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Corporate social responsibility and stakeholder engagement strategies for mining business success and community development: A conceptual framework for South African mining

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study explores how corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder engagement can minimise conflicts between mining companies and local communities in South Africa. These conflicts typically arise from disputes over local employment, procurement, and community representation within the mining sector.

Design/methodology/approach: This study used a qualitative research approach and a systematic literature review. It involved analysing existing scholarly articles from Google Scholar related to stakeholder engagement and corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the mining sector.

Findings: Findings from the systematic literature review indicate that mining companies struggle with stakeholder engagement when funding corporate social responsibility projects. The findings provide valuable insights into how stakeholder engagement could be a useful approach for minimising conflicts within the mining sector.

Recommendations/Value: This conceptual framework is recommended to guide policymakers, mining companies, and community leaders in establishing more sustainable and equitable mining practices. By using effective corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder engagement strategies, mining businesses can enhance their success and sustainability while building stronger relationships with local communities.

JEL Classification: M14

Keywords: Community development; conceptual framework; corporate social responsibility; mining business success; stakeholder engagement

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Despite fuelling the transition to renewable energy globally, Sub-Saharan Africa remains heavily reliant on natural resources for economic growth. Accordingly, Signé (2021), in his study, "*Africa's Mining Potential: Trends, Opportunities, Challenges and Strategies,*" highlighted that mineral resources provide substantial fiscal revenue, foreign currency reserves, and employment opportunities for African countries. This also highlights the critical role the mining and natural resources sector plays in driving economic development on the continent. However, such reliance presents a potential conflict between the quest for economic growth and the transition to renewable energy. While demand for minerals used in producing batteries, wind turbines, and solar energy is expected to rise significantly (Signé, 2021), it should be noted that mining such minerals also contributes to climate change, the primary issue that renewable energy aims to address. Despite climate change challenges, Africa's mining sector has demonstrated resilience. The sector has weathered adverse global conditions such as the 2007-8 financial crisis and the post-2014 commodity price decline, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, even with its detrimental effect on commodity prices.

Over the past ten years (2008-2018), Barberton Mines demonstrated its commitment to corporate social responsibility through various projects beyond the education sponsorship programme, documented in their 2018 Social and Labour Plan (Ngomane, 2019). These projects showcase Barberton Mines' commitment to collaborating with local stakeholders, public sectors, and businesses for successful project implementation and community development. However, despite Barberton Mines' efforts to promote corporate social responsibility (CSR), some local community stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with the current initiatives. According to Ngomane (2019), stakeholder engagement sessions conducted during the Barberton Mines Transformation Trust highlighted several key concerns regarding CSR.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents a review of relevant literature on stakeholder engagement and corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the mining sector. Based on this literature review, the study identifies potential strategies that Barberton Mines can explore to enhance its CSR practices and effectively engage stakeholders, thus ultimately contributing to both business success and community development.

2.1 Corporate social responsibility

Serfontein-Jordaan and Dlungwane (2022) drew on the World Business Council for Sustainable Development's (WBCSD) definition of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a commitment to contribute to sustainable economic development alongside stakeholders. Moreover, this collaboration aims to improve the quality of life for employees, their families, local communities, and society as a whole.

The South African mining industry operates under the Mineral and Petroleum Resource Development Act of 2002. This act stipulates that mining licenses are contingent upon the approval of a Social and Labour Plan (SLP) by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMR). Notably, this approval is predicated on the SLP's alignment with the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of the local municipality (Serfontein-Jordaan & Dlungwane, 2022). Thus, the IDP serves as a crucial developmental framework, acting as a roadmap for coordinated efforts by the local government and other industries within the community (Rapanyane, 2020). The ultimate aim is to improve the quality of life for all residents through a coherent strategy.

The Road-Based Socio-Economic Empowerment Charter for the Mining and Minerals Industry (2018) mandated mining companies to meaningfully contribute to mine community development (Mantashe, 2018). This requires direct consultation with relevant stakeholders, including mine communities, traditional authorities, and affected parties, to identify their developmental priorities. Cheruiyot-Koech and Reddy (2022) posited that the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) policy represents a significant effort towards broader social responsibility. Thus, driven by key institutions and state actors, the policy is codified in the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Codes of Practice, which emphasise corporate social responsibility (CSR) across various sectors. For example, mining firms in South Africa actively engage with local communities, thereby recognising them as crucial stakeholders for CSR initiatives. Traditionally, CSR in South Africa took the form of corporate social investment

(CSI), which primarily involved charitable donations focused on education and healthcare in surrounding communities (Que *et al*., 2019; Cheruiyot-Koech & Reddy, 2022).

However, despite these differences, BBBEE remains a distinct local variant of the global CSR movement. It emphasises the BEE Code of Good Practice, which directs social efforts towards the direct and indirect empowerment of black people. More specifically, the BEE Code promotes external beneficiaries through internships, bursaries, and initiatives to increase the tertiary education population (Cheruiyot-Koech & Reddy, 2022). Additionally, it encourages firms to develop black-owned enterprises and support existing suppliers through procurement and funding. The state also plays a role in considering BEE status when awarding licenses in specific industries such as mining. Furthermore, South Africa's King Codes of Governance influence firms to report CSR performance transparently and independently (Cheruiyot-Koech & Reddy, 2022). However, challenges remain; with large corporations leading the charge, SMEs have yet to fully embrace CSR (Aliye, 2020). Additionally, critics argue that CSR efforts in South Africa need to go beyond voluntary initiatives and be thoroughly integrated into core business practices in order to truly address the root causes of deepening inequalities (Aliye, 2020).

Furthermore, several factors highlight the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) for mining companies in South Africa. Firstly, public perception of the mining industry is often negative, demanding proactive efforts to improve its image (Leonard, 2019). Secondly, mining companies face persistent pressure from various stakeholders, both globally and locally. Finally, securing and maintaining a "social license to operate" is crucial in South Africa, as communities frequently oppose mining expansion due to inadequate engagement (Serfontein-Jordaan & Dlungwane, 2022).

Ngomane (2019) examined the leading cause of the stand-off between Barberton Mines Pty Ltd. and the local community. Accordingly, South African mines face the threat of closure due to community protests, as communities expect mining companies to provide employment opportunities and also fulfil their corporate social responsibility obligations. The Barberton protest, fuelled by accusations of overlooked employment opportunities, began on March 27th and lasted until May 4th, 2018 (Ngomane, 2019). The 39-day stand-off resulted in staggering losses of R134 million (approximately US$7 million) in profit, alongside significant damage to infrastructure and increased security costs.

