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Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Environmental Awareness and Wildlife Protection Attitude in Business Practices

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ABSTRACT: The increasing concern for environmental sustainability and wildlife protection has highlighted the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in shaping organizational practices. In the context of Vietnam, where rapid economic development often poses challenges to environmental conservation, understanding how CSR influences environmental awareness and attitudes toward wildlife protection among businesses is critical. This study aims to examine the impact of CSR dimensions including economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities on environmental awareness and wildlife protection attitudes in Vietnamese companies. A quantitative research approach was employed, surveying 186 business representatives across various sectors. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test hypothesized relationships. The results indicate that economic, legal, and ethical responsibilities positively influence environmental awareness, which in turn significantly affects attitudes toward wildlife protection. However, philanthropic responsibility did not demonstrate a significant effect. The findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of CSR's role in environmental and wildlife-related behaviors and provide practical guidance for businesses and policymakers in Vietnam to enhance sustainable and responsible practices.

KEYWORDS: Corporate social responsibility, environmental awareness, sustainable business practices, wildlife protection attitude.

I. INTRODUCTION

Environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation have emerged as pressing global challenges, particularly in developing countries where rapid industrialization and urbanization often compromise natural resources (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Hart, 1995). Vietnam, as a rapidly growing economy in Southeast Asia, faces significant environmental pressures, including deforestation, habitat degradation, and the decline of endangered wildlife species (CCI France Vietnam, 2017; Tuoitrethudo, 2021). These issues highlight the urgent need for businesses to operate responsibly, balancing economic growth with environmental stewardship. Companies, as key actors in society, play a critical role in mitigating environmental degradation and promoting sustainable development, making the integration of environmental considerations into business strategies both a societal expectation and a strategic necessity (Boiral & Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2017; Delmas & Toffel, 2004).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been widely recognized as a strategic approach through which businesses can address social and environmental issues while enhancing their reputation and competitiveness (Carroll, 1991; Dahlsrud, 2008). CSR encompasses multiple dimensions, including economic responsibility, legal compliance, ethical conduct, and philanthropic engagement, all of which collectively guide organizational behavior toward sustainability (Nguyen et al., 2025). While numerous studies have examined the relationship between CSR and financial performance, corporate image, and general stakeholder satisfaction (Bansal, 2005; Jamali et al., 2017), there is limited research exploring CSR's direct impact on environmental awareness and wildlife protection attitudes, particularly in the context of Vietnam. This represents a significant research gap, as understanding the mechanisms through which CSR can influence pro-environmental behaviors and conservation attitudes is essential for designing effective business strategies that support biodiversity preservation.

Moreover, environmental awareness is a crucial mediator linking organizational practices to behavioral outcomes, shaping how individuals perceive, value, and engage with ecological issues (Poškus, 2022; Schultz, 2001). Similarly, wildlife protection attitudes reflect the societal and organizational commitment to preserving species and ecosystems, which is increasingly important in countries facing high biodiversity risks (Hasan & Csányi, 2023; Prime Minister, 2025). Despite the recognized importance of these constructs, few studies have empirically examined the interplay between CSR, environmental awareness, and wildlife protection attitudes in emerging economies, leaving a theoretical and practical gap in understanding how businesses can contribute effectively to ecological sustainability.

In this context, the present study aims to investigate the effects of CSR on environmental awareness and wildlife protection attitudes in Vietnamese businesses. Specifically, the research examines the four dimensions of CSR such as economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities and their influence on environmental awareness, which in turn is hypothesized to enhance wildlife protection attitudes. By addressing this gap, the study contributes to the theoretical development of CSR research in environmental contexts and provides actionable insights for managers, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to foster sustainable business practices and wildlife conservation initiatives in Vietnam. Ultimately, the study underscores the strategic role of CSR as a mechanism for aligning corporate operations with environmental and social priorities, thereby supporting both sustainable development goals and biodiversity protection efforts. The construct of the study is divided into 5 main parts including (1) introduction; (2) conceptual framework and research model; (3) methodology; (4) findings and discussion; and (5) implications and conclusion.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH MODEL

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a central concept in modern management research, reflecting a company's commitment to society and the environment that transcends purely profit objectives. One of the most widely used definitions of CSR is that of Carroll (1991), who argues that CSR encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and humanitarian expectations that society places on a business at a given time. This definition emphasizes CSR as a structured framework of responsibility, in which businesses need to balance economic and social benefits in an ethical and sustainable manner. This idea has since been adopted by many international studies, viewing CSR as part of a business strategy aimed at maintaining legitimacy and meeting the expectations of stakeholders (Dahlsrud, 2008; Lu et al., 2020). Furthermore, the European Commission (2011) also defines CSR as the responsibility of businesses for their social and environmental impact through ethical, transparent, and sustainable practices. Overall, international studies agree that CSR today is not just a charitable activity but an integrated management philosophy that guides businesses towards sustainable development.

The most commonly used CSR model in international research is Carroll’s Pyramid of CSR, which comprises four basic components: economic, legal, ethical, and humanitarian. Economic responsibility is considered the foundation, reflecting the requirement for businesses to generate profits and maintain growth to ensure their own sustainability. Legal responsibility emphasizes compliance with laws and societal norms. Ethical responsibility relates to businesses acting in accordance with ethical standards beyond legal requirements, maintaining fairness and respecting stakeholders. Meanwhile, humanitarian responsibility demonstrates the voluntary participation of businesses in community activities such as charity, social support, and contributions to the common good (Carroll, 1991; Pinkston & Carroll, 1996). The Carroll’s CSR model has become the basis for most multidimensional CSR scales in quantitative research (Edmondson & Carroll, 1999). Scales based on these four components are often assessed using Likert scales to measure the extent to which a company performs CSR in each aspect. Recently, studies have expanded Carroll's model by incorporating environmental responsibility into the CSR framework when researching in the context of sustainable development, especially in sectors with high ecological impact such as manufacturing, agriculture, and energy (Khuong et al., 2021). These expanded CSR scales help reflect the increasing role of environmental responsibility in modern corporate strategies.

