

# Visionary leadership, CSR practices and workforce engagement: Basis for stakeholders relationship improvement framework

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## Abstract

This study examines the relationship between visionary leadership, corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, and workforce engagement in private enterprises in Shandong Province, China. It aims to establish a basis for a stakeholder relationship improvement framework. The research strives to achieve five specific objectives: Define and assess visionary leadership, encompassing creativity and innovation, inspirational communication, and ethical governance; identify and analyze CSR practices, focusing on environmental, social, and economic responsibilities; determine the level of workforce engagement, measured through job satisfaction, personal development, and team collaboration; test the significant relationships between visionary leadership, CSR practices, and workforce engagement; and based on the findings, propose a stakeholder relationship improvement framework. A sample of 400 employees from five private enterprises participated in the study. To achieve these objectives, a mixed-method approach was employed, utilizing a descriptive design with both qualitative and quantitative analysis. This comprehensive design ensures a thorough and accurate interpretation of the findings. Quantitative data was collected through online surveys and analyzed using statistical techniques. Qualitative data was gathered through survey and content analysis. The findings revealed a positive correlation between visionary leadership, CSR practices, and workforce engagement. Enterprises with strong visionary leadership tend to implement more effective CSR strategies and cultivate a more engaged workforce. Furthermore, the study indicates that CSR practices and workforce engagement reinforce each other creating a virtuous cycle that benefits both the enterprise and its stakeholders. Based on these results, the study proposed a stakeholder relationship improvement framework that incorporates the key elements of visionary leadership, CSR practices, and workforce engagement. This framework serves as a guide for enterprises in Shandong Province to enhance their stakeholder relationships, leading to improved performance and long-term sustainability. Further research in different regions and industries could validate the findings and broaden understanding of this important relationship. The main contents of this study include an introduction, literature review, methodology, results and findings, discussion and

recommendations, proposed stakeholder relationship improvement framework, and conclusion.

**Keywords:** visionary leadership, CSR practices, workforce engagement, stakeholder relationship improvement framework, creativity and innovation, inspirational communication, ethical governance, environmental responsibility, social responsibility, economic responsibility, job satisfaction, personal development, team collaboration

## Visionary leadership, CSR practices and workforce engagement: Basis for stakeholders relationship improvement framework

### 1. Introduction

In the current context of globalization with the rapid development of the knowledge economy, private enterprises, as a vital part of China's economy, their operation mode and strategic choice have a profound effect on local and even national economic development. Especially in China's Shandong Province, an economically active and culturally rich region, the healthy development of private enterprises is significant.

Smith et al. (2015) believed that a visionary leadership style can promote the establishment of long-term and stable stakeholder relationships in SMEs. A visionary leadership style enhances the trust and commitment of stakeholders (such as suppliers, customers, employees, and communities) in private enterprises through a clear corporate vision and strategic direction. Johnson et al. (2018) emphasized that private enterprises can significantly improve their relationship with stakeholders through CSR practices (such as environmental protection projects, social support, etc.). Socially responsible practice plays an important role in actively building brand image and improving corporate reputation, as well as enhancing stakeholders' loyalty and willingness to cooperate. Lee et al. (2019) pointed out that participation can enhance employees' sense of belonging and satisfaction, thus improving their loyalty to the enterprise and willingness to cooperate with external stakeholders. Internal participation and external cooperation facilitate the founding of a close network of stakeholder relationships.