Barberton mines are located in the Southern region of Mbombela and Northwest of the Kingdom of Eswatini. The Barberton Greenstone Belt also shares its boundaries with the

Malolotja Game Reserve to the East. The mining began in 1883 after being founded in 1874 by Tom MacLaclan (Aliye, 2020; Travers *et al*., 2023). The four mines under the Barberton Mine include the Sheba Gold Mine, which was claimed as the first discovery by Edward Bray. Moreover, the Sheba Gold Mine holds the title of the oldest working gold mine in South Africa. Next is the Fairview Gold Mine, which was unearthed in 1887 by Kidson Reef Gold Mining Company Ltd. Additionally, the New Consort Gold Mine, which was established in 1885 and owned by a consortium of Metorex Ltd, MCI Resources Ltd, and Crew Gold corp, has contributed significantly to the town's prosperity over the years. Lastly, the Agnes Gold Mine was named after Jessie Agnes, the wife of the gold prospector, Jack Grieves.

Collectively, these four mines form the backbone of Barberton's mining industry, placing it amongst the top eight in South Africa with an impressive 1.66 million ounces (52 tons) of proven reserves (Jones & Kisters, 2022). Despite being over a century old, the Barberton Mines complex has yielded a staggering 11 million ounces (344 tons) of gold over the past century (Travers *et al.*, 2023). This remarkable feat is a testament to the enduring riches of this historic mining region. The section evaluates the findings and discussion on stakeholders' engagement and corporate social responsibility for Barberton Mines' success.

2.2 Stakeholder engagement

Prior to 1980, the definition and scope of corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributions were less clearly defined. However, the publication of Edward Freeman's book on strategic management in that year introduced the stakeholder approach, which significantly increased the visibility and understanding of CSR's role in business (Carroll, 2021). Therefore, by introducing new perspectives on CSR concerns within the context of business and society, the stakeholder theory and its associated management practices have become deeply intertwined with CSR concepts, language, strategies, and thinking.

Furthermore, stakeholder theory underscores the importance of establishing sustainable and ongoing relationships with stakeholders (Nurmi, 2017). It proposes that organisational survival hinges on the ability to meet the needs and expectations of various stakeholders, who are defined by their rights, ownership, or concerns regarding the business and its operations — past, present, and future (Ansu-Mensah *et al*., 2021). Moreover, diverse stakeholders and people from various nationalities may have varying priorities for social initiatives that can lead organisations to focus their corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts on activities that are most relevant and impactful within the specific communities and regions (Cheruiyot-Koech &

Reddy, 2022). Also, social networks serve as a valuable source of information and facilitate effective stakeholder dialogue, along with various stakeholders actively participating in CSR discussions on platforms such as Twitter (X) (Pons *et al*., 2021).

Pascual *et al.* (2023) stated that the key lies in scenario planning that transcends disciplinary boundaries and integrates valuable insights into policy-making. However, while driving economic growth, the mining sector also faces the critical challenge of balancing environmental and social responsibility (Cheruiyot-Koech & Reddy, 2022). Matikainen (2022) emphasised the importance of deep collaboration, where stakeholders actively work together to achieve shared objectives. Furthermore, obtaining community agreement and support prior to project implementation is crucial for sustainable and productive partnerships (Que *et al*., 2019). Ultimately, open communication and collaborative efforts are indispensable for achieving sustainable outcomes. Mining activities directly impact local communities as primary stakeholders, and their feedback is crucial for successful operations (Zainuddin Rela *et al*., 2020). There is also a growing awareness, which contributes to the increasing pressure on mining companies to act responsibly towards communities (Prno *et al.,* 2021).

2.3 Aim

The purpose of this study is to explore corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and stakeholder engagement strategies that would contribute to mining business success and community development in the Barberton Mines Transformation Trust.

2.4 Research questions

- What are the corporate social responsibility and stakeholders' engagement strategies the mining sector employed to contribute to the mining business success and community development?
- What could be a conceptual model relevant for mining companies?

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach. As defined by Cresswell & Creswell (2018), qualitative research is a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand and clarify phenomena within their specific contexts, such as "real-world settings." In this study, the qualitative research method was underpinned by a systematic literature review of previous articles on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder engagement within the mining sector.

Kelly *et al.* (2016) contended that the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement provides a reliable and practical framework for guiding the conduct and reporting of systematic reviews. Moreover, the PRISMA checklist assists researchers in ensuring high-quality reporting and enables end-users to critically appraise the quality of the review. This approach was adopted to systematically identify and retrieve relevant information from the literature (Kelly *et al.*, 2016).

Systematic literature reviews aim to bridge knowledge gaps and enhance the understanding of a specific topic by:

1. Gathering all evidence that meets predefined eligibility criteria;
2. Summarising the existing body of knowledge; and
3. Critically examining the available research.

The objective of this systematic literature review was to identify and synthesise academic research studies on CSR and stakeholder engagement within the mining sector, with a specific focus on enhancing business success and sustainability.

