

CAUSE PROMOTION AND SOCIAL MARKETING IN CSR: EVIDENCE FROM PHILIPPINE PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how cause promotion and social marketing can reposition corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Philippine private higher education from episodic giving toward behavior- and outcome-oriented community engagement. Using a qualitative multiple-case documentary design, the study analyzed publicly accessible institutional policies, strategic and sustainability reports, community engagement materials, accreditation-related documents, partnership records, and official digital communications from selected private higher education institutions. Cross-case analysis identified three patterns of CSR practice: donation-centric, hybrid, and outcome-oriented. More credible initiatives showed early listening and co-design, explicit and measurable objectives, continuity in roles and resources, formalized partnerships, and reporting that distinguished outputs from outcomes. Cause promotion strengthened mobilization and visibility, but credibility risks increased when promotional claims exceeded the available evidence. The study proposes a management framework linking social marketing, governance, partnership continuity, measurement discipline, and evidence-aware communication. The findings are limited by reliance on publicly available documentary evidence. Overall, CSR becomes more defensible when private higher education institutions manage it as a sustained institutional capability for social change.

Keywords: cause promotion, corporate social responsibility, private higher education, social marketing, university social responsibility

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1. INTRODUCTION

Community engagement has long been part of the public role of Philippine higher education. Private colleges and universities routinely organize feeding programs, school-supply drives, disaster relief, community training, medical missions, livelihood seminars, scholarships, and other extension activities. These interventions can respond to immediate needs and reinforce civic values. The managerial problem, however, appears when activity completion is treated as equivalent to social impact. Counts of participants, distributed goods, or completed events can demonstrate implementation, but they cannot by themselves establish whether a community adopted a new practice, reduced a persistent risk, strengthened local capacity, or maintained a beneficial change after the intervention ended.

This distinction has become increasingly important as university social responsibility (USR) has moved beyond a philanthropic interpretation. Contemporary USR scholarship frames responsibility as an institution-wide capability reflected in governance, teaching, research, human-resource practices, stakeholder relationships, and community engagement (Ali et al., 2021; Godonoga, 2023). From this perspective, the question is no longer whether an HEI performs socially desirable activities, but whether its structures, decisions, and evidence systems make those activities coherent with its mission and accountable to the people affected by them. A systematic review by Baptiste et al. (2022) similarly indicates that universities frequently report responsible activity while facing difficulty demonstrating durable outcomes, creating a gap between visible action and verifiable change.

For private HEIs, this gap has strategic consequences. Community engagement sits alongside tuition dependence, accreditation requirements, student services, institutional branding, and resource constraints. Donation-oriented programs remain attractive because they are relatively easy to organize, document, and communicate. By contrast, behavior-change programs require formative research, audience segmentation, repeated engagement, barrier reduction, follow-up, and continuity across academic calendars. Philippine evidence also shows that extension implementers operate under financial, scheduling, participation, and resource constraints, which can make continuity difficult even when commitment is strong (Abenir, 2020; Garcia & Uy Jr., 2025). Thus, the movement from donations to social change is not simply a moral preference; it is a question of program design and organizational capability.

Social marketing offers a useful management lens for addressing this problem. Rather than assuming that information alone produces change, social marketing starts with the audience, the desired behavior, perceived costs and benefits, contextual barriers, and the supports needed to make adoption feasible. Akbar et al. (2021) emphasize consumer research, segmentation, program design, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability as connected stages of social marketing planning. Evidence from prevention interventions further suggests that the use of more complete social marketing criteria is generally associated with stronger behavioral effects, while also reminding practitioners that effect sizes are often modest and context dependent (Roger et al., 2023). This makes social marketing especially relevant to university CSR, where short academic cycles can tempt institutions to overstate what a one-semester intervention can achieve.

