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Bakari Khatib Faki

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Reframing Corporate Social Responsibility as a strategic instrument for poverty reduction and social welfare in Zanzibar

Bakari Khatib Faki 

Faculty of Social and Political sciences, Universitas Indonesia, Depok, West Java, Indonesia

email: fakibakar8@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a strategic instrument for poverty reduction and social welfare in Zanzibar. Using a qualitative research design based on secondary data analysis, the study draws on government policy documents, corporate reports, and academic literature to evaluate the nature, scope, and effectiveness of CSR practices across key sectors, particularly tourism, telecommunications, and banking. The findings reveal that, while CSR initiatives are increasingly present, they remain largely fragmented, short-term, and predominantly philanthropic in orientation. Most interventions focus on donations, sponsorships, and community support activities, which provide immediate benefits but fail to address the structural drivers of poverty. The study further identifies a significant disconnect between CSR practices and national development frameworks such as Zanzibar Development Vision 2050 and the Zanzibar Poverty Reduction Plan. Limited coordination, weak monitoring mechanisms, and minimal community participation further constrain the developmental impact of CSR. The paper argues for a strategic shift toward a development-oriented CSR model that emphasizes policy alignment, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability. Such a reorientation would enable CSR to function as a complementary pillar in advancing inclusive development and long-term social welfare in Zanzibar.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility; poverty reduction; social welfare

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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become one of the key paradigms of restructuring the relationship between business activity and social well-being during the last decades. Originally theorized as a voluntary and philanthropic practice, in time CSR has become a strategic, institutionalized aspect of a corporate practice (Helmold, 2021). This change is indicative of the increased acknowledgment of the fact that corporations are not only economic players but also entities with social and environmental responsibilities. As such, multinational and domestic organizations are increasingly incorporating CSR as a part and parcel of their business strategies, connecting their business performance to the wider social impacts, such as community development and social change (Shaikh, 2024). Therefore, CSR ceases to be peripheral but it is a type of strategic social investment that has the potential to solve acute development issues, especially in the Global South.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, CSR takes on a greater importance because subsisting structural issues are poverty, inequality, and the lack of access to basic social services (Saeed et al., 2025). Although this has been the case, governments and international organizations continue to intervene, but the role of the private sector in inclusive development has not been fully exploited. The nature of CSR in most African economies is characterized by fragmentation, short-termism, and more philanthropic activities hence limiting their ability to produce a sustainable social welfare outcome or have any significant impact on poverty reduction.

This relationship is especially noticeable in the semi-autonomous state of Zanzibar, which is a part of the United Republic of Tanzania, where poverty is a widespread socio-economic issue. The structural limitations such as excessive reliance on informal jobs, subsistence living and lack of access to high-quality education and health care still prevent the developmental progress (Pike et al., 2024). Though there are government and donor-initiated programs to reduce poverty, there is a little integration of CSR in overall development planning. According to Mohammed (2022) the current CSR activities in tourism and telecommunications industries are largely focused on donations, health and environmental campaigns, and are mostly philanthropic. Although these initiatives have short-term communal gains, they do not do enough to deal with the structural determinants of poverty and produce lasting social welfare gains.

Despite the expanding global literature on CSR, a critical gap persists in understanding its role as a strategic instrument for poverty reduction and social welfare within small island developing contexts such as Zanzibar. Existing studies in Africa tend to conceptualize CSR primarily in terms of corporate philanthropy or reputational management, with limited attention to its integration into systemic welfare frameworks or national development strategies. In Zanzibar, scholarly engagement remains particularly limited and fragmented, with a disproportionate focus on tourism-related environmental initiatives, often overlooking critical dimensions such as youth unemployment, social protection, and inclusive economic development.