From a macro perspective, China's sustained economic growth and increasing international influence have provided unprecedented development opportunities for private enterprises. However, with the intensification of market competition and the increasing uncertainty of the external environment, how to build and maintain a harmonious relationship with stakeholders has become a major challenge for private enterprises. As a forward-looking leadership style, visionary leadership can guide enterprises to respond to complex and changing market environments through clear goal-setting and strategic vision. In terms of CSR practices, with the awakening of global consumers' consciousness of corporate social responsibility (CSR), increasingly companies have begun to incorporate CSR into their long-term strategic planning. For private enterprises, CSR practices are not only a manifestation of social responsibility, but also an effective means to enhance brand image, attract outstanding talents, and strengthen the competitiveness of enterprises. Workforce Engagement is directly related to the internal cohesion and innovation ability of the enterprise. In the era of the knowledge economy, the creativity and wisdom of employees are the most valuable resources of enterprises. By stimulating employees' sense of engagement and belonging, companies can unleash their potential and attain sustainable growth. Starting from the macroeconomic environment, this paper gradually went deep into the specific operational level of private enterprises and analyzed the interrelationship among the three variables including visionary leadership, CSR practices, and workforce engagement and their impact on the improvement of stakeholder relations. By building a framework for relationship improvement, it aims to help private enterprises in Shandong Province better respond to current challenges and opportunities and achieve a harmonious coexistence with stakeholders.

This study intends to contribute to the present information by offering perceptions hooked on how visionary leadership, CSR practices, and workforce engagement can collectively serve as a foundation for a Stakeholder Relationship Improvement Framework tailored for private enterprises in Shandong Province. By understanding and harnessing these elements, private enterprises can potentially enhance their reputation, strengthen relationships with stakeholders, and contribute meaningfully to the sustainable progress of the region.

**Objectives of the Study** - This study assessed the key factors of visionary leadership, CSR practices, and workforce engagement for private enterprises within China's Shandong Province. The result will be used to

improve the stakeholder relationships framework. Specifically, described visionary leadership in terms of innovation and creativity, inspiration and communication, and ethical governance; determined the CSR Practices regarding environmental responsibility, social responsibility, and economic responsibility; determined workforce engagement regarding job satisfaction, personal development, and team collaboration; tested the meaningful relationship with the three major variables, and developed stakeholders' relationship improvement framework.

## 2. Methods

**Research Design** - A mixed-method approach, employing both descriptive research design and qualitative and quantitative analyses, was used to fully and accurately interpret the findings. According to Smith et al. (2022), descriptive research methods involve studies that gather facts, data, and information relevant to the current state of a phenomenon. This approach provides an accurate overview of the situation, person, or event being investigated. Chen et al. (2023) further emphasized that descriptive research aims to study and monitor a phenomenon that cannot be identified by objective factors alone. In this study, the researchers employed a descriptive research design to gather information about the respondents. This involved providing and distributing questionnaires. This approach effectively facilitated data collection from the respondents.

**Participants of the Study** - Based on the report "2023 Qingdao Top 100 private Enterprises List", the study selected the five private companies for a questionnaire survey. In these five private companies, 400 employees participated in the online interview survey. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula with a five percent margin of error. Additionally, a stratified random sampling technique was employed to select participants.

**Instruments of the Study** - This study employed modified questionnaires with Likert-4 scale measurements to collect data. The first part of the questionnaire investigated the demographics of the respondents. The second part assessed visionary leadership including innovation and creativity, inspirational communication, and ethical governance. The third part examined CSR practices by focusing on environmental responsibility, social responsibility and economic responsibility; The fourth part measured workforce engagement through questions on job satisfaction, personal development and team collaboration. Following the initial design, 30 experts were invited to conduct a pre-test of the questionnaire. This pre-test helped to further improve the questionnaire's. The variable reliability test conducted on the questionnaire emphasized that Cronbach's alpha values for all variables have improved after revalidating the questions and redoing the reliability test. This indicated that the questions used in the study were reliable and consistent in measuring the variables of visionary leadership, CSR practices, and workforce engagement. The Cronbach's alpha of innovation and creativity, inspiration, and communication, ethical governance, environmental responsibility, social responsibility, job satisfaction, personal development, and team collaboration were between 0.911 and 0.952, which were all excellent marks. Cronbach's alpha of economic responsibility was 0.749, which was an acceptable mark. Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.7, which were all in the acceptable to excellent range according to the rule of thumb provided by George and Mallery (2003). This suggested that the questionnaire was a reliable tool for measuring the key dimensions of the study and could be used for research in this area.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - A stratified sampling approach was adopted to select the study participants. Prior to the formal data collection, questionnaires were distributed online through the China Wenjuanxing data collection platform. First, a reliability test was conducted on a small sample. The results of this pilot test were then submitted to the thesis advisor for review and approval of the final survey content. Once the questionnaire was finalized, Wechat and email were used to distribute the survey to the respondents. After data collection, data was checked for accuracy, statistically analyzed, tabulated, and summarized. Finally, the results were interpreted and analyzed.