3.2 Data collection (selection of papers and time horizon)

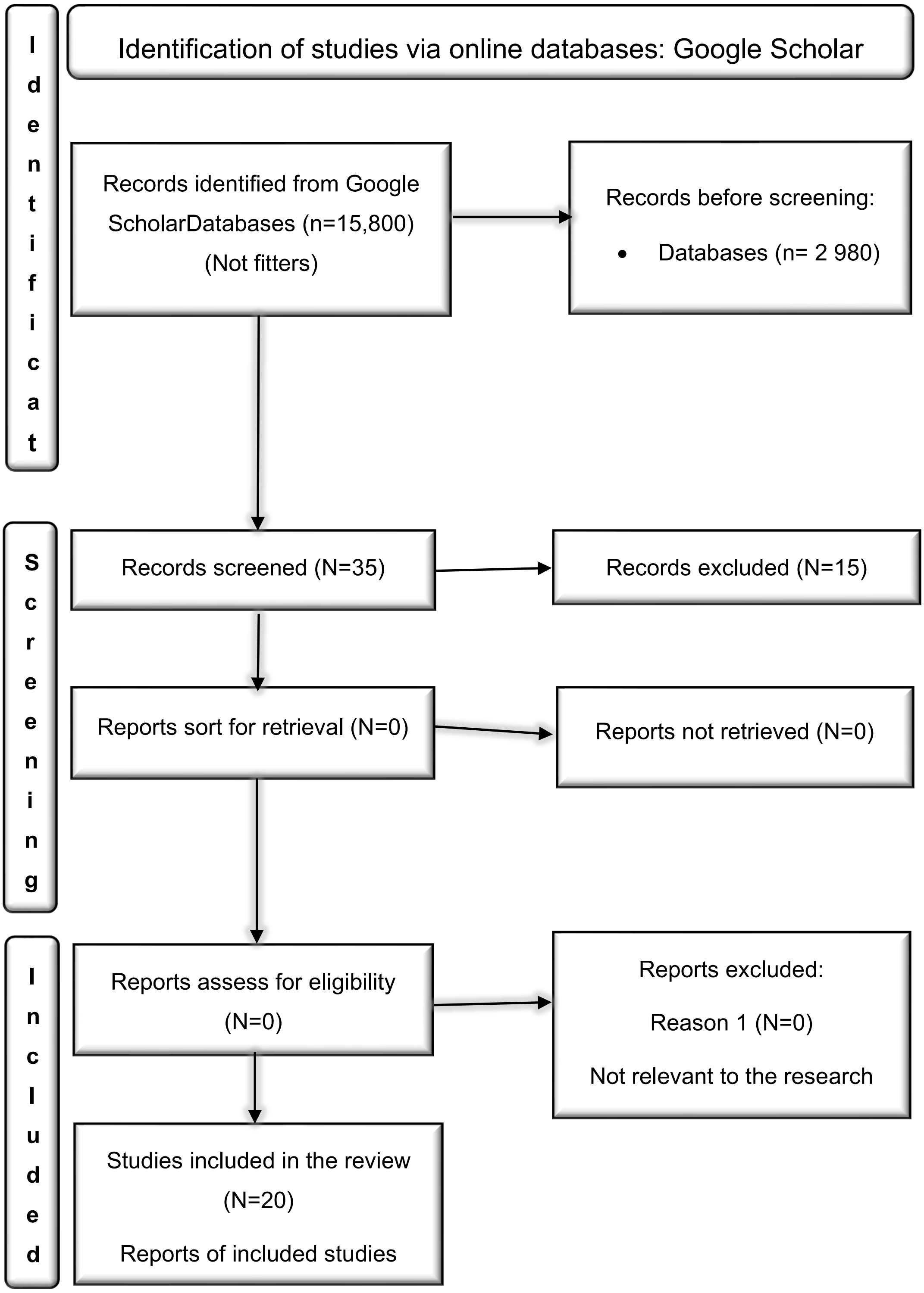
This study investigated how Barberton Mines can leverage existing literature on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder engagement to enhance business success and further contribute to community development. Moreover, building upon the findings from Barberton Mines, the research explored how the company can effectively integrate these concepts. Data collection for this study also involved a comprehensive review of academic, peer-reviewed publications. The search period encompassed publications from June 2019 to December 2023. Additionally, Google Scholar served as the primary online database for identifying and retrieving relevant materials on CSR and stakeholder engagement within the mining sector. The review was limited to peer-reviewed academic articles published in English.

3.3 Sampling and sample size (article selection)

This research employed a systematic review methodology, as illustrated in Figure 1 and detailed below. The initial stage involved a comprehensive search of online databases using a set of carefully selected keywords and phrases: "stakeholders' engagement," "corporate social responsibility," "mining sector," and "sustainability."

Following title selection, eligible papers were downloaded and analysed. The search was also refined using the following filters: “publication date between June 2019 and December 2023”; “sorted by relevance to the keywords”; “limited to academic articles”; and “restricted to full-text availability”. The research focused on 20 articles to develop a concise and systematic review. The inclusion criteria consisted of academic articles published between June 2019 and December 2022, written in English, and specifically focusing on corporate social responsibility and stakeholder engagement within the mining sector. Exclusion criteria included data classified as conference proceedings, books, book chapters, and reports relevant to the nature of the research question and the scope of the study.

Figure 1: PRISMA Methodology utilised in this study to select articles for review



Source: The PRISMA guidelines (Page *et al*., 2021)

The PRISMA 2020 statement replaces the 2009 version and provides updated reporting guidance that reflects advancements in methods for identifying, selecting, appraising, and synthesising studies (Page *et al.*, 2021). The PRISMA Diagram illustrates the methodology employed in this study, which involved a six-step data collection process using Google Scholar:

a) **Initial search:** A preliminary search on Google Scholar yielded 15,800 records.

b) **Filtered search:** The initial search was refined using the following filters:

   - **Date range:** June 2019 to December 2023.

   - **Peer-reviewed status:** Limited to peer-reviewed articles. This filtered search resulted in 2,080 eligible peer-reviewed articles.

c) **Title screening:** 35 articles were selected for download based on a review of their titles and relevance to CSR and stakeholder engagement.

d) **Full-text screening:** 15 articles were excluded after a thorough review of their full text due to misalignment with the study's eligibility criteria and research objectives.

e) **No reports included:** No reports were included in the systematic literature review, as they did not meet the inclusion criteria.

f) **Final selection:** 20 publications were ultimately selected for the systematic literature review based on their relevance and alignment with the research objectives.

3.3 Results (article classifications)

To organise the selected database of 20 journal articles, a comprehensive bibliographic list was compiled and included in Annexure A. The data were then systematically analysed using a Word document table. Also, the articles were categorised into two primary themes: corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder engagement. Importantly, further analysis identified emerging sub-themes within these primary categories, revealing the key areas of focus within the published literature on CSR and stakeholder engagement during the specified timeframe.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE REVIEW

The findings and discussion are organised around two main themes: corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder engagement. Within these central themes, several emerging sub-themes are identified. For example, three key sub-themes emerged within the domain of CSR strategies, while two sub-themes were identified within the domain of stakeholder engagement approaches.

4.1 Corporate social responsibility initiatives

Three key strategies emerged within the domain of corporate social responsibility (CSR): enhancing CSR concepts, aligning policies with CSR, and implementing a project selection mechanism.