It is on this background that this study seeks to critically analyze CSR as a strategic poverty reduction and social welfare improvement tool in Zanzibar. Going beyond the philanthropic approach, the study places CSR into a larger sustainable development context and investigates how business programs can be re-focused on long-term, inclusive and community-based results. In this respect, the study adds to the scholarly discussion and policy-making by suggesting the ways in which companies can go beyond profit-driven goals and become active contributors to the resolution of structural socio-economic issues.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The CSR literature provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the evolving relationship between corporations and society (Bilodeau et al., 2025). Among the most influential frameworks is Carroll's CSR Pyramid, which conceptualizes corporate responsibility across four interrelated dimensions: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic (Nurunnabi et al., 2020). While this model has significantly shaped global CSR discourse, contemporary scholarship increasingly emphasizes Stakeholder Theory, which posits that corporations have obligations not only to shareholders but also to a broader network of stakeholders, including employees, communities, customers, and the environment (Debeila et al., 2024). This perspective is particularly relevant in development contexts, where corporate actions directly affect vulnerable populations.

However, the application of CSR in African contexts has been subject to critical scrutiny. Scholars argue that CSR initiatives are often externally driven, donor-influenced, or modeled on Western frameworks that inadequately reflect local socio-economic realities (Fouda, 2023). Empirical studies from countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya suggest that CSR can generate meaningful development outcomes when it is locally grounded and aligned with national priorities (Kappo-Abidemi & Kanayo, 2020). According to the evidence by S. Ogbu (2023) indicates that CSR across much of Africa remains predominantly philanthropic, lacking the strategic orientation necessary to produce long-term and systemic impacts on poverty and social welfare.

In the East African context, CSR activities are particularly prominent within the tourism sector, where companies frequently invest in environmental conservation and community-based initiatives. While such efforts contribute to corporate visibility and sustainability narratives, they often prioritize reputational benefits over structural social transformation (Tarimo et al., 2025). In Zanzibar specifically, the literature on CSR remains limited, with existing studies largely focusing on environmental conservation and tourism-related activities. Scholar like B. Faki and I. Ahmed (2025) Indicating critical development issues including poverty alleviation, youth unemployment, and access to education and healthcare remain underexplored within CSR scholarship.

The existing gap, therefore, lies in the absence of a welfare-oriented and development-focused CSR framework in the context of Zanzibar. Although companies engage in sporadic philanthropic initiatives, there is a lack of systematic evaluation of their contributions to poverty reduction and social welfare outcomes (Anam et al., 2024). CSR activities are frequently ad hoc and lack structured implementation frameworks such as the Plan-Do-Check-Act-Improve (PDCAI) cycle, which could facilitate continuous improvement and sustainability (Nguyen et al., 2023). Therefore, community participation in the design and evaluation of CSR initiatives remains minimal, resulting in misaligned priorities and limited local ownership.

As an example, the corporate intervention into education is usually one-off donation that is unable to solve the systemic problem like teacher shortage, high rate of dropout, and vocational opportunities (Al-Makhadmeh et al., 2022). Likewise, CSR activities that are linked to health often focus on sensitization and do not involve any investments in healthcare facilities or even delivery systems. According to Faki (2026) these trends describe how the unexploited potential of CSR as a source of structural poverty reduction is underutilized. This limitation is further compounded by the fact that corporate initiatives are not aligned to national development frameworks and thus opportunities to create synergistic impact are missed.

To address these loopholes, this study defines CSR as a strategic and development-based tool and not a fringe philanthropic endeavor. The research is based on the Stakeholder Theory and is backed by the PDCAI framework, considering the possibility to redesign CSR as systematic, measurable, and sustainable interventions, which would fit the needs of the community and the

priorities of national development. In particular, the research questions that are discussed in the study are as follows: (1) How is CSR conceptualized and implemented in Zanzibar in terms of poverty reduction? (2) what are the weaknesses and strengths of current CSR effort in the name of social welfare, and (3) how can CSR be redesigned to become a more efficient vehicle to work as a means of poverty-reduction?