CSR has become an important tool for promoting environmental protection and sustainable development. Numerous international studies indicate that businesses integrating CSR into their business strategies tend to undertake more activities aimed at minimizing environmental impact through green innovation, efficient resource management, and the development of comprehensive environmental strategies. For example, Kraus et al. (2020) demonstrates that CSR positively influences environmental performance through environmental strategies and green innovation. This shows that CSR is not just a communication tool but has a real impact on reducing emissions, improving resource efficiency, and optimizing environmentally friendly operational processes. Furthermore, CSR is also considered a crucial driver in the conservation of ecosystems and natural resources. Businesses in many industries, especially manufacturing and mining, have used CSR as a means to restore the natural environment, conserve biodiversity, and participate in ecological restoration activities (Liu et al., 2024). Several studies in developing countries show that CSR contributes significantly to reducing environmental pollution, managing waste, and investing in clean technologies to ensure the alignment between economic development and ecosystem protection (Shah et al., 2016). In other words, CSR is increasingly seen as an integral part of corporate environmental strategies and a key factor in achieving sustainable development goals (Nguyen et al., 2025).

Environmental Awareness

Environmental awareness is a core concept in sustainable development research, reflecting the level of understanding, concern, and responsibility of individuals or organizations regarding environmental issues. According to Dunlap & Van Liere (1978), environmental awareness represents the perception of the relationship between humans and ecosystems, including an understanding of the negative impacts of economic activities on the natural environment. This concept was later expanded in the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) model, emphasizing that humans are part of nature and must respect the ecological limits of the planet (Dunlap et al., 2000).

Many studies suggest that environmental awareness encompasses not only environmental knowledge but also emotional factors and ethical norms related to environmental protection. Kollmuss & Agyeman (2002) define environmental awareness as the combination of knowledge, values, attitudes, and concerns about the environment, thereby shaping environmentally friendly intentions and behaviors. This approach shows that environmental awareness plays a crucial mediating role between external factors such as policies, business strategies, and actual environmental protection behaviors.

In the business context, environmental awareness is considered a crucial outcome of implementing CSR activities. When businesses demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental protection through CSR policies such as emission reduction, efficient resource use, or investment in green technologies, this contributes to raising environmental awareness among stakeholders, especially employees and managers (Ramus & Steger, 2000; Zsóka et al., 2013). High environmental awareness helps individuals within the organization better understand the ecological consequences of business activities and encourages them to support environmentally friendly decisions. Environmental awareness has also been shown to be a significant predictor of nature conservation attitudes and behaviors. Bamberg & Möser (2007), in a meta-analysis, showed that environmental awareness has a positive and significant relationship with environmental protection attitudes and sustainable behavioral intentions. Individuals with high levels of environmental awareness tend to exhibit more positive attitudes toward biodiversity conservation, ecosystem protection, and limiting activities that harm wildlife. Particularly in the context of global biodiversity loss, environmental awareness plays a key role in shaping wildlife protection attitudes. Schultz's (2001) research shows that when individuals are aware of the link between humans and other species, they tend to develop a stronger ethical concern for protecting animals and their natural habitats.

Wildlife Protection Attitude

Wildlife protection attitude reflects the degree to which individuals or organizations positively or negatively evaluate activities aimed at conserving wildlife and natural ecosystems. According to Ajzen (1991), attitude is a core component of the Theory of Planned Behavior and directly influences the intentions and behaviors of individuals and organizations. In the context of conservation, wildlife protection attitude represents the willingness to support policies, actions, and decisions aimed at limiting illegal exploitation, protecting habitats, and maintaining biodiversity (Manfredo et al., 2009).

Numerous studies in the field of conservation show that a positive attitude toward wildlife protection is a crucial prerequisite for environmentally friendly behaviors. Kellert (1996) argues that attitudes toward wildlife are formed based on ethical values, social experiences, and levels of ecological understanding. Individuals with positive attitudes tend to support conservation programs, oppose activities that harm wildlife, and are willing to accept the economic costs of protecting nature. In the business context, a wildlife protection attitude is increasingly seen as a key element in sustainable business practices, especially for industries with significant impacts on ecosystems such as agriculture, mining, tourism, and manufacturing. Businesses with a positive attitude toward wildlife conservation often integrate conservation principles into their business strategies, such as avoiding habitat destruction, adhering to biodiversity protection standards, and participating in ecosystem restoration programs (Banerjee, 2002; Boiral & Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2017). These attitudes not only reflect ethical responsibility but also contribute to enhancing the social legitimacy and reputation of the business.

Several studies also show that wildlife protection attitudes are strongly influenced by environmental awareness. As individuals or organizations become more aware of biodiversity loss and the role of wildlife in ecosystems, they tend to develop more positive attitudes toward conservation efforts (Schultz, 2001; Stern, 2000). According to Stern (2000) with the Value–Belief–Norm (VBN) model, awareness of environmental consequences and personal responsibility play a crucial role in shaping norms and attitudes that support nature conservation. Furthermore, CSR is identified as a key institutional factor contributing to the formation of a wildlife protection attitude in the business environment. CSR activities aimed at protecting the environment and biodiversity help spread conservation values within organizations, thereby positively impacting the attitudes of managers and employees towards wildlife (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Jamali et al., 2017). When businesses proactively participate in conservation programs, communicate about ecological responsibility, and cooperate with nature conservation organizations, a wildlife protection attitude becomes part of the organizational culture and long-term strategic orientation.

Business Practices Towards Wildlife Protection in The Context of Vietnam

In recent years, Vietnam has placed greater emphasis on wildlife protection as part of its sustainable development and biodiversity conservation strategy. The government has issued numerous legal documents, national programs, and inter-sectoral coordination initiatives to prevent the illegal trade, use, and decline of endangered and rare wildlife species. The Vietnamese government has approved the National Program on the Conservation of Endangered, Rare, and Precious Wildlife Species until 2030, with a vision to 2050, aiming to restore, protect, and sustainably develop priority wildlife species, while also moving towards a green economy and adapting to climate change. This program clearly identifies wildlife conservation as a central task in biodiversity conservation and a responsibility of society and businesses. Functional agencies, including the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the forest protection force, have coordinated the implementation of plans to inspect and handle violations of laws related to the illegal trade and exploitation of wildlife. For example, the coordinated plan between the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment emphasizes strengthening control, detection, and strict handling of violations of laws on wildlife protection and aquatic resources.