**Data Analysis** - This study employed weighted means and ranks to assess visionary leadership, CSR practices, and work engagement. Visionary leadership was assessed in terms of creativity and innovation,

inspirational communication, and ethical governance. CSR practices were evaluated based on environmental responsibility, social responsibility, and economic responsibility. Finally, workforce engagement was measured through job satisfaction, personal development, and team collaboration. The Shapiro-Wilk test revealed that the p-values for all variables were less than 0.05. This indicated that the data set was not normally distributed. Consequently, Spearman rho, a non-parametric test, was used to analyze the relationships between the variables. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 28.

**Ethical Considerations** - To ensure the quality, reliability, and integrity of the research, ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Firstly, the study underwent and passed an ethical review process. Informed consent was obtained from all the respondents who willingly participated in the study. Respondents completed the questionnaire anonymously during the data collection phase. Furthermore, the confidentiality of all respondents' information was strictly maintained. Finally, the research was designed to avoid conflicts of interest and ensure the safety of all the participants.

### 3. Results and discussion

**Table 1**

*Summary Table on Visionary Leadership*

Key Result Areas	Composite Mean	VI	Rank
Creativity and Innovation	3.08	Agree	2
Inspirational Communication	3.11	Agree	1
Ethical Governance	3.07	Agree	3
Grand Composite Mean	3.09	Agree	

*Legend: 3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree; 2.50-3.49=Agree; 1.50-2.49=Disagree; 1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree*

Table 1 presents a summary of the results for visionary leadership in terms of three key result areas - creativity and innovation, inspirational communication, and ethical governance. The overall grand composite mean is 3.09, under the "Agree" group. It indicates that workers generally agree with the statements about their leaders' behavior in these areas. The research implication is that visionary leadership has a significant impact on various aspects of organizational performance, including creativity and innovation, communication, and ethical behavior. This highlights the importance of developing visionary leaders within organizations.

In terms of the relationship between these dimensions, Eisenbeiss et al. (2008) found that inspirational communication can positively affect employees' creativity and innovation ability. In addition, a study by Den Hartog et al. (2012) suggested that ethical leadership can foster an environment of creativity and innovation within an organization. Resick et al (2010) emphasized the importance of leadership's ethical governance to organizational creativity and innovation and revealed that ethical leaders can stimulate employees' creativity and innovation ability through their own behavior. It points out that ethical governance is crucial to creating an organizational environment conducive to innovation and creativity (Walumbwa, 2010). A leadership style of inspirational communication can stimulate employees' creativity and willingness to innovate (Trevino et al. 2003) .

**Table 2**

*Summary Table on CSR Practices*

Key Result Areas	Composite Mean	VI	Rank
Environmental Responsibility	3.07	Agree	3
Social Responsibility	3.17	Agree	1
Economic Responsibility	3.16	Agree	2
Grand Composite Mean	3.13	Agree	

*Legend: 3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree; 2.50-3.49=Agree; 1.50-2.49=Disagree; 1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree*

Table 2 illustrates a summary table about CSR practices, with 3.13 an overall composite mean, falling under

the "agree" class. The three key result areas in this table are environmental responsibility, social responsibility, and economic responsibility. This indicates that the company's performance in these areas is generally seen as positive by team members. The research implication is that investing in CSR indicates an optimistic influence in the field of a company's general performance, according to both social and economic characteristics. This highlights the significance of incorporating social responsibility into business practices.