The answers to these questions allow the study to contribute to the literature by placing the concept of CSR in the context of the wider discussion of the topic of poverty alleviation and social welfare in Zanzibar--the region that is still under-researched. It can also provide useful guidance to policy makers, corporate players, and social welfare practitioners since it highlights ways of synchronizing CSR programs with the priorities of the community and national development policies. Finally, the research places CSR as the possible solution between corporate interests and social justice and reforms the role of the private sector as a participant in sustainable development.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this research, the research design used is qualitative research design using secondary data analysis to explore the position of CSR in poverty reduction and social welfare in Zanzibar. The qualitative method will be suitable in this study since it will allow examining CSR practices, their organizational constraints, and how it may be converted into strategic development tools instead of emphasizing the measurable results. Secondary data especially are very apt in this context because it will be possible to gain a comprehensive analysis of available policy frameworks, institutional practices and recorded CSR initiatives without the logistical, financial and ethical limitations that come with primary field work.

To provide the depth of analysis and relevance to the context, the study relies on a wide variety of secondary sources. The sources will encompass government policy documents, national development strategies as well as official statistics of the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar and the United Republic of Tanzania as well as the Zanzibar Poverty Reduction Plan (ZPRP), Zanzibar Development Vision 2050 and the Ministry of Finance and Planning reports. Also, corporate reports and CSR disclosure of key sectors especially tourism and telecommunications are also considered in order to reflect the practices of the private sector. In order to place the analysis in a more comprehensive comparative context, regional and international sources are also included in the study, such as World Bank poverty estimates, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Reports, and scholarly academic literature. These materials were selected based on the relevance to the CSR, poverty reduction, and social welfare, their publication in a modern period of time to support the validity and timeliness of the analysis.

Data analysis is conducted using qualitative content analysis, which allows for the systematic identification of patterns, themes, and gaps in CSR practices. The analytical process involves iterative coding of documents, beginning with open coding to identify recurring themes such as education, health, and environmental initiatives, followed by axial coding to explore relationships between CSR activities and poverty reduction outcomes, and finally selective coding to develop broader analytical categories, including fragmentation, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement. In addition, elements of critical discourse analysis are employed to examine how CSR is framed within policy and corporate narratives, particularly in distinguishing between philanthropic approaches and more strategic, development-oriented practices.

The study uses data triangulation, comparing evidence in various sources, such as government documents, corporate reports, and academic studies, to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. This method helps to minimize the probability of bias and enhance the validity of

interpretations. Moreover, analytical transparency is ensured by the use of a regular and systematic coding so that the interpretations would be based on the data and not on subjective assumptions. Although the use of secondary data can also be a drawback of the direct interaction with the community point of view, it offers a strong basis of detecting structural trends and gaps within the CSR implementation at the policy level in Zanzibar. Thus, the presented methodological approach would allow the study to produce a coherent and evidence-based analysis of CSR as an element that could be used to reduce poverty and promote social welfare, as well as to showcase how secondary sources can be effectively used to examine under-researched development settings such as Zanzibar.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Structure and Nature of CSR Practices in Zanzibar

CSR in Zanzibar reflects a progressively expanding yet structurally uneven engagement of the private sector in social development processes (Mkuu & Yusoff, 2020). The findings of this study indicate that CSR activities are predominantly concentrated within key economic sectors namely tourism, telecommunications, and banking which collectively play a pivotal role in shaping Zanzibar's socio-economic landscape. As Mwaseba (2025) describes that this sectoral concentration is not incidental; rather, it reflects the relative economic dominance, financial capacity, and institutional visibility of these industries within the island economy. As a result, CSR initiatives emerging from these sectors have become the most visible manifestations of private sector participation in addressing social challenges.

Within these industries, the CSR activities are usually oriented toward three main areas which include education, health and environmental protection. According to N. Emini (2026) the trend indicates that corporate actors are becoming more and more aware of their possible role in the well-being of the community and sustainable development. The educations often involve scholarships, delivery of learning resources, and a few times the infrastructure support like constructing classrooms (K. Faki & Ali, 2026). The health-related interventions include awareness campaigns, mobile clinics, or sponsoring of medical outreach program but the environmental CSR activities are mainly evident in the tourism sector where they are mostly aligned to the business interests based on natural resource conservation. Altogether, these interventions can prove that CSR in Zanzibar is not completely missing or negligible; quiet, on the contrary, it is actively exercised and embedded in the corporate discourse. Nevertheless, with the seemingly broadening growth, it is found in the analysis that CSR is still largely disjointed, short-term oriented, and not well integrated into the wider development models.