Cause promotion adds a second and more communication-oriented dimension. In private HEIs, cause promotion appears in campaigns related to mental health, disaster preparedness, environmental behavior, anti-violence, inclusion, community livelihood, and learning support. Such campaigns can mobilize students, partners, volunteers, and external resources. Yet communication can also expose a credibility problem. Cause-related marketing research warns that stakeholders respond negatively when they perceive opportunism or weak alignment between the promoted cause and the organization's actual conduct (Bhatti et al., 2023). CSR skepticism research likewise shows that audiences assess motives, consistency, and evidence cues before accepting responsibility claims (Nguyen et al., 2023). Digital communication intensifies this dynamic because institutional messages circulate alongside partner accounts and user-generated content, making inconsistencies easier to observe (Shin et al., 2023).

The higher education setting adds a distinctive feature: CSR can simultaneously affect community outcomes and student formation. Service-learning and community-engaged learning connect academic objectives with social needs and have been associated with positive academic, civic, and social outcomes among students (Ardoin et al., 2023; Álvarez-Vanegas et al., 2024; Guanlao et al., 2025). Philippine experience with e-service-learning also demonstrates that institutionalized learning structures can help sustain engagement when delivery conditions change, although meaningful community outcomes still require deliberate coordination (Guanzon et al., 2021). The managerial challenge is therefore dual: private HEIs must preserve educational value without allowing student learning to displace the interests and outcomes of community partners.

Existing literature provides strong but fragmented insights. USR studies explain institutional responsibility; social marketing explains behavior-oriented program design; cause-promotion and CSR-skepticism research explain communication and authenticity; and community-engagement studies explain partnership and learning. What remains less developed is an integrated account of how these elements interact in Philippine private HEIs, especially the conditions under which CSR moves from donation-centered visibility toward sustained, evidence-backed social change. Local studies show that private HEIs already use CSR for sustainable engagement and that extension outcomes can be assessed

beyond participation counts (Corpuz & Sanchez, 2021; Corpuz & Sia, 2022), but the management architecture linking program design, continuity, measurement, and communication requires further synthesis.

Despite these advances, existing studies largely examine university social responsibility, social marketing, cause promotion, community partnership, and sustainability reporting as separate domains. Consequently, limited evidence explains how these management mechanisms operate together in shaping the transition from activity-oriented CSR toward sustained and evidence-supported social outcomes, particularly in Philippine private HEIs. This study addresses this gap by integrating behavioral program design, institutional continuity, partnership governance, measurement discipline, and evidence-aware communication within a single management framework. The contribution therefore lies not in introducing another CSR activity classification, but in explaining the organizational conditions that make CSR claims more credible, sustainable, and managerially actionable.

Accordingly, this study examines how selected Philippine private HEIs articulate, implement, and report CSR through the combined lenses of cause promotion and social marketing. It addresses three research questions: (1) How do documented CSR practices differ between donation-centric, hybrid, and outcome-oriented approaches? (2) Which organizational and partnership conditions are associated with more sustained and evidence-supported social-change practices? and (3) How does cause promotion affect the credibility of CSR when the quality of supporting evidence varies? The study aims to contribute a practical management framework that helps HEIs align community engagement, institutional governance, measurement, and public communication without overstating impact.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

University Social Responsibility as an Institutional Capability

USR extends the logic of corporate responsibility into an educational institution whose outputs include knowledge, professional formation, public service, and social legitimacy. Ali et al. (2021) show that USR frameworks encompass governance, teaching, research, internal management, and stakeholder engagement. Godonoga (2023) further emphasizes that a socially responsible university is defined not only by external programs but also by the way it structures relationships, accountability, and institutional behavior. This interpretation is important for private HEIs because it relocates CSR from a peripheral outreach office to the broader management system.