4.1.1 Strategy 1: Enhancing CSR concepts

Barberton Mines has a long history of supporting its community through various corporate social responsibility projects. Furthermore, these projects, often initiated at the request of local institutions and associations, directly address community needs. The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has a rich history dating back centuries. Over time, its scope has broadened significantly, and, at its core, CSR concerns a business's accountability and obligations towards society (Aliye, 2020). As outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2 of the MPRDA, mining companies have a legal obligation to promote employment and social and economic advancement for all South Africans and contribute to the socio-economic development of the communities where they operate. Moreover, empirical studies consistently emphasise the crucial role of strong coordination between stakeholders and corporations in securing business credibility and generating social and economic value (Ansu-Mensah *et al*., 2021). Additionally, effective CSR execution requires corporate managers to actively build relationships with stakeholders through both formal and informal engagement activities. Thus, by actively engaging with and investing in its community, Barberton Mines is fulfilling its legal and ethical responsibilities while fostering a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with its neighbours. Serfontein-Jordaan and Dlungwane (2022) emphasised the growing focus on corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives implemented by mining companies to achieve social, environmental, and economic sustainability within these communities.

Between 2008 and 2018, Barberton Mines, through its transformation fund, had funded ten notable projects, including education sponsorships, infrastructure development, and skill centres. Additionally, they employed over 1860 unskilled and skilled labourers. Despite these contributions, community members continued to demand increased employment opportunities, local business contracts, and more representation in the Barberton Mines Transformation Trust (BMT). However, this discontent culminated in social unrest in 2018, where the community protested against recruiting practices that extended beyond their local area, along with the lack of elected community members in the BMT. Thus, corporate social responsibility (CSR) in sub-Saharan Africa remains in its early stages of development (Aliye, 2020). Moreover, existing initiatives are primarily driven by philanthropic activities and related programmes from multinational corporations and a handful of prominent local companies. This fragmented landscape also highlights a critical gap: most countries in the region lack a national CSR policy and a dedicated coordinating department to oversee and guide responsible business practices. Ethiopia's mining sector also faced a crucial challenge, as companies lack a strategic understanding of their CSR towards community development. This results in strained relationships, marked by conflict and animosity, as revealed by Aliye's (2020) research. Moreover, interviews with community members highlight their key aspirations: local development, infrastructure, environmental protection, and equitable resource utilisation. Additionally, they yearn for a stronger voice, justice, and support for development, employment, and welfare improvement.

Since 2012, Barberton Mines has sponsored over 96 students, primarily in mining engineering and related fields, in response to community pressure for alignment with Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) policies. However, the 2018 report indicates that only 28 students were actively supported across South African universities. Stakeholder feedback in 2018 also expressed concerns about the limited scope of the bursary programme, which primarily focuses on mining-related fields. Participants suggested that the mines should expand the programme to accommodate diverse interests among local youth. Furthermore, the lack of a dedicated learnership programme and the primary focus on internal employees were criticised for excluding the broader community and potentially fostering unethical practices. Also, corporate social responsibility (CSR) priorities can vary significantly across regions, reflecting the unique challenges and concerns of different communities. Therefore, firms in the Middle East and Africa often prioritise addressing social issues within their communities, while European companies tend to focus more heavily on climate change initiatives (Cheruiyot-Koech & Reddy, 2022). The preference for CSR activities in South Africa includes education, training, and enterprise development (Cheruiyot-Koech & Reddy, 2022).

4.1.2 Strategy 2: Aligning policies with CSR

During the stakeholders' engagement workshop, a significant majority (92%) of participants called for the BMTT's disbandment and Trust Deed amendment to allow for community-elected representatives (Ngomane, 2019). This also aligns with the Mining Charter's requirement for community involvement in selecting its representatives. Thus, South Africa stands out as the only country in Sub-Saharan Africa to have actively embraced the corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework (Aliye, 2020). For example, it has incorporated legislation, policies, and institutional arrangements that promote responsible business practices. Notably, South Africa adopted international CSR standards into its national laws and norms, setting a commendable example (Aliye, 2020). More specifically, the mining manager clarified that the BMTT is not a "Community Trust" but a Barberton Mines initiative funded by multinational suppliers to support local socio-economic development. The Government of South Africa’s policy addresses historical inequalities and encourages companies to voluntarily integrate CSR programmes into their strategies that align with the country's sustainable development agenda (Aliye, 2020). The manager also emphasised transparency, highlighting that annual reports are shared with shareholders, the municipality, and the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR). Thus, recognising the community's discontent, Barberton Mines acknowledges the need to restructure the BMTT to better reflect community expectations. Bezzola *et al.* (2022) proffered that mining companies should develop community development agreements, which are binding contracts negotiated between the mining company and the local community with clearly defined goals and evaluation criteria.

Attention has also been focused on stakeholders’ dissatisfaction with Barberton Mines' procurement practices. The business forum criticised the BMTT Trustees for failing to develop local businesses that align with the Mining Charter 2018, which mandates identifying and supporting host community development and, thus, fails to integrate local SMMEs into the supply chain, which contradicts the spirit of Broad-Based Socio-Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) principles (Ngomane, 2019). Moreover, this failure to allocate funding for commercial projects and programmes raises concerns about fulfilling the community's needs.

According to Carroll (2021), there's increasing acknowledgement of the positive correlation between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices and a company's financial success. This recognition has given rise to the concept of the "business case for CSR," highlighting the potential for CSR initiatives to enhance profitability and overall business performance. Notably, Porter and Kramer's 2006 article, "Strategy and Society", served as a catalyst, arguing that social responsibility and competitive advantage are inextricably linked (Que *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, large corporations have responded by linking their CSR initiatives to local community development, thereby supporting education, skills training, environmental protection, and social and economic improvement projects (Aliye, 2020).

4.1.3 Strategy 3: Implement project selection mechanism

During stakeholder engagement sessions, 78% of participants favoured the integration of mining-related courses into the existing TVET College curriculum, while 22% suggested converting the Sinqobile Life Skills Center into an accredited technical centre (Ngomane, 2019). Overall, stakeholders play a crucial role in determining project viability, execution, and review (Ansu-Mensah *et al*., 2021). By encouraging them to share their perspectives, companies demonstrate the value placed on their views (Holcombe & Kemp, 2020). However, stakeholders should acknowledge that the establishment of a technical college ultimately falls under the purview of the Minister of Higher Education and is driven by demand. Additionally, engineering courses could encompass broader disciplines beyond mining if the demand for specific specialisations is low (Ngomane, 2019). Importantly, stakeholder input gleaned from these interactions is seamlessly integrated into the meeting plan, ensuring their concerns are heard and addressed (Kasimba & Lujala, 2020). Ansu-Mensah *et al.* (2021) highlighted participatory planning as the cornerstone for fostering community engagement and support. Their study found that empowering local stakeholders through needs assessments equips them to contribute effectively. This participatory approach fosters high levels of collaboration and engagement, thereby ultimately empowering communities to gain and maintain control over desired projects.