According to the above information, the average scores among the three scopes of social responsibility, economic responsibility, and environmental responsibility are all above 3.00, meeting the "agree" rating standard, indicating that the company's performance in these three areas is relatively good. In terms of social responsibility, the company may have taken measures such as charitable donations and public welfare activities, which have received positive results. In terms of social responsibility, the company may adopt fair and ethical principles, public welfare activities, and other measures, and receive positive results. In terms of economic responsibility and environmental responsibility, the company may also adopt transparent and reliable financial policies, strengthen resource management, energy conservation, and other measures, and obtain high evaluation.

Smith et al. (2020) showed that there is a meaningful progressive correlation connecting corporate social responsibility with business performance. Corporate social responsibility can enhance brand image, improve customer satisfaction, reduce operational risks, and so on. Research has revealed that active social responsibility often leads to better environmental performance, as well as better economic performance. Corporate social responsibility is not only a moral responsibility but also an economic method to achieve sustainable development of enterprises (Williams et al. 2020)

**Table 3**

*Summary Table on Workforce Engagement*

Key Result Areas	Composite Mean	VI	Rank
Job Satisfaction	3.17	Agree	1.5
Personal Development	3.15	Agree	3
Team Collaboration	3.17	Agree	1.5
<b>Grand Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

*Legend: 3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree; 2.50-3.49=Agree; 1.50-2.49=Disagree; 1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree*

Table 3 displays a summary of employee engagement with a whole composite average of 3.16, which falls into the "agree" category. This shows that, overall, employee engagement is positive in key outcome areas such as job satisfaction, personal development, and team collaboration. This shows a meaningful impact on worker motivation, retention, and the success of the company. By promoting these areas and fostering an affirmative labor environment, companies may raise worker enthusiasm and engagement, ultimately driving business success.

Saks (2006) pointed out that employee engagement is one of the fundamental factors for business obtaining success. Employee engagement includes job satisfaction, personal development, and teamwork. By improving the participation of employees, the enthusiasm and enthusiasm of employees can be enhanced, the loyalty of employees can be enhanced, and the turnover rate can be reduced. Improve the competitiveness and sustainability of the organization by increasing employee engagement. Shuck et al., (2010) highlighted the significance of worker engagement to business success. Job satisfaction, personal development, and teamwork are all linked together to lead to employee engagement. Improving job satisfaction can promote personal development and teamwork, and improving personal development and teamwork can enhance job satisfaction. By increasing employee engagement, it helps to maintain an edge in the fierce competition and achieve organizational goals.

**Table 4***Relationship Between Visionary Leadership and CSR Practices*

Variables	rho	p-value	Interpretation
<b>Creativity and Innovation</b>			
Environmental Responsibility	0.469**	< .001	Highly Significant
Social Responsibility	0.551**	< .001	Highly Significant
Economic Responsibility	0.551**	< .001	Highly Significant
<b>Inspirational Communication</b>			
Environmental Responsibility	0.469**	< .001	Highly Significant
Social Responsibility	0.496**	< .001	Highly Significant
Economic Responsibility	0.500**	< .001	Highly Significant
<b>Ethical Governance</b>			
Environmental Responsibility	0.572**	< .001	Highly Significant
Social Responsibility	0.444**	< .001	Highly Significant
Economic Responsibility	0.509**	< .001	Highly Significant

Table 4 displays a moderate direct relationship between the sub-variables of visionary leadership and CSR practices. The computed rho-values range from 0.444 to 0.572. The figure showed a statistically meaningful connection between visionary leadership and CSR practices due to the acquired p-values no more than 1%.