Institutionalization is therefore central. A CSR program can be socially valuable but remain fragile if it depends on a single faculty champion, student organization, or temporary budget. Philippine extension literature points to the importance of institutional support and capability building for sustained community work (Abenir, 2020), while Garcia and Uy Jr. (2025) document financial constraints, scheduling conflicts, participant engagement problems, and limited resource persons among extension implementers. Corpuz and Sanchez (2021) similarly show that CSR in private HEIs is connected to educational, social, financial, and internationalization concerns, indicating that the sustainability of CSR depends on how it is embedded in institutional priorities rather than treated as stand-alone charity.

Social Marketing and Behavior-Oriented CSR

Social marketing treats social change as a managed behavioral process rather than a communication event. The planning framework proposed by Akbar et al. (2021) gives particular weight to formative audience research and segmentation before intervention design, followed by implementation, evaluation, and sustainability. For HEIs, this logic changes the starting question from “What can the institution give?” to “Whose behavior or condition should change, what prevents that change, and what can the institution and its partners realistically influence?” This shift is especially relevant when CSR addresses waste segregation, health prevention, preparedness, financial capability, or educational participation, where durable results require more than one-time information or material assistance.

The behavioral evidence base also argues for caution. Roger et al. (2023) find that social-marketing-based prevention interventions can improve behavior, but results vary and are often modest. The implication for HEI management is that responsible programs should define intermediate outcomes and realistic maintenance periods rather than promise immediate transformation. Environmental and organizational supports are part of the intervention itself: access to materials, peer champions, follow-up coaching, referral pathways, recognition systems, or changes in local routines can reduce the friction that prevents behavioral adoption.

Cause Promotion, Authenticity, and Stakeholder Skepticism

Cause promotion can create awareness, mobilize participation, and align an institution with issues valued by students and communities. Its value, however, depends on fit and credibility. Bhatti et al. (2023) show that cause-related marketing research repeatedly identifies perceived opportunism and weak cause-organization fit as risks to stakeholder response. In higher education, where social mission forms part of institutional identity, the reputational cost of inconsistency can be particularly high. A campaign that emphasizes compassion, sustainability, or inclusion can invite scrutiny of whether corresponding internal practices and community outcomes support the message.

Digital platforms magnify both opportunity and scrutiny. Shin et al. (2023) demonstrate that assurance-related cues in cause-based social media communication can strengthen perceived authenticity and behavioral intentions. Nguyen et al. (2023) likewise show that CSR skepticism is shaped by perceived motives, consistency, and evidence. For private HEIs, credible cause promotion therefore requires more than persuasive storytelling. Partner validation, transparent indicator definitions, concise outcome summaries, and explicit acknowledgment of limits can help distinguish substantiated communication from performative visibility.

Community Partnership, Service-Learning, and Continuity

Community partnership literature strengthens the argument for co-design. Campus Compact (2022) synthesizes community-engagement scholarship around partnership processes, while Keller, St. Arnold Bell, and Haglund (2025) illustrate how community-academic collaboration can use resident priorities to shape action. The central management implication is that local actors should not be treated only as beneficiaries. Their knowledge of barriers, timing, norms, and implementation feasibility is part of the intervention design. Shared decision making can increase relevance and ownership, although it also requires clarity about roles, resources, and expectations.

Service-learning provides one institutional mechanism for continuity. Reviews and syntheses associate community-engaged learning with civic attitudes, social responsibility, academic outcomes, and other dimensions of student development (Ardoin et al., 2023; Álvarez-Vanegas et al., 2024; Guanlao et al., 2025). Philippine experiences described by Guanzon et al. (2021) and De Ramos (2021) show how community engagement can be connected to curricular and citizenship structures. When embedded in practicum, capstone, or service-learning requirements, CSR is less likely to reset with each student cohort. Nevertheless, ethical program design requires community outcomes to remain co-equal with educational outcomes rather than treating communities as a venue for student learning.