The CSR activities in the tourism sector are very visible and, in most cases, aligned to the environmental sustainability and community relations strategies of an organization. These initiatives that are commonly done by hotels and resorts include beach clean-ups, mangrove restoration projects, and sponsorship of local cultural festivals (Ahmad et al., 2023). Such activities are not only involved in conservation of the environment but also, they help to improve the corporate image and brand validity in a very competitive world tourism market. However, the evidence indicates that these kinds of initiatives tend to be more visible and symbolically involved than really structural. As an illustration, although the environmental campaigns help preserve the aesthetic and ecological worth of the tourist destinations, the campaigns seldom consider the wider socio-economic issues of the local communities, including unemployment, income disparities, or lack of access to basic services (Kitole & Sesabo, 2024). Therefore, the application of CSR within the tourism industry, though admirable in its motives, tends to work on the plane of superficial intervention as opposed to the plane of transformation development.

The same tendency is followed in the telecommunications industry, with the examples of Yas and Vodacom that have shown their increasing interest in CSR by investing in education, digital inclusion, and health awareness (Tsokota & Mutongi, 2024). These efforts are indicative of a newfound appreciation of how technology can be used to assist in social and economic development especially in helping to close digital gaps and increasing access to information. The scholarships in the information and communication technology (ICT), digital literacy programs and SMS based health campaigns are some of the contributions in terms of human capital development (Balog & Demidova, 2021). Therefore, even though they are topical, these initiatives are usually small-scale and short in duration, and are often incorporated into more extensive marketing or corporate visibility plans. In that way, their long-term developmental potential is limited, especially regarding the response to systematic disparities in digital infrastructure and opportunities access.

The banking industry, which is relatively less represented in CSR discussions, also gives back through financial literacy services, small business support, and sponsoring community projects every now and then (Pratihari & Uzma, 2020). Such interventions can help in the financial inclusion and economic empowerment especially where accessibility to formal financial services is unequal. The analysis however suggests that such efforts are normally minor and selective with only a few segments of the population being covered. Further, they are seldom part of multi-faceted interventions that seek to deal with structural obstacles to financial inclusion at larger scales (Example: income volatility, collateral inaccessibility, or limited financial access in the rural setting). Consequently, the transformative nature of CSR in the banking industry has not been fully exploited.

A defining characteristic that cuts across all sectors is the lack of coordination and strategic alignment in CSR practices. CSR initiatives in Zanzibar are predominantly designed and implemented independently by individual firms, with minimal collaboration among private sector actors or alignment with government-led development strategies (Maliganya et al., 2023). This lack of coordination is particularly evident in relation to national frameworks such as the Zanzibar Development Vision 2050 and the ZPRP, which provide comprehensive roadmaps for addressing poverty, enhancing human capital, and promoting sustainable development (Mohammad et al., 2023). The absence of meaningful integration between corporate initiatives and these policy frameworks results in a fragmented landscape of CSR activities, where efforts are dispersed, duplicative in some areas, and insufficient in others.

This disintegration is a major weakness on the overall efficacy of CSR as a development tool. Although local and short-term benefits can be created through individual initiatives, their overall effect is minimal because of the lack of synergy, scalability and continuity. As an example, several companies can sponsor educational activities in the same cities independently, whereas rural population, which has more needs, is not served. Equally, environmental projects can be focused within tourist areas neglecting other ecologically sensitive areas (Wu et al., 2024). These trends illustrate the inefficiencies that come with inconsistent CSR activities and the need to have a more holistic and strategic approach.

Besides, the developmental effect of CSR is further limited by the short-term orientation of most initiatives. The CSR activities are commonly project oriented, annualized, or corporal cycles, and they do not have long term sustainability mechanisms. This time constraint does not allow CSR to deal with the structural and multidimensional character of poverty, which can only be dealt with in the long term through coordinated interventions (Lou et al., 2023). Therefore, although CSR activities in Zanzibar offer tangible and at times meaningful benefits on the community level, these cannot lead to systematic change in alleviating poverty and social welfare.