The BBBEE framework, as outlined by Cheruiyot-Koech and Reddy (2022), has shifted the focus of CSR in South Africa from philanthropic activities to strategic initiatives. Thus, education, training, and skills development are now prioritised to empower historically disadvantaged groups and achieve broader socio-economic transformation. However, the mining industry often favours infrastructure-based CSR activities like building and upgrading roads, schools, and health facilities (Cheruiyot-Koech & Reddy, 2022). This reflects the unique needs and challenges of mining communities.

In a study on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and local conflicts in African mining communities, Bezzola *et al.* (2022) ascertained that it is rather challenging to convince mining companies to randomly allocate CSR payments to benefit the local community. They argued that it might not be sustainable for the organisation. However, the South Africa Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) policy encourages all companies to support social issues that affect local communities (Cheruiyot-Koech & Reddy, 2022). Moreover, their study found that CSR in some developing countries is used to counter local tensions. The results showed that mining companies are exposed to a higher probability of conflict in surrounding areas where they operate, and others suggested that CSR could reduce the probability of protests and conflicts between the mining company and neighbouring communities (Blesia *et al.*, 2021).

4.2 Stakeholders' engagement

An effective stakeholder engagement strategy involves two key elements: community involvement and representation. The strategy also emphasizes collaboration and a culture of trust to ensure the success of a mining business while also fostering community development.

4.2.1 Strategy 4: Community involvement and representation

In the mining industry, stakeholder engagement holds particular significance as communities directly experience the social and environmental impacts of mining operations. Therefore, by actively consulting with residents, companies ensure their voices are heard and their needs are addressed, ultimately fostering a more sustainable and cooperative environment (Ansu-Mensah *et al.*, 2021). The Mining Charter 2018 mandates a 5% equity distribution to the host community, managed by a trust such as the Barberton Mines Transformation Trust (BMTT). However, there are concerns regarding the lack of community involvement in its governance. Stakeholders, especially community representatives, criticised the exclusion of community consultation in selecting trustees. They argued that the current board, particularly the community representatives, who are former local officials, lack legitimacy and fail to represent the community's voice (Ngomane, 2019). Ansu-Mensah *et al.'s* (2021) study on corporate social responsibility in Ghana's mining sector determined that engaging with stakeholders is crucial for understanding community perspectives and concerns. Their research highlights the value of interaction as a development tool, which enables companies to incorporate stakeholder concerns into the decision-making process and reflect their contributions through outcomes. This collaborative process fosters open communication and idea sharing, leading to mutually beneficial results (Holcombe & Kemp, 2020).

Furthermore, it would also appear that participants felt excluded from direct consultation by both Barberton Mines and BMTT, who relied solely on consultations through the local municipality's Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) (Ngomane, 2019). This approach, deemed insufficient by the community, has resulted in ongoing conflicts and protests. Hence, mining companies and governments are increasingly recognising the need for improved relationships with local communities affected by mining operations (Prno *et al.*, 2021).

Ultimately, this lack of engagement can lead to resentment, disruption, and even confrontations, often resulting in damage to mining equipment and infrastructure (Ngomane, 2019). Accordingly, constructive dialogue and collaboration make it possible to address differing opinions without resorting to arguing, increasing the possibility of finding solutions (Matikainen, 2022). Constructive dialogue and collaboration, even with opposing viewpoints, enable respectful discourse and can lead to innovative solutions not achievable through selective engagement. Ultimately, such conflicts not only harm the profitability of operations but can even threaten their long-term viability. The study on "CSR and local conflicts in African mining communities" recommended that future research should examine the long-term impacts of increased private sector involvement in sustainable development initiatives on local communities (Blesia *et al.*, 2021). Such a study could lead to policy development for long-term cooperation and collaborations between mining companies and local communities that are aligned with the lifetime of a mine.

In African nations, mining communities are consistently at loggerheads because of the inadequate participation strategy of stakeholder engagement (Ansu-Mensah *et al*., 2021). Thus, the stakeholders' engagement programme should not be ignored, as it identifies stakeholders' concerns and integrates them into project development. Moreover, when scenarios are co-developed with stakeholders, acceptance by high-interest parties soars to an impressive 94%. It also tends to underscore the power of collaborative planning in fostering stakeholder engagement and building trust (Pascual *et al*., 2023). Local civil society organisations, including graduates from Barberton Mines and other institutions, have expressed a growing need for a graduate programme that provides relevant experience in key fields such as geology, mining engineering, and electrical engineering. In response to this demand, Barberton Mines secured a discretionary grant in March 2018 to support five interns and 14 experiential learning programmes through collaborations with industry stakeholders. This is also in line with Pons *et al.* (2021), who argued that the mining sector needs to enhance its CSR disclosure practices. They recommended a stakeholder engagement strategy rooted in the corporate stakeholder relationship perspective, emphasising two-way symmetrical communication and the principles of dialogic theory in public relations (Prno *et al.,* 2021)."

4.2.2 Strategy 5: Collaboration and trust culture

Mining companies must engage constructively with communities in order to enhance sustainability. This type of engagement fosters mutual understanding, shared goals, and objectives, ultimately leading to successful corporate social responsibility (CSR) outcomes

(Serfontein-Jordaan & Dlungwane, 2022). Such engagement should address all aspects of sustainability — economic, social, and environmental — to ensure its long-term viability. Accordingly, stakeholder engagement highlighted community criticism regarding Barberton Mines' lack of a dedicated technical training centre (Ngomane, 2019). Residents desired a centre offering artisan engineering skills to create a local talent pool for the mine. However, while Barberton already has a TVET college focused on non-engineering skills like business management, the community proposes expanding its curriculum to include engineering. Their preferred solution involves Barberton Mines partnering with the TVET college and absorbing qualified graduates as future artisans (Ngomane, 2019). Hence, partnering with governments and local communities is crucial for achieving progressive social, economic, and environmental improvements. These primary stakeholders, therefore, play a vital role in collaborative efforts. Moreover, by working together and continuously engaging with local communities, trusting relationships are built and sustained (Serfontein-Jordaan & Dlungwane, 2022). Also, corporate social responsibility and stakeholder engagement in Ghana's mining sector showed that interaction was a realistic development tool where stakeholders' concerns were taken into account in the decision-making process, and their contributions were manifested in the outcome (Ansu-Mensah *et al.*, 2021). Through such interactions, the company can be better acquainted with the perspectives and concerns of the community.