Although Vietnam was once considered a transit and consumption country for illegal wildlife products, numerous efforts have emerged from businesses and civil society organizations to change this situation. For example, the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), along with associations such as the Vietnam E-commerce Association (VECOM) and the Vietnam Automobile Transport Association (VATA), have organized training programs for business leaders on integrating social responsibility into wildlife conservation. These activities have reached over 11,000 businesspeople through 250 training courses in 45 provinces and cities, helping businesses better understand their responsibilities in controlling supply chains, preventing wildlife trafficking, and enhancing compliance with international standards.

Several studies and surveys at the local level show that businesses are increasingly valuing participation in environmental and wildlife protection activities as part of their sustainable development strategy and brand enhancement. For example, a survey in Da Nang showed that 98% of businesses consider environmental protection important, and 55.5% believe that conservation funds are necessary, indicating a trend of businesses being willing to participate in funding and supporting conservation programs (Tuoitrethudo, 2021). However, the fact that the consumption of wildlife products still exists in society, such as the dog meat market with approximately 5 million dogs killed each year in Vietnam, partly illustrates the cultural and consumer behavior challenges to animal protection.

Integrating CSR into business activities aimed at wildlife conservation is increasingly being promoted in Vietnam as a key strategy for achieving sustainable development. CSR initiatives in this area not only help businesses comply with biodiversity conservation laws but also create significant added value in their relationships with communities and stakeholders. Firstly, incorporating wildlife conservation responsibility into CSR policies helps businesses mitigate brand and legal risks, especially in the context of increasingly stringent global supply chain oversight aimed at preventing illegal wildlife trade (CCI France Vietnam, 2017). Furthermore, CSR activities focused on nature conservation contribute to raising public awareness of the importance of biodiversity, thereby strengthening the position and reputation of businesses within local communities. Finally, demonstrating a clear commitment to wildlife conservation through CSR helps businesses increase their ability to attract investment and expand cooperation with international organizations, NGOs, and conservation programs, thereby facilitating the implementation of long-term sustainable development initiatives in Vietnam.

Hypothesis Development

Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Awareness

Within the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility, economic responsibility is considered a core foundation, reflecting a company's obligation to generate profits, maintain operational efficiency, and ensure long-term market viability (Carroll, 1991). However, in the current context of sustainable development, economic responsibility is no longer simply understood as maximizing short-term profits, but is increasingly linked to the efficient use of resources, minimizing environmental costs, and investing in ecologically responsible business activities (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Many studies indicate that companies that effectively implement economic responsibility through long-term strategies tend to enhance environmental awareness within the organization. When businesses focus on long-term cost efficiency, they have a stronger incentive to invest in environmentally friendly solutions such as energy saving, production process optimization, and waste reduction, thereby contributing to raising awareness among managers and employees about the environmental impact of business operations (Hart, 1995; Klassen & McLaughlin, 1996). These activities help individuals within the business better understand the relationship between economic efficiency and environmental protection. In addition, linking economic responsibility with sustainability goals helps businesses convey the message that environmental protection is not opposed to profit but is a factor creating a competitive advantage. Porter & van der Linde (1995) argue that environmental initiatives, when implemented effectively, can promote innovation, improve productivity, and reduce costs, thereby strengthening positive environmental awareness throughout the organization. This awareness plays a crucial role in shaping values and attitudes that support environmental protection.

In the context of developing economies like Vietnam, where businesses face the pressure of both economic growth and environmental protection, economic responsibility has a particular impact on environmental awareness. Businesses focused on sustainable growth are generally more aware of environmental risks and the long-term costs of ecological degradation, thereby promoting environmental awareness as an integral part of their business strategy (Zsóka et al., 2013; Lu et al., 2020). Therefore, economic responsibility not only ensures financial efficiency but also contributes to raising environmental awareness among stakeholders within the business. Based on the above agurements, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Economic responsibility has a positive effect on environmental awareness.

Legal responsibility refers to the obligation of businesses to comply with laws, regulations, and standards issued by the state to ensure that business operations are conducted legally and responsibly towards society (Carroll, 1991). In the environmental field, legal responsibility is particularly important because regulations on environmental protection, pollution control, and biodiversity conservation serve to establish minimum standards that businesses must meet.

Numerous studies indicate that strict compliance with environmental regulations has a positive impact on environmental awareness within businesses. When businesses are required to meet legal demands such as environmental impact assessments, emission reporting, or biodiversity protection standards, managers and employees are compelled to enhance their understanding of environmental issues related to their business operations (Delmas & Toffel, 2004; Earnhart & Lizal, 2006). This compliance process is not merely reactive but also contributes to the formation of lasting awareness of the importance of environmental protection. Furthermore, environmental regulations also serve as an institutional tool to promote awareness change within organizations. According to institutional theory, legal pressure from the government and regulatory agencies forces businesses to adjust their behavior and management thinking to accepted social norms, thereby enhancing environmental awareness as part of organizational culture (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Bansal, 2005). In this context, legal responsibility is not limited to avoiding legal penalties but also becomes a driving force for businesses to better understand the ecological impacts of their production and business activities.

In developing economies like Vietnam, where the legal framework for the environment and wildlife conservation is increasingly being perfected and strictly enforced, legal responsibility has a significant impact on the environmental awareness of businesses. The increasing regulations on environmental protection, biodiversity, and wildlife require businesses to enhance their awareness and understanding of these issues to ensure compliance and maintain stable business operations (Zhu et al., 2013; Lu et al., 2020). Therefore, legal responsibility is expected to significantly contribute to raising environmental awareness within organizations. Based on the above agurements, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Legal responsibility has a positive effect on environmental awareness.

Furthermore, ethical responsibility in Carroll's (1991) CSR model refers to the obligation of businesses to act fairly, honestly, and beyond minimum legal requirements, in order to meet ethical standards and social expectations. In the environmental context, ethical responsibility motivates businesses not only to comply with the law but also to proactively minimize negative impacts on the environment, protect natural resources, and biodiversity.

Recent studies show that ethical responsibility plays a crucial role in enhancing environmental awareness. When businesses act based on ethical standards, they tend to be more deeply aware of the environmental impact of their business activities and proactively seek sustainable solutions (Boubakri et al., 2021; Sansores-Guerrero & Navarrete-Marneou, 2024). The application of ethical principles encourages management and employees to develop a positive attitude towards environmental protection, thereby actively participating in green activities, process innovation, and efficient resource management.