Evidence Discipline and Credible Reporting

The final theoretical strand concerns evidence. Sustainability reporting in higher education remains uneven, with institutions varying in materiality choices, indicator depth, and the balance between positive narratives and verifiable performance information (Leal Filho et al., 2022). Public sustainability reporting by Philippine institutions, including Far Eastern University (2023), illustrates the sector's movement toward more explicit outcome and SDG-related claims. This creates an opportunity to improve transparency, but also a need to strengthen the systems behind the claims.

Recent assurance and internal-control guidance reinforces that sustainability claims are governance products, not only communication outputs. COSO (2023) emphasizes internal control over sustainability reporting, while the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board (2024) establishes broader expectations for sustainability assurance. Although private HEIs are not identical to listed corporations, the underlying management logic is transferable: material claims should have defined owners, traceable sources, consistent definitions, review procedures, and documented limitations. In this study, evidence discipline is therefore treated as a component of responsible CSR management rather than as an audit requirement.

Taken together, these theoretical streams suggest that outcome-oriented CSR depends on an interrelated management architecture. Social marketing provides the behavioral logic for identifying audiences, barriers, and intended changes; community partnership provides contextual relevance and local ownership; institutional governance provides continuity of roles and resources; evidence discipline determines whether claimed outcomes can be substantiated; and cause promotion determines how those outcomes are communicated to stakeholders. The propositions developed below therefore treat CSR credibility and continuity as the result of interaction among program design, institutionalization, partnership quality, measurement, and communication rather than as isolated organizational practices.

Analytical Propositions

P1. CSR initiatives that combine formative audience research, explicit behavioral or social outcomes, and enabling supports will display stronger evidence of sustained change than initiatives organized primarily around one-time donations or activity counts.

P2. CSR continuity will be stronger where responsibilities, resources, partnerships, and review routines are institutionalized across academic cycles rather than dependent on ad hoc volunteerism.

P3. Cause promotion will strengthen participation and visibility, but credibility risk will increase when the intensity of promotional claims exceeds the quality and traceability of available evidence.

P4. Integration with service-learning or other structured learning pathways can strengthen continuity when community-defined outcomes remain a core criterion of program success.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative documentary research design with multiple-case analysis to examine how Philippine private HEIs articulated, implemented, and reported CSR in relation to cause promotion, community engagement, and social impact. A documentary approach was appropriate because the research question concerned institutional logics, governance arrangements, public claims, and evidence practices that are observable in formal records and official communications. The design was interpretive and comparative rather than statistical; the purpose was to identify recurring patterns and plausible management mechanisms across heterogeneous private HEI settings.

Cases were selected purposively using a maximum-variation logic to capture differences within the private higher education sector. The original selection criteria included geographic location, tuition band, institutional orientation (sectarian and non-sectarian), and the stated focus of CSR or community engagement initiatives, including health, environment, livelihood, education support, and civic participation. The analysis did not assume that all private HEIs were directly comparable. Instead, variation was used to examine whether similar patterns appeared under different institutional conditions.

Data consisted exclusively of secondary materials that were credible, publicly accessible, and attributable to the relevant institution or partner organization. The source types included institutional strategic plans; annual and sustainability reports; accreditation and quality-assurance materials; community engagement and extension program descriptions; memoranda of understanding and partnership records where publicly available; policy manuals related to student welfare and outreach; privacy and data-governance statements; official websites; press releases; and institutionally controlled

social-media communications. These materials were treated as evidence of how institutions defined responsibility, signaled resource commitments, framed social outcomes, and substantiated public claims. Absence of a practice from public documentation was not interpreted as proof that the practice did not exist.

Analysis proceeded in four stages. First, within-case profiles were developed to map the stated CSR purpose, target community or behavior, governance arrangements, partnership structure, resource signals, monitoring practices, and reporting approach. Second, a cross-case synthesis compared recurring patterns and contrasts. Third, the evidence supporting major claims was assessed by examining whether outcomes were linked to explicit indicator definitions, identifiable data sources, follow-up or monitoring routines, and transparent limitations. Fourth, the patterns were interpreted against the four analytical propositions derived from the literature. Reporting approaches were located on a continuum from narrative-driven disclosure to evidence-supported reporting, while program designs were compared across donation-centric, hybrid, and outcome-oriented forms.