In the study of Matikainen (2022), " Addressing Sustainability in the Mining Industry through Stakeholder Engagement", in Germany, it was ascertained that stakeholders' orientations towards the mining operations affect the opportunities to establish constructive stakeholder engagement with them. The mining company does not engage in dialogue or collaboration with stakeholders who are against the mining operations but only with supportive and neutral stakeholders (Narula *et al*., 2019). Despite their indirect influence, understanding the interactions between all stakeholders is crucial for recognising their importance (Matikainen, 2022). Furthermore, simply sharing information with stakeholders, as some mining companies do, is not sufficient to enhance sustainability, according to Matikainen (2022). Therefore, he emphasised the need for genuine engagement through dialogue and collaboration, even with stakeholders who hold opposing viewpoints.

In South Africa, the Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development Project (MMSD) champions a collaborative approach to mining. By prioritising collaboration, the MMSD aims to minimise the adverse impacts of mining and ensure communities share in the benefits of mineral development (Mansaray, 2020). This necessitates strong partnerships among mining companies, government agencies, and local communities.

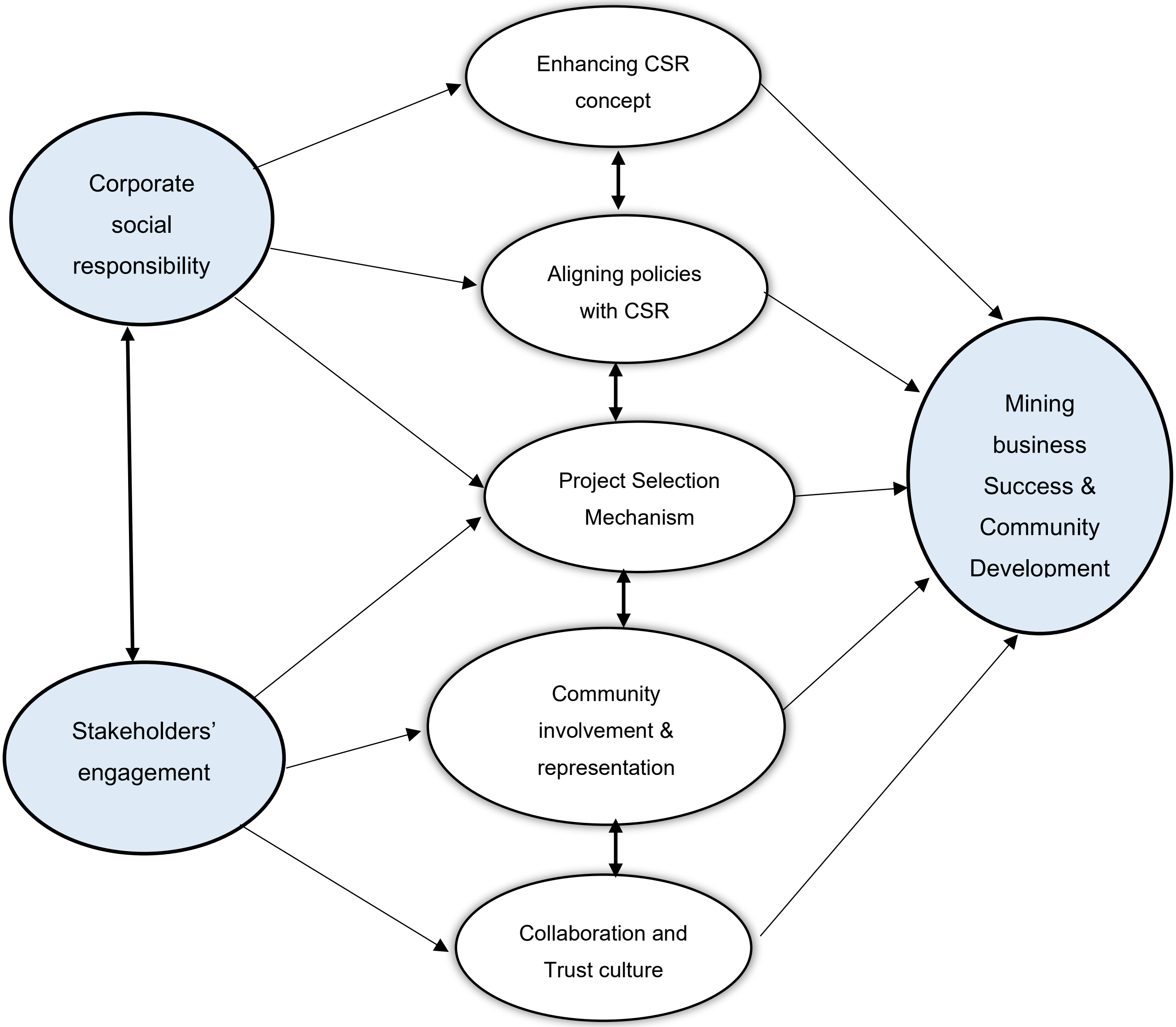
5. FRAMEWORK: CSR AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Figure 2 summarises key findings from the systematic literature review on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder engagement with regard to the mining industry and community development. Building upon the main themes and emerging strategies for CSR and stakeholder engagement, the proposed conceptual framework identifies three key variable types: independent, intervening, and dependent (Creswell, 2013). Based on the literature review findings of this study include the following:

- **Independent Variable:** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and stakeholders' engagement
- **Intervening Variables:** Emerging strategies for CSR and stakeholder engagement
- **Dependent Variables:** Mining business success and community development

Figure 2. Conceptual framework of literature review for CSR initiatives and stakeholders' engagement strategies

Independent Variables Intervening Variables Dependent Variable



The theory posits that two independent variables (CSR and stakeholder engagement theories) influence the dependent variables (mining business success and community development). This influence is mediated by five intervening variables consisting of emerging strategies for CSR and stakeholder engagement.