Based on the findings of this study, visionary leadership influences the basis of a framework for improving stakeholder relations. The figure shows a substantial helpful connection between visionary leaders and CSR practices, particularly in the areas of creativity and innovation, environmental responsibility, social responsibility, economic responsibility, inspirational communication, and ethical governance, suggesting that visionary leaders can effectively drive and facilitate CSR practices within their organizations. The framework will focus on developing and promoting visionary leadership skills and incorporating corporate social responsibility practices into the company's mission and values. By doing so, companies can improve their relationships with stakeholders, promote sustainable and ethical practices, and ultimately lead to the total achievement of the party.

**Table 5***Relationship Between Visionary Leadership and Workforce Engagement*

Variables	rho	p-value	Interpretation
<b>Creativity and Innovation</b>			
Job Satisfaction	0.497**	< .001	Highly Significant
Personal Development	0.412**	< .001	Highly Significant
Team Collaboration	0.417**	< .001	Highly Significant
<b>Inspirational Communication</b>			
Job Satisfaction	0.458**	< .001	Highly Significant
Personal Development	0.344**	< .001	Highly Significant
Team Collaboration	0.483**	< .001	Highly Significant
<b>Ethical Governance</b>			
Job Satisfaction	0.451**	< .001	Highly Significant
Personal Development	0.413**	< .001	Highly Significant
Team Collaboration	0.436**	< .001	Highly Significant

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 5 shows the computed rho-values ranging from 0.344 to 0.497. The figure indicates a weak to moderate straight connection including visionary leadership and workforce engagement. The data shows a

statistically meaningful connection between visionary leadership and workforce engagement since the achieved p-values no more than 1%. Based on the outcomes of the research, workforce engagement influences the basis of the framework for improving stakeholder relationships. The data displays a major positive relationship between visionary leadership and workforce engagement, particularly in the creativity and innovation, inspiring communication, and ethical governance fields, suggesting that visionary leaders can effectively motivate and engage employees in their work. The framework will focus on developing and promoting visionary leadership skills, as well as promoting a positive and engaging work environment. By doing so, companies can improve relationships with stakeholders, promote employee satisfaction and motivation, and ultimately contribute to the overall achievement of the party.

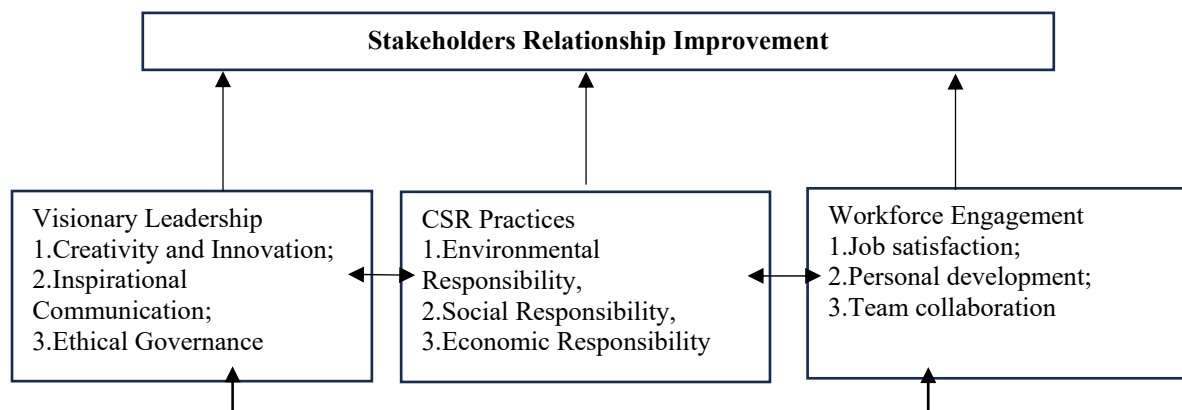
**Table 6**  
*Relationship Between CSR Practices and Workforce Engagement*