Analytical credibility was strengthened through source triangulation across different document types and through a contribution-focused interpretation. The analysis distinguished what institutions directly documented from what could only be inferred from the pattern of records. It avoided causal attribution where documentary evidence could not isolate alternative explanations and did not rank institutions. This approach is consistent with the study's purpose: to identify management conditions under which CSR claims become more credible, behavior-oriented, and sustainable rather than to certify or audit individual HEIs.

The design has limitations. Public documents are produced for different audiences and may selectively emphasize successful programs. Documentary depth also varies across institutions, which limits strict comparability and prevents the analysis from verifying undocumented implementation practices. Because the study did not use interviews, surveys, direct observation, or beneficiary-level longitudinal data, it cannot independently confirm the magnitude of reported social impact. These constraints are addressed by making claims at the level supported by the available evidence and by treating the findings as analytically transferable patterns rather than statistically generalizable estimates.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The cross-case analysis revealed that CSR practice was better understood as a continuum than as a binary distinction between charity and social change. Three broad patterns were visible in the documentary evidence: donation-centric programs, hybrid programs, and outcome-oriented programs. These forms differed not only in the type of activity undertaken, but also in how needs were identified, how continuity was managed, what evidence was collected, and how public communication was calibrated. Table 1 summarizes the comparative pattern.

Table 1. Comparative continuum of CSR practice in private HEIs

Dimension	Donation-centric	Hybrid	Outcome-oriented	Evidence implication	Management implication
Primary logic	Immediate relief or visible assistance	Material support plus repeated engagement	Defined behavioral or social outcome	Evidence shifts from activity completion toward change over time	Match program architecture to intended level of change
Needs definition	Institution-led or event-driven	Some consultation with partner groups	Early listening, profiling, or co-design	Stronger claims require clearer evidence of community-defined needs	Invest in formative research before selecting

Time horizon	Single event or short cycle	Repeated activities across a limited period	Follow-up aligned with the change being claimed	Longer claims require appropriate follow-up windows	activities Protect continuity across semesters and leadership changes
Measurement	Counts of events, goods, or participants	Outputs plus selected intermediate outcomes	Baseline, intermediate outcomes, maintenance indicators where feasible	Outcome credibility depends on definitions, sources, and follow-up	Use a small indicator set that can be maintained consistently
Communication	High visibility; emotionally compelling	Balanced activity and outcome narrative	Evidence-aware claims with explicit limits	Promotional intensity can exceed evidence quality	Require evidence review before major cause-promotion claims

Source: Authors' synthesis from the documentary analysis (2026)

Donation-centric programs remained important for emergency relief and immediate material needs, but their documentation generally centered on what the institution delivered. This design is not inherently weak; donations can be appropriate when the problem is acute and relief is the intended objective. The difficulty arises when output evidence is used to imply longer-term social impact. The literature on USR helps explain this distinction. Baptiste et al. (2022) note that universities often demonstrate activity more easily than durable outcomes, while Corpuz and Sanchez (2021) show that philanthropic initiatives remain a visible feature of CSR among Philippine private HEIs. The management implication is therefore not to eliminate donations, but to align claims with the actual purpose and time horizon of the intervention.

Hybrid programs combined material assistance with repeated engagement, training, coaching, or skills development. These designs offered more opportunity for change but still varied in the clarity of their outcome logic. The strongest documentary pattern appeared where programs moved beyond broad aspirations and specified what participants or partner organizations were expected to do differently. This is consistent with social marketing, which requires a defined audience, behavior, barriers, and value proposition rather than a generic awareness objective (Akbar et al., 2021). The findings support P1: programs that showed stronger outcome orientation were also more likely to document needs assessment, segmentation or targeting, enabling supports, and some form of follow-up.