5.1 Corporate social responsibility and stakeholders

The authors have also confirmed that corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder engagement are intertwined. This implies that effectively addressing stakeholder needs is challenging without their active involvement in CSR initiatives. Hence, the proposed conceptual framework suggests that a robust stakeholder engagement process is crucial for selecting CSR projects in the mining sector, ultimately enhancing mining business success and community development. This model also aligns with research findings that stakeholders play a pivotal role in determining project viability, execution, and review (Ansu-Mensah *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, by actively seeking and incorporating stakeholder perspectives, companies demonstrate the value they place on their input (Holcombe & Kemp, 2020).

5.2 Corporate social responsibility influences mining business success and community development

The conceptual model posits that corporate social responsibility (CSR) significantly influences both business success and community development when all stakeholders — the company, the community, and relevant authorities — possess a shared understanding of CSR concepts and align their policies accordingly. This aligns with findings from systematic literature reviews, which emphasise that CSR encompasses a business's accountability and obligations towards society (Aliye, 2020). Furthermore, CSR priorities can vary significantly across regions, thereby reflecting unique local challenges and concerns. For example, while Middle Eastern and African firms often prioritise addressing social issues within their communities, European companies tend to focus more heavily on climate change initiatives (Cheruiyot-Koech & Reddy, 2022). Therefore, the model emphasises the crucial role of fostering a clear understanding and transparent communication so as to prevent conflicts within the community where mining operations are situated. Previous studies have further indicated that a lack of strategic understanding of CSR's impact on community development can lead to strained relationships, characterised by conflict and animosity (Aliye, 2020).

The conceptual model further predicts that aligning mining company policies with CSR principles is essential for achieving business success and community development. In the South African context, particularly within the Barberton Mines region, this alignment is feasible due to the country's proactive adoption of international CSR standards into its national laws and norms (Aliye, 2020). For example, the model supports robust stakeholder engagement, such as the inclusion of community representatives with proper membership representation in the Barberton Mines Transformation Trust. According to Bezzola *et al.* (2022), this representation should ideally translate into a legally binding Community Development Agreement between the mining company and the local community, along with clearly defined goals and evaluation criteria.

5.3 Stakeholders' engagement influences the mining business success and community development

The conceptual model predicts that stakeholder engagement significantly influences mining business success and community development, especially when community involvement and representation are central strategic initiatives. Therefore, by actively consulting with residents, companies can ensure that their voices are heard and their needs are addressed, which fosters a more sustainable and cooperative environment (Ansu-Mensah *et al.,* 2021). In the case of Barberton Mines, stakeholders have criticised the exclusion of the community in the selection of trustees. They argued that the current board, particularly those designated as "community representatives" (often former local officials), lack legitimacy and fails to authentically represent the community's voice (Ngomane, 2019). The model, therefore, emphasises that meaningful stakeholder engagement (leading to positive outcomes for both the mining business and community development) necessitates genuine community involvement and representation in decisions that directly affect them.

Furthermore, to achieve influential stakeholder engagement and drive both business success and community development, the conceptual model predicts that cultivating a culture of collaboration and trust is of paramount importance. This aligns with previous studies, which have demonstrated the power of collaborative planning in fostering stakeholder engagement and building trust between communities and mining companies (Pascual *et al.,* 2023). In the case of Barberton Mines, stakeholders have criticised the lack of a dedicated technical training centre (Ngomane, 2019). This highlights the importance of identifying and addressing community needs prior to embarking on corporate social responsibility projects. That said, while indirect stakeholder influences exist, understanding the interactions between all stakeholders is crucial for recognising their importance (Matikainen, 2022). Moreover, Matikainen (2022) emphasised that simply sharing information with stakeholders is insufficient for enhancing sustainability. However, true engagement requires genuine dialogue and collaboration, even with stakeholders who hold opposing viewpoints.

5.4 Mining success and community development

In summary, the model suggests that the success of mining businesses and the development of surrounding communities are intricately linked to the truthful implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) principles and effective stakeholder engagement. There are also key emerging strategic issues that must be addressed to achieve this balance, which include the following:

5.4.1 A comprehensive understanding of CSR concepts

All stakeholders, including the mining company, the community, and relevant authorities, need a shared understanding of CSR principles and their implications.

5.4.2 Aligning mining policies with CSR

Mining policies must be explicitly aligned with CSR principles to ensure that social and environmental considerations are integrated into all aspects of the mining operation.

5.4.3 Implementing robust project selection mechanisms

Transparent and inclusive mechanisms for selecting and prioritising community development projects are crucial to ensure that they address genuine community needs.

5.4.4 Fostering community involvement

Active community involvement and representation in decision-making processes that are related to mining operations are essential to ensure that the voices and concerns of residents are heard and addressed.

5.4.5 Cultivating a culture of collaboration and trust

Building and maintaining strong relationships based on trust and collaboration between the mining company and the community are critical for long-term success and sustainable development.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder engagement remain crucial subjects for the success of mining businesses and the further development of surrounding communities. Thus, a comprehensive systematic literature review was conducted to enhance our understanding of effective CSR strategies for achieving both business success and community development. The review included a range of academic publications, which ultimately yielded 20 eligible articles related to CSR and stakeholder engagement within the mining sector. The findings of this review were then analysed to identify emerging strategies for enhancing CSR and stakeholder engagement in the mining industry.

Furthermore, based on the systematic literature review, the study recommends a conceptual model that mining companies can explore to enhance their CSR performance and strengthen stakeholder engagement. The model also underscores the critical role of meaningful community engagement for sustainable mining practices. Therefore, including local communities as active stakeholders within the governance structure of mining operations can foster mutually beneficial partnerships. Accordingly, this participation empowers communities to contribute to the prioritisation and financing of projects that address their specific needs and aspirations, thereby promoting collaboration and reducing the potential for conflict.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of strategic stakeholder engagement in unlocking significant business opportunities. Moreover, this collaborative approach can contribute significantly to economic development and mitigate tensions between mining companies and local communities. Therefore, it is crucial to recognise that addressing specific community needs may require collaborative efforts between mining companies and the national government. For example, addressing basic needs such as access to clean water, healthcare, and education, as well as developing essential infrastructure, may necessitate joint initiatives to ensure long-term community well-being. Thus, by prioritising meaningful community engagement, leveraging local talent, and collaboratively addressing shared needs, the mining industry can build strong partnerships that contribute to sustainable development and benefit both businesses and communities.

6.1 Limitations and future research

This study has some limitations. Firstly, the data collection relied primarily on secondary data extracted from Google Scholar. As such, this approach may have limited the scope of the research. Secondly, the available academic literature explicitly focusing on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder engagement in the mining sector may be relatively limited.