Therefore, the paradoxical relation of CSR practices in Zanzibar can be observed in terms of structure and nature. On one hand, as highlighted by A. Sharma (2025), there is an evident indication of increased corporate participation in social development especially in major sectors of the economy. Conversely, this interaction is marked by disintegration, small scale and insignificant inclusion in

national developmental agendas. These structural restrictions have to be addressed in order to transform CSR into a set of separate projects into a unified and effective tool of sustainable reduction of poverty and social well-being in Zanzibar.

4.2. Limitations of CSR: Fragmentation, Philanthropy, and Weak Impact

The results also indicate that CSR in Zanzibar is largely viewed through the perspective of philanthropic paradigm thereby limiting its developmental effects. In most industries, CSR activities are mostly designed in the form of donations, sponsorships, or one-time interventions that are more interested in short-term publicity and corporate goodwill, as opposed to long-term change. Although such practices can produce short-term positive effects to the targeted communities, they can hardly affect structural and systemic causes of poverty (Mangsor et al., 2022). This has been especially seen in the education sector wherein CSR interventions tend to center on scholarships, provision of learning materials or at times provision of infrastructure support. Even though these contributions can help in the short term to increase access to education, they fail to tackle more institutional issues, including teacher shortages, curriculum gaps, or insufficient educational infrastructure (Fusheini et al., 2021). Correspondingly, in the healthcare field, CSR activities are often focused on awareness, mobile campaigns, or temporary medical care, which can offer relief but do not support the development of health systems or the provision of health care sustainably (Johansson et al., 2022). Consequently, the CSR interventions would help to ease the symptoms of poverty as opposed to addressing the causes of poverty.

The lack of firm monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is also an addition to this charity-oriented approach. According to the analysis, the corporate actors seldom give systematic or transparent evaluations of their long-term consequences of their CSR activities. Rather, reporting is more likely to be output-oriented (Example; How many beneficiaries have been reached, what activities have been undertaken) as opposed to measurable developmental outcomes. This is because of the absence of outcome-based assessment, as it becomes hard to ascertain whether CSR activities are actually having a positive impact on poverty alleviation or the enhancement of social welfare (Chipriyanov et al., 2024). As a result, the CSR in Zanzibar is rather outcome blind because it is imposed by reputational incentives and corporate reporting needs rather than by evidence-based development goals. Lack of organized frameworks by E. Lodgaard (2011) (Plan-Do-Check-Act-Improve (PDCAI) cycle) also restricts the possibility of continuous learning, adaptation, and strategic improvement. In the absence of such mechanisms, CSR initiatives cannot turn into systematic and sustainable development practices other than ad hoc interventions.

The other limitation that is found to be a major constraint in the findings is the little participation of the local communities in design and implementation of CSR activities. The existing CSR strategy in Zanzibar is mostly top-down, where corporate entities decide the priorities according to organizational interests, branding, or global trends in CSR, but not according to the needs defined locally (Lee et al., 2021). Such a low involvement of beneficiaries usually results into discrepancy of nature between CSR interventions and what communities actually need. As an example, as much as companies invest in digital literacy programs or environmental branding campaigns, most local communities might need more urgent issues like food insecurity, clean water, good healthcare services or sustainable livelihood opportunity (Jibril & Hussain, 2026). Such detachment renders the CSR efforts irrelevant and ineffective, in other instances, it threatens to perpetuate the existing inequalities by favoring those regions that are easy to be seen by corporate over those that require most development.

The absence of participatory systems negates the possibility of CSR to promote ownership and empowerment of the community. When communities are placed as passive entities other than as active agents, CSR initiatives do not contribute to local capacity development and long-term resiliency.

Participatory approaches on the other hand have been found to improve the sustainability and effectiveness of development intervention through the contextual applicability and responsiveness of the programs to local realities (Usman et al., 2024). This lack of such strategies in the CSR environment of Zanzibar is a huge gap that constrains the potential of the private sector to transform the social development.