Variables	rho	p-value	Interpretation
<b>Environmental Responsibility</b>			
Job Satisfaction	0.457**	< .001	Highly Significant
Personal Development	0.468**	< .001	Highly Significant
Team Collaboration	0.405**	< .001	Highly Significant
<b>Social Responsibility</b>			
Job Satisfaction	0.563**	< .001	Highly Significant
Personal Development	0.442**	< .001	Highly Significant
Team Collaboration	0.435**	< .001	Highly Significant
<b>Economic Responsibility</b>			
Job Satisfaction	0.554**	< .001	Highly Significant
Personal Development	0.461**	< .001	Highly Significant
Team Collaboration	0.454**	< .001	Highly Significant

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 6 showcases the computed rho-values ranging from 0.405 to 0.563. The figure reveals a moderate direct link including CSR practices and workforce engagement. It disclosed a statistically noteworthy link between CSR practices and workforce engagement as the acquired p-values were no more than 1%.

Based on the findings of this study, CSR practices influence the basis of the framework for improving stakeholder relationships. The figure displayed a weighty progressive link between CSR practices and employee engagement, particularly in the environmental, social, and economic responsibility fields, suggesting that enterprises investing in CSR practices tend to have more engaged and satisfied employees. The framework will focus on promoting and investing in corporate social responsibility practices and incorporating them into the company's culture and values. By doing so, companies can improve relationships with stakeholders, promote worker agreements and improvement, and ultimately lead the whole attainment of the group.



*Figure1 Stakeholders Relationship Improvement Framework Model*



The data displays a meaningful upbeat relationship found in visionary leadership, CSR practices, and workforce engagement. Visionary leadership, CSR practices, and workforce engagement are these three elements that interact and promote each other, which together form the basis for the improvement of stakeholder relations. Visionary leadership provides direction for the development of the organization by implementing strategies such as creativity and innovation, inspirational communication, and ethical governance aspects, which can balance the role of the needs of all stakeholders; CSR practices reflect the responsibility and contribution of the organization to the society, economy and environment, and comforts to earn the confidence and regard of the public, enhance their brand image and reputation, and thus improve their relationships with stakeholders. Workforce engagement is a key factor in achieving organizational goals, creating job satisfaction, personal development, and team collaboration, which can improve employee motivation and work efficiency, and support the sustainable progress of the company.

#### 4. Conclusion and recommendation

The study found that respondents moderately approved of the level of visionary leadership displayed by private enterprises, particularly in terms of creativity and innovation, inspirational communication, and ethical governance. Respondents generally agreed that private enterprises implement CSR practices, focusing on environmental responsibility, social responsibility, and economic responsibility. The findings revealed positive levels of workforce engagement among employees in the surveyed private enterprises, as evidenced by their reported job satisfaction, personal development opportunities, and team collaboration. A statistically significant positive relationship was identified between visionary leadership, CSR practices, and workforce engagement. This suggests that strong visionary leadership and effective CSR practices can contribute to higher levels of workforce engagement. Based on the study's findings, a framework for improving stakeholder relationships was developed. This framework offers practical guidance for private enterprises in Shandong Province to enhance their interactions with stakeholders, potentially leading to improved performance and long-term sustainability.

Managers and leaders should develop and promote visionary leadership skills. This will enable them to inspire and engage employees, leading to a more positive work environment and greater acceptance of CSR practices. Private enterprises should invest in robust CSR practices, particularly focusing on environmental responsibility, social responsibility, and economic responsibility. Implementing such practices can demonstrably improve employee satisfaction and engagement. Managers and leaders can further elevate workforce engagement by fostering a positive work environment and actively promoting team collaboration. Private enterprises in general are encouraged to consider adopting the stakeholder relationship improvement framework proposed in this study. This framework serves as a valuable guide for developing and implementing sustainable and ethical practices. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct related studies in diverse regions and industries. This will help validate the findings of this study and expand our understanding of the relationship between visionary leadership, CSR practices, and workforce engagement. Additionally, exploring other factors that may contribute to improved stakeholder relationships and organizational success is an important area for further investigation

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