Future research should focus on conducting empirical studies to investigate the effective implementation of CSR and stakeholder engagement strategies within the South African mining context. Previous studies have revealed that South African legislation and policies, such as the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Act and the Mining Charter, are promoting the implementation of international CSR standards and stakeholder engagement principles.

6.2 Managerial implications and contributions

This study aims to contribute to reducing conflicts between mining companies and local communities by promoting social and economic development. A key implication for mining company management is to explore the proposed conceptual model and integrate its principles into their corporate strategy planning and business plans.

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on CSR and stakeholder engagement within the mining sector. Hence, the findings provide valuable insights for mining companies, policymakers, and researchers seeking to enhance the social and environmental performance of the mining industry.

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Annexure A: Systematic literature review of corporate social responsibility and stakeholders' engagement in the mining sector

Main theme	Emerging CSR and stakeholders' engagement strategies	Title	Reference	Key findings
Theme 1: Corporate social responsibility	**Strategy 1:** Enhance CSR concepts	1. Corporate Social Responsibility: Perspectives on the CSR Construct's Development and Future. Business & Society	Carroll (2021)	CSR's link to financial performance leads to the "business case for CSR."
		2. Corporate Social responsibility and Business-Community Relations in Africa: the Case of Ethiopia.	Aliye (2020)	Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Sub-Saharan Africa remains in its early stages of South Africa stands out as the only country in Sub-Saharan Africa to have actively embraced the development of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework. Large corporations have responded by linking their CSR initiatives to local community development, supporting education, skills training, environmental protection, and social and economic improvement projects.
	Strategy 2: Aligning policies with CSR	3. Corporate community relations and development: engagement with indigenous peoples.	Blesia *et al.* (2021)	Future research should investigate whether the increased engagement of the private sector in sustainable development leads to long-term positive outcomes for local communities. Such a study could lead to policy development for long-term cooperation between mining companies and local communities.

		4. CSR and local conflicts in African mining communities.	Bezzola *et al.* (2022)	Mining companies might develop community development agreements, which are binding contracts negotiated between the mining company and the local community with defined goals and evaluation criteria.
		5. Corporate Social Responsibility Preferences in South Africa	Cheruiyot-Koech & Reddy (2022)	The mining sector faces the critical challenge of balancing environmental and social responsibility. Participation can be twofold: directly employing community members and indirectly contributing through financial donations or supporting community projects. The BBBEE policy represents a significant effort towards broader social responsibility.
		6. Traditional leadership, community participation and mining development in South Africa: The case of Fuleni, Saint Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal.	Leonard (2019)	The IDP serves as a crucial developmental framework, acting as a roadmap for coordinated efforts by the local government and other industries within the community.
	Strategy 3: Project selection mechanism	7. From pay-out to participation: Indigenous mining employment as local development?	Holcombe & Kemp (2020)	Effective stakeholder engagement hinges on introducing initiatives during consultation or interaction sessions. Stakeholders play a crucial role in determining project viability, execution, and review.

		8. Corporate Social Responsibility: Understanding the Mining Stakeholder with a Case Study.	Que *et al*. (2019)	Obtaining community agreement and support before project implementation is crucial for sustainable and productive partnerships.
Stakeholders' engagement	**Strategy 4:** Community involvement and representation	9. The Rebellious and Ungovernable Barberton Community Against Barberton Mines (Pty) Ltd	Ngomane (2019)	The lack of stakeholders' engagement can lead to resentment, disruption, and even confrontations, often resulting in damage to mining equipment and infrastructure.
		10. Green Mining – A Holistic Concept for Sustainable and Acceptable Mineral Production	Nurmi (2017)	Stakeholder theory underscores the importance of establishing sustainable and ongoing relationships with stakeholders.
		11. Examining Host Communities' Perceptions on Trust Funds as Corporate Strategies for Community Development in Ghana	Kasimba & Lujala (2020)	Stakeholder input gleaned from interactions is seamlessly integrated into the meeting plan, ensuring their concerns are heard and addressed.
		12. Business-community engagement: A case of a mining company in India	Narula *et al*. (2019)	Stakeholders' orientations towards the mining operations affect the opportunities to establish constructive stakeholder engagement.
		13. Effective Community Engagement during the Environmental Assessment of a Mining Project in the Canadian Arctic	Prno *et al.* (2021)	There is an increasing pressure on mining companies to act responsibly towards communities.

		14. Boad-Based Sociao-Economic Empowerment Charter for the Mining and Minerals Industry South Africa:	Mantashe (2018)	The Road-Based Socio-Economic Empowerment Charter for the Mining and Minerals Industry (2018) mandates mining companies to meaningfully contribute to mine community development through direct consultation with relevant stakeholders, including mine communities, traditional authorities, and affected parties.
	Strategy 5: Collaboration and trust culture	15. Achieving sustainable corporate social responsibility outcomes: A multiple case study in the South African mining industry.	Serfontein-Jordaan & Dlungwane (2022)	Partnering with governments and local communities is crucial for achieving progressive social, economic, and environmental improvements.
		16. Corporate social responsibility and stakeholder engagement in Ghana's mining sector: a case study of Newmont Ahafo mines.	Ansu-Mensah *et al*. (2021)	In African nations, mining communities are persistently at loggerheads because of inadequate participation strategy of stakeholder engagement. The stakeholders' engagement programme should not be ignored, as it identifies stakeholders' concerns and integrates them into project development.
		17. Diverse values of nature for sustainability	Pascual *et al.* (2023)	Scenario planning that transcends disciplinary boundaries and integrates valuable insights into policy-making. When scenarios are co-developed with stakeholders, acceptance by high-interest parties soars to an impressive 94%.
		18. Addressing Sustainability in the Mining Industry Through Stakeholder Engagement.	Matikainen (2022)	Open communication and collaborative efforts are indispensable for achieving sustainable outcomes.

		19. Effect of Corporate Social Responsibility on Community Resilience: Empirical Evidence in the Nickel Mining Industry in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia	Zainuddin *et al.* (2020)	Mining activities directly impact local communities as primary stakeholders, and their feedback and collaboration are crucial for successful operations.
		20. Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility in the mining industries	Pons *et al.* (2021*)*	The mining sector needs to enhance its CSR disclosure practices by having a stakeholder engagement strategy rooted in the corporate stakeholder relationship perspective, emphasising two-way symmetrical communication and the principles of dialogic theory in public relations.