Especially in developing economies like Vietnam, where environmental regulations are still being perfected, ethical responsibility helps businesses take a step ahead in sustainable development. Businesses that proactively act ethically not only enhance their reputation and the trust of stakeholders but also promote internal environmental awareness, laying the groundwork for future initiatives to protect wildlife and biodiversity (Yang et al., 2025). Based on the above agurements, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Ethical responsibility has a positive effect on environmental awareness.

Finally, philanthropic responsibility refers to voluntary corporate activities aimed at improving social welfare, including charitable contributions, community support, and participation in socio-environmental initiatives. In the context of environmental protection, philanthropic responsibility is often demonstrated through activities such as funding ecosystem restoration projects, supporting environmental education programs, or collaborating with non-governmental organizations to conserve natural areas (Pinkston & Carroll, 1996; Boubakri et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2024).

Research shows that when businesses actively participate in humanitarian activities related to environmental protection, this helps raise environmental awareness among stakeholders, including employees, management, and the surrounding community (Zsóka et al., 2013; Ramus & Steger, 2000). For example, businesses organizing tree-planting campaigns, participating in wildlife conservation programs, or holding environmental education workshops helps individuals better understand environmental issues and promotes their responsibility in sustainable activities.

According to research on CSR communication, businesses clearly communicating their CSR activities helps improve the understanding and awareness of stakeholders regarding the environmental and social impact of the organization. This demonstrates that voluntary CSR activities, including humanitarian responsibility, contribute to building information to better raise stakeholders' awareness of the environment and corporate responsibility for environmental protection (Paiva et al., 2024). Furthermore, research in the context of international CSR emphasizes that CSR creates a channel of interaction between businesses and stakeholders, thereby promoting participation and concern for environmental issues when CSR is implemented comprehensively and transparently (Olukorede, 2025). Therefore, humanitarian responsibility not only reflects a company's commitment to society but also plays a strategic role in shaping environmental awareness. Based on the above agurements, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: Philanthropic responsibility has a positive effect on environmental awareness.

Environmental Awareness and Wildlife Protection Attitude

Environmental awareness reflects the level of understanding, concern, and responsibility of individuals or organizations regarding environmental issues, including the relationship between humans and ecosystems as well as the negative impacts of economic activities on nature (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978; Dunlap et al., 2000). Studies show that environmental awareness encompasses not only knowledge but also values, attitudes, and beliefs about environmental protection, thereby shaping sustainable behaviors (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Bamberg & Möser, 2007).

In the context of nature conservation, environmental awareness plays a crucial mediating role in shaping attitudes toward wildlife protection. When individuals or organizations are aware of the risks to biodiversity, the decline of animal populations, and the role of species in ecosystems, they develop a positive attitude towards activities that protect animals and their habitats (Schultz, 2001; Stern, 2000). International studies in the field of CSR and nature conservation also show that businesses or employees with high environmental awareness tend to support wildlife protection programs, from complying with animal protection laws and participating in conservation projects to limiting behaviors that harm animals and the environment (Manfredo et al., 2009; Banerjee, 2002; Boiral & Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2017). Environmental awareness fosters the belief that actions to protect animals not only bring social benefits but also ensure the long-term sustainability of ecosystems, thereby promoting environmentally friendly attitudes and decisions. Therefore, there is a theoretical basis for suggesting that environmental awareness positively impacts attitudes toward wildlife conservation, and this is a crucial factor in promoting conservation behavior within the business environment. Based on the above agurements, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: Environmental awareness has a positive effect on wildlife protection attitude

The Mediating Role of Environmental Awareness

In research on organizational behavior and environmental protection, Environmental awareness is often considered a crucial mediating factor between CSR activities and nature conservation outcomes, including attitudes toward wildlife protection. According to Stern's (2000) with Value–Belief–Norm Model (VBN), awareness of environmental consequences and personal responsibility forms the basis for ethical norms and responsible behavior toward nature. When individuals or organizations become aware of the environmental impact of their business activities, they develop attitudes and behaviors that protect the ecosystem, including wildlife.

In the context of CSR, economic responsibility motivates businesses to use resources efficiently, reduce waste, and improve production efficiency (Hart, 1995; Porter & van der Linde, 1995). When businesses implement sustainable economic strategies, employees and stakeholders become more aware of the environmental impact of their production activities. This increased environmental awareness then promotes positive attitudes toward wildlife protection, consistent with the VBN theory of the link between perceived consequences and nature conservation behavior.

Legal responsibility requires businesses to comply with laws and standards regarding the environment and biodiversity conservation (Delmas & Toffel, 2004; Bansal, 2005). When businesses fully fulfill their legal obligations, employees and stakeholders become more aware of the standards and the consequences of non-compliance on the environment. This enhanced environmental awareness fosters positive attitudes toward wildlife protection, thereby improving conservation behavior.

Ethical responsibility encourages businesses to proactively go beyond legal requirements to protect the environment and support communities (Boubakri et al., 2021; Carroll, 1991). These activities raise environmental awareness among employees and stakeholders by emphasizing the ethical value of nature conservation. This awareness then shapes positive attitudes toward wildlife protection, encouraging businesses and individuals to participate in conservation activities.

Philanthropic responsibility requires businesses to engage in charitable activities, support communities, and contribute to initiatives protecting the environment and biodiversity (Boubakri et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2025). When businesses take these actions, employees and stakeholders become more aware of the relationship between business operations and their impact on the natural environment. This increased environmental awareness then fosters positive attitudes toward wildlife conservation, including supporting conservation programs, reducing consumption of wildlife products, and participating in conservation initiatives (Schultz, 2001; Stern, 2000). Based on the above agurements, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

H6a: Environmental awareness mediates the relationship between economic responsibility and wildlife protection attitude.
H6b: Environmental awareness mediates the relationship between legal responsibility and wildlife protection attitude.
H6c: Environmental awareness mediates the relationship between ethical responsibility and wildlife protection attitude.
H6d: Environmental awareness mediates the relationship between philanthropic responsibility and wildlife protection attitude.

