therefore, the private

⁷ A composite word comprising *un* (meaning 'no') and 'contact' created in the South Korean context. It means no human-to-human contact.

sector's open and collaborative partnership with the government is required during a disaster (Bang & Kim, 2016; Park & Chung, 2021), and such collaboration can have synergic effect on community building, recovering from the disaster.

Data availability

Underlying data

Kim, Soyeon (2022): CSR news reports.xlsx. figshare. Dataset. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.19207881.v2>. (Kim, 2022).

This project contains the following underlying data:

- data.xlsx. (Full list of news reports used in this study with company, date news title (in original Korean and

translated English), news report in Korean, and link to source).

Data are available under the terms of the [Creative Commons Zero "No rights reserved" data waiver](#) (CC0 1.0 Public domain dedication).

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Open Peer Review

Current Peer Review Status:  

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Reviewer Report 09 May 2023

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Assunta Di Vaio 

University of Naples "Parthenope", Naples, Italy

Many thanks for the opportunity you have given me to read your Manuscript titled The COVID-19 pandemic and corporate social responsibility of Korean global firms: from the perspective of stakeholder theory. It is an interesting work. However, the current version of the document needs to be improved. You should resolve some major concerns.

First, the theoretical background needs to be better explored under the lens of stakeholder theory, but also of resilience theory. When you introduce Covid-19, you are introducing a shock event. In the literature resilience theory helps support your study. I would suggest you well address [/doi.org/10.1108/JEIM-08-2022-0275](https://doi.org/10.1108/JEIM-08-2022-0275)¹. This article will help you develop resilience theory for analyzing business models. Furthermore, the stakeholder theory should be better clarified. What aspects of the theory are you using to develop your case study? It is not enough to include Freeman, 1984. You should clarify "exactly" the linkages between the theory and the issues of your study. You should consider previous studies using stakeholder theory in more detail than just quoting Freeman. Therefore, try to well address doi.org/10.1108/CG-04-2022-0174².

Finally, regarding the methodology, Data collection and analysis needs more details. How did you conduct the analysis? It is not enough to write that the author alone has thoroughly read the selected papers, but you need to explain the technique of manual content analysis. Therefore, I invite you to carefully address the methodological section that you find in doi.org/10.1108/CG-04-2022-0174²; <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2292>³; doi.org/10.1109/TEM.2022.3197241⁴. Please download these articles. They will be useful for you to strengthen the theoretical background, but also for the methodology. Also, explain how you produced figures 1-3. Include the software used to produce the figures. The discussion should be better supported by theory. Conclusions need to be strengthened.

Good Luck!

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Is the background of the case's history and progression described in sufficient detail?

Partly

Is the background of the case's history and progression described in sufficient detail?

Partly

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?

Partly

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?

Partly

If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?

Not applicable

If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?

Not applicable

Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?

No source data required

Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?

Partly

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?

No

Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for teaching or other practitioners?

Partly

Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for other practitioners?

Partly

Is the argument information presented in such a way that it can be understood by a non-academic audience?

Yes

Does the piece present solutions to actual real world challenges?

Not applicable

Is real-world evidence provided to support any conclusions made?

Not applicable

Could any solutions being offered be effectively implemented in practice?

Not applicable

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Accounting and Management

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Reviewer Report 30 May 2022

<https://doi.org/10.21956/emeraldopenres.15608.r28170>

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Jacob D. Rendtorff 

Department of Social Sciences and Business, Roskilde University, Roskilde, Denmark

This article provides a competent analysis of the situation of CSR activities in Korean global firms during the ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The topic is relevant and important since we need more knowledge about how not only Korean global firms, but all companies deal with CSR in the context of the developments of CSR in the cThis article provides a competent analysis of the situation of CSR activities in Korean global firms during the ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The analysis of the article looking at Korean global firms (Samsung Electronics, LG Electronics, and Hyundai Motors) is based on careful work and the description of the CSR activities of the companies is relevant and important. The findings are interesting since they focus on genuine motives of the CSR activities and good citizenship of the companies. It is interesting that the research say that companies' CSR activities support both company and society with the idea of creating great social value. Thus, congratulations with this good work, that I am happy to recommend for passing peer review.

Is the background of the case's history and progression described in sufficient detail?

Yes

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Yes

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?

Yes

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If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?

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Yes

Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?

Yes

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Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?

Yes

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Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for teaching or other practitioners?

Yes

Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for other practitioners?

Yes

Is the argument information presented in such a way that it can be understood by a non-academic audience?

Yes

Does the piece present solutions to actual real world challenges?

Yes

Is real-world evidence provided to support any conclusions made?

Yes

Could any solutions being offered be effectively implemented in practice?

Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: CSR and business ethics

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.