On a larger structural scale, the results indicate a long-standing lack of attachment between the CSR activities and the national development priorities.(Ranaivo et al., 2026) The policy frameworks of Zanzibar, such as the Zanzibar Development Vision 2050 and the ZPRP present precise targets in regard to reduction of poverty, development of human capital, and social protection. Nevertheless, the CSR activities are mostly disconnected to these strategic agendas, working side by side, and not in harmony with state-led development endeavors (Jibril, 2025). Such non-alignment is a great untapped potential of utilizing the resources of the private sector to support the actions of the government. CSR activities cannot work towards large-scale and systemic development results without being incorporated in national systems.

The consequences of this disconnection are enormous. First, it constrains the possibilities of synergy between the programs of the public and the private sector, which leads to the disjointed and unproductive utilization of resources. Second, it makes CSR interventions less scalable and sustainable, since they do not fit into larger institutional frameworks or policy frameworks. Third, it limits the capability of CSR to respond to multidimensionality of poverty, which needs long-term and cross-sectoral approaches. Here, CSR will continue to be a marginal component in the main development agenda, as opposed to being a strategic partner in the promotion of social welfare. In this case, as much as CSR in Zanzibar portrays an increasing corporate interest in social responsibility, its present philanthropic focus, the absence of evaluation tools, less engagement with community, and a poor connection with the national development agenda have serious limitations on its performance (Nyumbe, 2025). The limitations should be addressed to rebrand CSR as an effective and transformational tool to alleviate poverty and social welfare.

4.3. Reframing CSR for Sustainable Poverty Reduction and Social Welfare

Even though the limitations have been identified, the results of this research highlight the high but ineffective potential of CSR to serve as a strategic tool in reduction of poverty and improvement of social welfare in Zanzibar. Such a possibility, however, cannot be achieved under the scope of a largely philanthropic and decentralized CSR system. Rather, it requires a paradigmatic change whereby CSR has to be viewed as part of a larger socio-economic change. Such re-orientation necessitates corporate efforts to be aligned with national development platforms, increase stakeholder involvement and systematic, evidence-based implementation and evaluation (Panda et al., 2024).

One of the main concerns in this change is the incorporation of CSR into the policy and institutional environment of Zanzibar. The CSR initiatives today are highly independent of the national development agendas, thus limiting their ability to scale and general impact. Scholar like F. Pike (2024) aligning CSR activities with such strategic frameworks as the Zanzibar Development Vision 2050 and ZPRP, it would be possible to enjoy more coherence between the activities of the public and the private sectors. Such alignment would not only decrease the duplication of the efforts but also make sure that the contribution of the corporations is directly aimed at the national priorities. As an illustration, corporate investments in education can be strategically focused on the need to fill in some of the most important gaps in the development of skills and youth employment, which are directly highlighted in national policies. Equally, health sector CSR can be redesigned to support the public health systems through investing in infrastructures, staff development, and provision of services, as opposed to the short-term outreach program (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2024). Therefore, CSR might become a complementary pillar that supports state-led development initiatives.

It is also crucial to switch the dependency-oriented approaches to CSR to the empowerment-based strategies that would focus more on the long-term capacity building and inclusive development. According to the findings by [M. Firdaus \(2024\)](#) a large number of current CSR programs place communities in the role of passive receivers and not development agents. In order to overcome this shortcoming, CSR should be restructured to accommodate livelihoods, increase local capacity to participate in the economy. In the tourism industry, as an example, CSR may no longer be a mere show of community participation, but actual investments in vocational training, skills development and local supply chains. Through the cooperation of the educational facilities and training centers, the tourism enterprises may train the local population with skills that would enable them to secure better remunerated jobs in the sector ([Radygina, 2023](#)). This would not only help in reducing poverty but also increasing the sustainability of the sector itself through the emergence of skilled local workforce.