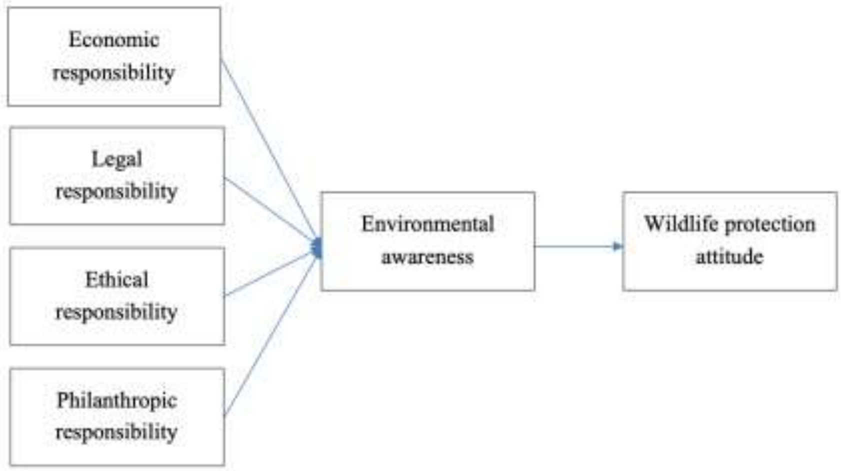

Figure 1. Research Model

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Measurement of Constructs

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on environmental awareness and wildlife protection attitudes in business practices within the Vietnamese context. Quantitative methods are particularly appropriate for this research as they allow for the empirical testing of hypothesized relationships among latent constructs and enable generalization across different types of businesses.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire survey administered to managers, owners, and senior employees of businesses operating in various sectors in Vietnam. These respondents were selected because they are directly involved in strategic decision-making and the implementation of CSR and environmental practices. The survey method is suitable for capturing perceptions and attitudes related to CSR implementation, environmental awareness, and wildlife protection, which are inherently subjective but measurable through validated scales. To ensure content validity and construct reliability, all measurement scales used in this study were adapted from well-established studies in the fields of CSR, environmental awareness, and wildlife conservation. Minor contextual modifications were made to ensure consistency with the Vietnamese business environment while maintaining the original meaning of the items. All constructs were measured using a five-point

Likert scale, ranging from "1 = Strongly disagree" to "5 = Strongly agree", which is commonly used in CSR and environmental behavior research.

Corporate Social Responsibility was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct following Carroll's (1991) framework, which includes four components: economic responsibility (ER), legal responsibility (LR), ethical responsibility (ETR), and philanthropic responsibility (PR). Given the contextual relevance, the CSR measurement items were adopted from Nguyen et al. (2025), whose study was conducted in Vietnam and focused on sustainable development outcomes. Economic responsibility was measured using four items, reflecting the extent to which businesses emphasize long-term profitability, efficient resource use, and sustainable economic performance. Legal responsibility was measured using five items, capturing compliance with environmental regulations, biodiversity protection laws, and other legal requirements related to business operations. Ethical responsibility was assessed through five items, focusing on fairness, transparency, and voluntary actions beyond legal obligations to minimize environmental and ecological harm. Philanthropic responsibility was measured using three items, reflecting voluntary contributions to community development, environmental protection initiatives, and wildlife conservation activities.

Environmental awareness (EA) was treated as a mediating variable in the research model, reflecting the level of understanding, concern, and responsibility regarding environmental issues within business organizations. The measurement scale for environmental awareness was adapted from Poškus (2022), consisting of four items. These items capture respondents' awareness of environmental consequences, ecological limits, and the relationship between business activities and environmental degradation.

Wildlife protection attitude (WPA) was considered the dependent variable of the study, representing the extent to which businesses and their representatives hold positive evaluations toward wildlife conservation and biodiversity protection. This construct was measured using six items adapted from Hasan and Csányi (2023), which focus on support for wildlife conservation policies, opposition to illegal wildlife exploitation, and willingness to engage in conservation-friendly business practices.

Sample, Data Collection and Analysis

Primary data for this study were collected through a structured questionnaire survey conducted among businesses operating in Vietnam. The survey targeted business owners, senior managers, and managerial-level employees, as these individuals are directly involved in corporate decision-making, CSR implementation, and environmental management practices. The questionnaire was initially developed in English based on validated measurement scales from previous studies and then translated into Vietnamese using the back-translation method to ensure semantic equivalence and content validity. Prior to the main survey, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of respondents to assess the clarity, relevance, and comprehensibility of the questionnaire items. Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine the wording and structure of the questionnaire. Data collection was carried out using both online and offline survey methods, including email distribution and direct administration at business locations. This mixed-mode approach helped increase the response rate and ensured access to businesses across different sectors and regions in Vietnam. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to reduce social desirability bias and encourage honest responses.

This study employed a non-probability sampling approach, specifically purposive sampling combined with convenience sampling. Respondents were deliberately selected based on their roles as business owners, managers, or senior employees who are directly involved in CSR implementation and environmental decision-making. Convenience sampling was applied to facilitate access to respondents through business networks, professional associations, and online platforms. This approach is appropriate for CSR research in developing economies where comprehensive sampling frames are often unavailable. After data screening and the removal of incomplete or invalid responses, a total of 186 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis. This sample size is considered adequate and statistically acceptable for quantitative analysis using structural equation modeling techniques.

For data analysis, the reliability of the constructs was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, while validity was examined through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the sample characteristics. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied to test the hypothesized relationships between CSR, environmental awareness, and wildlife protection attitude, including the mediating role of environmental awareness. Bootstrap resampling with 5,000 iterations was used to assess the significance of mediation effects. All analyses were conducted using SPSS for basic statistics and SmartPLS for SEM.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistic Results

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 186 respondents participating in this study. Regarding gender, the majority of respondents were male (60.2%), while females accounted for 39.8%, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution in the surveyed businesses.