Early listening and co-design emerged as a recurrent differentiator. Programs with stronger evidence of relevance referred to needs assessments, community profiling, partner-led consultations, or other mechanisms through which community priorities shaped the intervention. This pattern mirrors the partnership logic emphasized in community-engagement literature (Campus Compact, 2022) and the community-driven process demonstrated by Keller et al. (2025). Co-design appeared to serve two management functions. First, it improved problem definition by revealing barriers that might not be visible from the university perspective. Second, it increased the likelihood that local actors would recognize the program as theirs rather than as a temporary institutional project. This matters for behavior change because maintenance often depends on community routines that persist after the university reduces its direct involvement.

Continuity was the second major differentiator. The documentary evidence suggested that programs were more stable when responsibilities were assigned to identifiable offices or roles, resources were protected across cycles, and partnerships were formalized rather than dependent solely on volunteer enthusiasm. Where these features were weak, CSR could revert to short-term activities when student cohorts changed, faculty workload increased, or budgets tightened. This pattern supports P2 and is consistent with Philippine evidence on the organizational constraints faced by extension workers (Abenir, 2020; Garcia & Uy Jr., 2025). It also reinforces the broader USR argument that responsibility becomes more durable when embedded in governance rather than attached to isolated events (Ali et al., 2021; Godonoga, 2023).

Curricular integration offered one practical route to continuity. When community engagement was linked with practicum, capstone, service-learning, or other structured academic requirements, institutions had a recurring reason to allocate faculty attention and student participation. The student-development literature gives this strategy educational legitimacy, with reviews indicating positive civic, social, and academic outcomes from community-engaged learning (Ardoin et al., 2023; Álvarez-Vanegas et al., 2024; Guanlao et al., 2025). Philippine e-service-learning experience further shows that structured academic pathways can preserve engagement even when modes of interaction change (Guanzon et al., 2021). The finding is consistent with P4, but with an important qualification: the community cannot be reduced to a learning laboratory. Partner-defined outcomes must remain part of the program's success criteria.

Cause promotion created a more complex pattern. Promotional communication was useful for attracting volunteers, creating awareness, signaling institutional values, and sustaining partner attention. However, the same visibility increased exposure to stakeholder skepticism. The analysis therefore supports P3: the reputational value of cause promotion depended on the relationship between the strength of the claim and the strength of the evidence. This finding is consistent with cause-related marketing research on perceived fit and opportunism (Bhatti et al., 2023), as well as research showing that assurance cues can strengthen perceived authenticity in cause-related social-media communication (Shin et al., 2023). In private HEIs, where community engagement can also support branding and enrollment narratives, evidence discipline becomes particularly important because stakeholders may question whether a cause is being used primarily for image building.

The evidence problem was not only whether data existed, but whether it could be traced. Stronger reporting practices distinguished between activities completed, immediate outputs, intermediate changes, and longer-term outcomes. They also made it easier to identify who owned the indicator, what source produced the figure, and what was still uncertain. This direction is consistent with sustainability reporting research in higher education, which documents uneven materiality and disclosure practices (Leal Filho et al., 2022). It also aligns with the governance logic of COSO (2023) and IAASB (2024), where credible sustainability information depends on internal control, documentation, and review. The relevant lesson for private HEIs is not that every community project requires external assurance, but that public claims should be capable of internal verification.

A related issue concerns the temptation to over-claim impact. Outcome-oriented CSR does not require every institution to conduct complex experimental evaluation. In many cases, a modest but credible contribution claim is more useful than an unsupported impact claim. For example, a university can document improved participation, adoption of a target practice, referral completion, or sustained use of a community process without asserting that it alone caused a broad social outcome. This contribution-focused logic is compatible with the modest and heterogeneous behavioral effects reported in social marketing reviews (Roger et al., 2023) and with the skepticism literature's emphasis on consistency and evidence (Nguyen et al., 2023).