CSR has a lot of potential in telecommunications industry to promote digital inclusion and economic empowerment. In addition to short-term digital literacy initiatives, businesses might invest in long-term initiatives that contribute to digital entrepreneurship, affordable access to the internet in underserved regions and enable people to participate in the digital economy ([Chen et al., 2026](#)). These interventions would also take care of structural disparities in information and economic opportunities access, thus playing a larger role in poverty reduction. In the same vein, the banking industry can enhance financial inclusion by developing customized financial products and services to the low-income households and small businesses. Banks can also support people and communities to invest in productive projects and enhance their economic resilience by facilitating microfinance projects, increasing access to credit, and encouraging the use of savings schemes ([Hussein Kakembo et al., 2021](#)). Together, all these empowerment-based strategies would transform CSR into a short-term assistance model, to that of sustainable development.

The other essential aspect of this change is the introduction of strong monitoring and evaluation systems to improve accountability, effectiveness and learning. The lack of systematic assessment structures currently plays a major role in the inability to measure the developmental contribution of CSR activities. The integration of systematic models like the Plan-Do-Check-Act-Improve (PDCAI) would allow organizations to plan, execute, control, and optimize CSR operations in a cyclical and ongoing way ([Yadav et al., 2024](#)). Through this strategy, it would be easier to move the way output-based reporting is done to outcome-oriented assessment so that the measures of CSR interventions are not only carried out but also evaluated on the contribution to poverty reduction and social welfare ([Kadhim et al., 2024](#)). Therefore, the enhanced monitoring and evaluation would enhance the corporate credibility and increase the trust of the stakeholders, such as communities, policymakers, and development partners.

Therefore, the idea of multi-stakeholder cooperation should be encouraged in order to transform CSR into a coherent and effective engine of social change. The richness of the poverty and social welfare issues in Zanzibar requires the concerted efforts of the governmental bodies, the players of the private sector, and the civil society organizations. Joint ventures can enable sharing of resources, knowledge, and building of combined interventions that will solve several dimensions of poverty at once ([Pantoja, 2025](#)). The creation of institutional mechanisms, including a national CSR coordination body, might also facilitate the process of alignment and hold the parties accountable, as well as facilitate the strategic distribution of resources in accordance with the priorities of the country. According to [C. Valentini \(2022\)](#) highlights as there would also be some platforms to dialogue and participate and communities would become more active in developing CSR initiatives through such mechanisms. Therefore, even though CSR in Zanzibar is at present executed in a fragmented and rather philanthropic system, it has the massive potential to add up to significant effects in sustainable poverty alleviation and social wellbeing. To unleash this potential, a strategic re-orientation toward

integrated, participatory and development-based strategies is necessary that sees CSR as a supplementary and institutionalized part of the more general socio-economic transformation agenda.

5. CONCLUSION

This study reviewed the importance of CSR in poverty alleviation and social welfare in Zanzibar using qualitative research method of secondary data. The evidence shows that, despite the apparent presence of CSR initiatives in major industries including tourism, telecommunications, and banking, the influence of these activities is still minimal because they are interspersed, short lived, and largely philanthropic. The majority of interventions are centered on donations and community support actions that, although useful, do not resolve the structural causes of poverty or lead to a sustainable social change.

The study also finds that there is a serious lack of connection between the CSR practices and national development frameworks such as Zanzibar Development Vision 2050 and the Zanzibar Poverty Reduction Plan. Lack of coordination between the players in the private sector, government institutions, and the civil society leads to fragmented activities that have low aggregate effects. This leaves vital chances of progress in terms of community empowerment, skills building, youth employment, and a sense of inclusion in the economy untapped. The study can add to the scanty literature on CSR in the Zanzibar setting, by highlighting the necessity to rebrand CSR to act as a strategic development ally. It suggests the shift to integrated, policy-consistent, and sustainability-focused CSR models that can better contribute to the poverty reduction and long-term social welfare outcomes.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not Applicable.

Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy reasons.

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Notes on Contributors

Bakari Khatib Faki

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-1969-5717>

Bakari Khatib Faki is affiliated with Faculty of Social and Political sciences, Universitas Indonesia, Depok, West Java

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