In terms of age, most respondents fell within the 30–39 age group (41.9%), followed by 40–49 years (28.5%), 20–29 years (18.8%), and 50 years and above (10.8%). This suggests that the workforce engaged in business operations in Vietnam is predominantly composed of young to middle-aged professionals, who are likely to be active in decision-making processes. Regarding educational attainment, most respondents held a bachelor's degree (60.2%), while 26.9% had a master's degree, 8.1% had completed high school or below, and 4.8% held a doctorate. These results indicate that the respondents are generally well-educated, which may positively influence their understanding of CSR, environmental awareness, and wildlife protection issues. As for organizational position, 41.9% of respondents were managers, 31.2% were general employees, and 26.9% were directors or executives. This distribution ensures that the survey captures perspectives from multiple hierarchical levels within the organization. Finally, in terms of business sectors, 32.3% of respondents were from manufacturing, 25.8% from services, 21.5% from trading/commerce, and 20.4% from agriculture or other sectors. This diversity of sectors provides a comprehensive view of CSR practices and environmental attitudes across different industries in Vietnam.

Table 1. Demographics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics		**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender	Male	112	60.2
	Female	74	39.8
Age (years old)	20–29	35	18.8
	30–39	78	41.9
	40–49	53	28.5
	50 and above	20	10.8
Education Level	High school or below	15	8.1
	Bachelor's degree	112	60.2
	Master's degree	50	26.9
	Doctorate	9	4.8
Position in Company	Employee	58	31.2
	Manager	78	41.9
	Director/Executive	50	26.9
Business Sector	Manufacturing	60	32.3
	Services	48	25.8
	Trading/Commerce	40	21.5
	Agriculture/Other	38	20.4
Total		**186**	**100**

Reliability and Validity Assessment

Table 2 presents the reliability and convergent validity of the constructs used in this study, including Economic Responsibility (ER), Legal Responsibility (LR), Ethical Responsibility (ETR), Philanthropic Responsibility (PR), Environmental Awareness (EA), and Wildlife Protection Attitude (WPA).

Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs range from 0.821 to 0.899, exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating high internal consistency of the measurement scales. Similarly, rho_A values range from 0.883 to 0.908, further confirming the reliability of the constructs. Composite Reliability (CR) values range from 0.876 to 0.927, which are above the recommended minimum value of 0.70, suggesting that the items consistently represent the underlying constructs. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs range from 0.640 to 0.810, surpassing the 0.50 benchmark (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), indicating good convergent validity. These results imply that each construct adequately explains the variance of its respective items, and the measurement model is reliable and valid. Overall, the findings confirm that the measurement instruments employed in this study are both reliable and valid for further structural analysis.

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity of Constructs

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
ER	0.821	0.883	0.876	0.640
LR	0.885	0.893	0.916	0.687
ETR	0.882	0.892	0.914	0.682
PR	0.882	0.891	0.927	0.810
EA	0.884	0.886	0.920	0.742
WPA	0.899	0.908	0.922	0.664

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS

Table 3 presents the assessment of discriminant validity among the study constructs using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). Discriminant validity ensures that each construct is empirically distinct from others, which is crucial for the validity of structural equation modeling (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct (diagonal elements) is higher than its correlations with all other constructs (off-diagonal elements). For example, the square root of AVE for Environmental Awareness (EA) is 0.862, which is greater than its correlations with Economic Responsibility (ER, 0.720), Ethical Responsibility (ETR, 0.645), Legal Responsibility (LR, 0.624), Philanthropic Responsibility (PR, 0.496), and Wildlife Protection Attitude (WPA, 0.762). Similarly, all other constructs also satisfy this criterion, indicating that the constructs are sufficiently distinct from each other.

Furthermore, the HTMT values, which are presented in the lower portion of Table 3, range from 0.558 to 0.876. All these values are below the conservative threshold of 0.90 suggested by Henseler et al. (2015), confirming that discriminant validity is adequately established. The highest HTMT value is 0.876 between ETR and WPA, indicating a strong but acceptable level of distinctiveness. These results collectively demonstrate that the constructs in the measurement model are conceptually and empirically distinct, supporting the robustness of subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

		EA	ER	ETR	LR	PR	WPA
Fornell-Larcker Criterion	EA	0.862					
	ER	0.720	0.800				
	ETR	0.645	0.635	0.826			
	LR	0.624	0.663	0.763	0.829		
	PR	0.496	0.577	0.769	0.776	0.900	
	WPA	0.762	0.754	0.884	0.856	0.738	0.815
Heterotrait-Monotrait	EA						
	ER	0.785					

Ratio (HTMT)	ETR	0.726	0.701				
	LR	0.696	0.750	0.838			
	PR	0.558	0.661	0.862	0.869		
	WPA	0.840	0.817	0.876	0.848	0.827	

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS

Structural Measurement Assessment and PLS-SEM Result Discussion

The results of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) are presented in Table 4, examining the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) dimensions on Environmental Awareness (EA) and, subsequently, Wildlife Protection Attitude (WPA) in Vietnamese businesses. The adjusted R^2 values indicate that 58.6% of the variance in EA is explained by the CSR dimensions, while 57.9% of the variance in WPA is accounted for by EA and the indirect effects of CSR. These findings suggest that the model has a substantial explanatory power in understanding the relationships between CSR practices, environmental awareness, and wildlife protection attitudes.

Economic responsibility (ER) shows a strong and significant positive effect on environmental awareness ($\beta = 0.491$, $t = 7.075$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that businesses prioritizing economic responsibility, such as integrating sustainability into core business operations, can effectively enhance the environmental awareness of employees and stakeholders. Similarly, ethical responsibility (ETR) has a significant positive influence on EA ($\beta = 0.337$, $t = 3.748$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that ethical practices that reflect fairness and moral obligations toward the environment contribute meaningfully to stakeholders' environmental consciousness.

Legal responsibility (LR) also has a positive and significant effect on environmental awareness ($\beta = 0.196$, $t = 2.088$, $p = 0.037$), although its impact is relatively weaker than ER and ETR. This finding implies that adherence to environmental regulations and legal standards plays a role in fostering awareness, yet it may not be sufficient on its own to strongly motivate environmental engagement. In contrast, philanthropic responsibility (PR) exhibits a negative effect on EA ($\beta = -0.198$, $t = 2.247$, $p = 0.025$), indicating that philanthropic CSR initiatives do not necessarily enhance environmental awareness in the context of Vietnamese businesses, possibly due to a symbolic or externally-oriented nature of such activities.