The analysis also suggests that public sustainability and impact reporting can serve as a bridge between CSR management and institutional learning. Reporting artifacts such as the sustainability disclosures published by Far Eastern University (2023) show that private HEIs are already translating social and environmental activities into more structured public narratives. When linked with quality assurance and program review, these reports can become more than reputation documents: they can help leadership identify weak indicators, fragmented ownership, recurring implementation barriers, and areas where community outcomes are not yet being tracked.

Taken together, the findings indicate that the most important transition is not from “charity” to “marketing,” but from event management to change management. Social marketing contributes the behavioral architecture; community partnership contributes local relevance and ownership; governance contributes continuity; and evidence-aware cause promotion contributes credible mobilization. The combined framework is presented in Table 2 as a practical management sequence for private HEIs.

Table 2. Management framework for accountable cause promotion and social-change CSR

Management domain	Core question	Minimum evidence	Primary risk if neglected
Purpose and outcome	What specific condition or behavior should change?	Defined outcome and realistic time horizon	Activity counts are mistaken for impact
Audience and barriers	Who must act differently, and what prevents adoption?	Needs assessment, segmentation, or partner input	Generic interventions with weak relevance
Co-design and partnership	Who has decision authority and implementation knowledge?	Documented roles, partner participation, coordination mechanism	Low ownership and poor maintenance
Governance and continuity	Who owns the program, budget, data, and review cycle?	Named responsibility and continuity mechanism	Program resets across cohorts or leadership changes
Measurement	What can be measured consistently and ethically?	Small indicator set with identifiable sources and follow-up	Unverifiable or inconsistent claims
Cause promotion	What can the institution credibly say now?	Claim-to-evidence check and disclosure of limits	Perceived opportunism or performative CSR
Learning and improvement	How will evidence alter the next cycle?	Documented review, adaptation, and feedback	Reporting becomes ceremonial rather than managerial

Source: Authors' synthesis based on the literature and cross-case documentary findings (2026)

From a managerial perspective, the framework provides a right-sized alternative to two extremes. The first extreme is visibility-driven CSR, in which institutions communicate extensively but measure little. The second is measurement overload, in which programs attempt to collect more indicators than staff and partners can maintain. A practical middle path is to select a limited number of material outcomes, clarify data ownership, match follow-up to the expected pace of change, and require promotional claims to remain within the evidence boundary. This approach preserves the mobilizing value of cause promotion while making social marketing and community partnership operationally feasible for resource-constrained private HEIs.

5. CONCLUSION

This study answers the three research questions in several ways. First, documented CSR practices differed along a continuum from donation-centric initiatives emphasizing immediate outputs, through hybrid programs combining assistance with repeated engagement, to outcome-oriented programs organized around defined behavioral or social changes. Second, more sustained and evidence-supported practices were characterized by early needs assessment, co-design, formalized partnerships, institutional ownership, continuity of resources, and systematic follow-up. Third, cause promotion supported mobilization and visibility, but its credibility depended on the proportionality between public claims and the quality, traceability, and limitations of the available evidence. Together, these findings indicate that credible CSR requires alignment between program design, governance, measurement, partnership, and communication.

The central management implication is to connect social marketing, governance, measurement, and communication. Private HEIs do not need complex impact systems for every outreach activity; they need a defensible match between purpose, evidence, and claim. A small set of consistently defined indicators, clear ownership, appropriate follow-up, and transparent limitations can make CSR more useful for institutional learning while reducing the risk of performative reporting.

The study is limited by its reliance on public documentary sources, which vary in depth and may privilege successful narratives. Future research should combine documentary evidence with interviews, community-partner perspectives, beneficiary-level data, and longitudinal designs to test how particular program features influence behavioral maintenance and stakeholder trust. Comparative work across institutional types and regions would also help determine which elements of the proposed framework are broadly transferable and which require local adaptation.

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