Environmental awareness is found to have a strong positive effect on wildlife protection attitude ($\beta = 0.762$, $t = 16.587$, $p < 0.001$). This confirms that higher environmental consciousness among business stakeholders is directly associated with a more positive attitude toward wildlife protection. Additionally, the mediation analysis reveals that EA significantly mediates the relationships between ER, LR, and ETR and WPA, highlighting its role as a key mechanism through which CSR influences pro-environmental behaviors. Conversely, the mediation effect of PR is negative, reinforcing that philanthropic initiatives do not translate into improved wildlife protection attitudes through environmental awareness.

Table 4: Structural Equation Modelling Results

Path	**Original Sample (O)**	**Sample Mean (M)**	**Standard Deviation (STDEV)**	**T Statistics (|O/ STDEV|)**	**P Values**	**Hypothesis conclusion**
H1: ER -> EA	0.491	0.499	0.069	7.075	0.000	Accepted
H2: LR -> EA	0.196	0.181	0.094	2.088	0.037	Accepted
H3: ETR -> EA	0.337	0.332	0.090	3.748	0.000	Accepted
H4: PR -> EA	-0.198	-0.186	0.088	2.247	0.025	Rejected
H5: EA -> WPA	0.762	0.759	0.046	16.587	0.000	Accepted

H6a: ER -> EA -> WPA	0.374	0.379	0.053	7.071	0.000	Accepted
H6b: LR -> EA -> WPA	0.149	0.138	0.074	2.019	0.044	Accepted
H6c: ETR -> EA -> WPA	0.257	0.253	0.073	3.496	0.001	Accepted
H6d: PR -> EA -> WPA	-0.151	-0.141	0.067	2.251	0.025	Rejected
Adjusted R^2: EA = 0.586; WPA = 0.579						

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS

The results of this study indicate that economic responsibility has a significant positive effect on environmental awareness ($\beta = 0.491$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. This finding aligns with previous research by Nguyen et al. (2025) and Bansal & Roth (2000), which suggest that integrating sustainability into core business operations enhances stakeholders' environmental consciousness. In the Vietnamese context, companies that adopt green business practices, such as energy efficiency measures or sustainable resource management, contribute directly to raising environmental awareness among employees and business partners, promoting a culture of environmental responsibility within corporate settings.

Legal responsibility also positively influences environmental awareness ($\beta = 0.196$, $p = 0.037$), confirming H2. This is consistent with prior studies by Delmas & Toffel (2004) and Earnhart & Lizal (2006), which argue that adherence to environmental laws and regulations fosters awareness and compliance. However, the effect of legal responsibility is relatively weaker compared to economic and ethical responsibilities, suggesting that in Vietnam, while compliance with national environmental regulations and wildlife protection policies (Prime Minister, 2025) increases awareness, it may not fully motivate voluntary engagement in environmental initiatives beyond legal requirements.

Ethical responsibility shows a significant positive impact on environmental awareness ($\beta = 0.337$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. This result corresponds with the work of Banerjee (2002) and Carroll (1991), highlighting that ethical corporate practices strengthen stakeholder trust and encourage pro-environmental attitudes. Vietnamese businesses that integrate ethical principles such as fairness, transparency, and respect for nature into their operations often observe greater environmental engagement among employees and local communities, reinforcing the role of ethical considerations in promoting environmental consciousness.

In contrast, philanthropic responsibility has a negative influence on environmental awareness ($\beta = -0.198$, $p = 0.025$), leading to the rejection of H4. This finding diverges from traditional CSR theory (Carroll, 1991) and suggests that philanthropic activities, such as charitable donations or community support projects, may be perceived as symbolic or disconnected from environmental objectives. Consistent with Jamali et al. (2017), philanthropic CSR in developing countries like Vietnam often focuses on social image rather than creating substantive environmental impact, limiting its effectiveness in enhancing environmental awareness.

Environmental awareness strongly predicts wildlife protection attitude ($\beta = 0.762$, $p < 0.001$), confirming H5. This is consistent with prior studies by Poškus (2022) and Hasan & Csányi (2023), indicating that higher environmental awareness translates into more positive attitudes toward biodiversity conservation. In practice, Vietnamese businesses that educate employees about wildlife protection, biodiversity, and responsible tourism can significantly strengthen pro-environmental attitudes, contributing to the conservation of endangered species.

Finally, the mediation analysis demonstrates that environmental awareness significantly mediates the relationships between economic, legal, and ethical responsibilities and wildlife protection attitude (H6a, H6b, H6c). However, environmental awareness does not mediate the relationship between philanthropic responsibility and wildlife protection attitude (H6d). These findings underscore the importance of linking CSR initiatives directly with environmental education and awareness programs in Vietnam, rather than relying solely on philanthropic activities. Integrating CSR with employee training, community engagement, and sustainable operational practices appears to be the most effective approach for promoting positive attitudes toward wildlife protection.

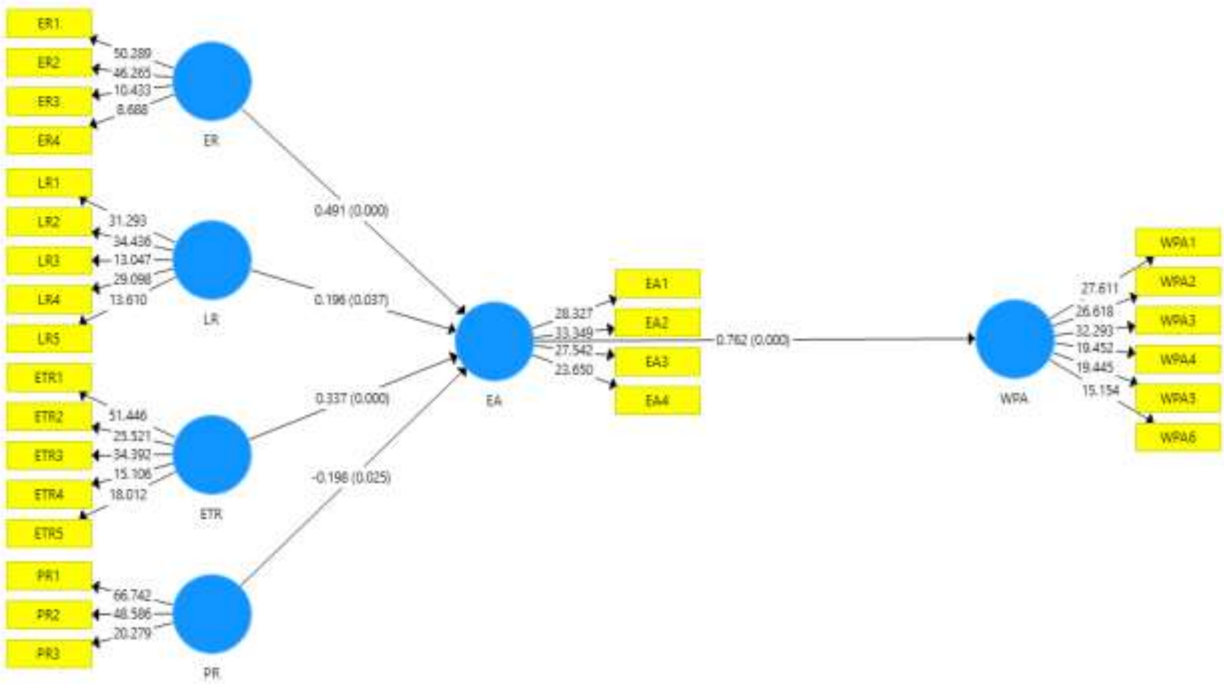

Figure 2. PLS Bootstrapping Model

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS

V. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the literature on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental behavior by examining the impact of CSR dimensions on environmental awareness and wildlife protection attitudes in Vietnam. The results show that economic, legal, and ethical responsibilities significantly enhance environmental awareness, while philanthropic responsibility is less effective in this context. This extends previous studies (Carroll, 1991; Bansal & Roth, 2000; Nguyen et al., 2025) by highlighting the differential effects of CSR components. Additionally, environmental awareness is confirmed as a key mediator linking CSR practices to wildlife protection attitudes, supporting and extending the findings of Poškus (2022) and Hasan & Csányi (2023). This emphasizes the cognitive mechanism through which CSR translates into pro-environmental behavior. By providing empirical evidence from Vietnam, this study enriches CSR research in emerging economies, showing that the effectiveness of CSR initiatives depends on local socio-cultural and institutional factors. These insights offer a foundation for future comparative and context-specific studies.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide practical insights for different groups of stakeholders, including business managers, policymakers, local communities, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), highlighting how corporate social responsibility (CSR) can enhance environmental awareness and promote wildlife protection in Vietnam.

For business leaders, the study emphasizes the strategic importance of integrating environmental sustainability into core business operations. Beyond mere legal compliance, managers should design CSR initiatives that embed ethical considerations and sustainable practices throughout the organization. Practical strategies may include adopting cleaner production technologies, reducing carbon emissions, improving resource efficiency, and developing environmentally friendly products. Internal interventions, such as employee training programs, workshops, and awareness campaigns, are essential to cultivate an organizational culture that prioritizes environmental responsibility. By encouraging staff participation in sustainability initiatives, companies can transform employee engagement into tangible environmental outcomes, fostering a workforce committed to conservation goals. This approach not only improves the company’s ecological performance but also strengthens its reputation, enhances stakeholder trust, and contributes to long-term competitiveness in a market that increasingly values environmental responsibility.

The results highlight the critical role of supportive policy frameworks in amplifying the effects of CSR on environmental awareness. Policymakers can facilitate corporate engagement in conservation and sustainability by providing incentives such as tax reductions, recognition programs, or grants for green initiatives. Establishing clear regulatory guidelines that encourage environmentally responsible business conduct ensures that corporate efforts are aligned with national priorities, including wildlife protection and natural resource management. Furthermore, promoting partnerships between governmental agencies and the private sector can optimize the impact of CSR programs, ensuring both accountability and scalability. These policies can motivate companies to move beyond compliance toward proactive environmental stewardship, ultimately contributing to sustainable development objectives at the national level.

Local communities are pivotal in supporting biodiversity and wildlife protection initiatives. The study demonstrates that CSR activities can enhance community environmental awareness and encourage active participation in conservation efforts. Businesses can strengthen their social impact by involving local populations in awareness campaigns, workshops, and participatory projects, such as habitat restoration or wildlife monitoring programs. Such engagement fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members, encouraging sustainable behaviors and long-term commitment to environmental protection. Moreover, these collaborative approaches create opportunities for knowledge exchange between companies and communities, ensuring that corporate initiatives are responsive to local ecological needs and cultural contexts.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), despite often having limited resources, can still play a significant role in promoting environmental sustainability and wildlife protection. The study suggests that SMEs can adopt structured yet scalable CSR practices, focusing on practical interventions such as energy conservation, waste reduction, recycling, and partnerships with local conservation organizations. Even modest initiatives, when strategically implemented, can yield meaningful environmental benefits while simultaneously enhancing the company’s credibility and stakeholder trust. SMEs are uniquely positioned to implement flexible and locally relevant solutions, which can complement broader corporate or governmental sustainability efforts, contributing to an integrated approach toward national conservation objectives.

Although philanthropic initiatives may not directly influence environmental awareness, aligning these activities with conservation objectives can amplify their impact. For instance, companies can support community-based ecological projects, fund wildlife rescue centers, or sponsor educational programs on biodiversity protection. When combined with ethical, legal, and economic CSR practices, philanthropic efforts can create synergistic effects, strengthening both corporate legitimacy and environmental outcomes. By strategically integrating philanthropy with broader CSR initiatives, businesses can enhance their societal contributions while reinforcing their commitment to sustainable development.

Limitation and Future Research Directions

Despite providing valuable insights, this study has several limitations. The research relies on a cross-sectional survey design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships over time. Besides, the sample is restricted to businesses in Vietnam, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or countries. Moreover, the study focuses primarily on self-reported measures, which may be influenced by social desirability or response biases.

Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal or experimental designs to better capture causal effects. Expanding the study to include multiple countries or regions would enhance the generalizability of the results. Additionally, incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews or case studies, could provide deeper insights into how CSR initiatives are implemented and perceived by different stakeholders. Further studies may also explore additional mediating or moderating factors, such as organizational culture, leadership style, or stakeholder engagement, to better understand the mechanisms linking CSR to environmental awareness and wildlife protection.

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