

SENIOR MANAGEMENT MINDSETS FOR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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ABSTRACT Despite the large amount of factual data on senior management's significant role in achieving corporate social responsibility (CSR), little effort has been devoted to shed light on the CSR decision-making process and the managerial mindsets that drive it. To fill this gap in CSR research, this study explores the CSR decision-making process and senior management mindsets regarding CSR, inductively prompted by the CSR literature and a qualitative study. This study offers a conceptual model of socially responsible decision-making based on the Doctus knowledge-based system. The model is empirically analyzed and verified through semi-structured interviews with CSR experts. Further, an inductive examination of the qualitative data using individual-level analysis revealed three different mindsets of senior management towards CSR: conformist, self-interested, and shareholder satisfaction/profit-driven mindsets.

KEYWORDS: *corporate social responsibility, decision-making model, mindsets.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1950s, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been a topic of discussion in academia and industry (Fatima & Elbanna, 2022). Furthermore, the literature on business ethics emphasizes the significant role of senior managers in CSR decision-making (Du et al., 2013; Kim & Thapa, 2018; Carroll & Laasch, 2020; Trojak & Galić, 2020). However, the lack of studies on the effect of managers' qualities on a company's commitment to CSR (Attig & Cleary, 2015) creates a research gap in this field. CSR is an ethical concept for personal, social, and business behavior (Ferrell et al., 2019). In this sense, CSR as an umbrella term refers to "a corporation's built-in, self-regulating ethical standards,

policies, and practices that reflect its responsibility for wider societal good" (Soltani et al., 2015, p. 796).

In the 1970s, Bowman established the socially responsible decision-making perspective. He highlighted the effect of the 'neo invisible hand' on corporate decisions, share prices, and, ultimately, profit. Bowman established a close link between a company's success and social responsibility. This approach implies positive and negative incentives for top managers, who are presumed to make socially responsible decisions. Positive incentives occur when managers willingly and favorably adopt a caring attitude toward their social obligations. Negative incentives exist when individuals make decisions and act out of fear of adverse legal repercussions (Bowman, 1973, cited in Loew et al., 2021).

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According to psychologists, goal-oriented behavior, such as decision-making, is guided by cognitive representations. Individuals' mindsets dictate their choices (Marquardt et al., 2021). Like Kahneman's Systems 1 and 2 (2011, cited in Barry & Halfmann, 2016), a mindset is a way of comprehending information, defining its accessibility, and dictating how individuals make judgments. Studies have emphasized the importance of senior managers' cognitive states in their decision-making (Barry & Halfmann, 2016; Marquardt et al., 2021). The differences between managers significantly affect decision-making. Individual variances in personal style, history, prior experience, and future self-continuity, such as threats associated with particular future events, affect how individuals make decisions (Barry & Halfmann, 2016; Zeng & Ouyang, 2020; Marquardt et al., 2021).

In this study, we adopt the term 'managerial leadership', which refers to 'the essence of influencing and facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.' (Yulk, 2012, cited in Behrendt et al., 2017, p.2). Their function in socially responsible companies goes beyond decisions that directly benefit the companies' economic and financial interests to incorporate social and environmental concerns (Kim & Thapa, 2018). The term 'managerial mindset' describes a manager's mental attitude towards and interpretation of corporate accountability for corporate activities, as well as the repercussions of broader stakeholders (Soltani et al., 2015). The relationship between a manager's mindset and leadership behavior has not been researched. Kouzes and Posner (2019) found that leadership is a set of skills and competencies expressed in managers' decision-making processes. Their mindset shapes and influences their behavior. Their dedication to hard work and commitment improves their effectiveness and enables them to lead.

Despite the large amount of theoretical and empirical data on the significant role of senior management and their mindset regarding the CSR decision-making process, it is still an under-researched area in the CSR literature (Du et al., 2013; Kim & Thapa, 2018). The purpose of our study was to fill this research gap. Our study makes a significant contribution to the CSR literature. First, it attempts to fill the gap in research on CSR decision-making by developing a conceptual model of socially responsible decision-making, for which we use the Doctus knowledge-based system (Velencei, 2017). The use of artificial intelligence (AI), more specifically the Doctus semiotic model, leverages expert knowledge to construct a socially responsible decision-making model that clarifies the decision-making process, which has been considered a "Black Box" (Wang et al., 2015, p.

666). The model is empirically analyzed and verified through semi-structured interviews with CSR business experts.

Furthermore, an inductive examination of the qualitative data reveals three distinct managerial mindsets that drive CSR decisions. Second, most CSR research has been conducted at the organizational or country level (Pisani et al., 2017; Carroll & Laasch, 2020; Fatima & Elbanna, 2022). Our study was performed at the individual level.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. First, an overview of the literature and our conceptual model of socially responsible decision-making are presented. Next, the methodology for data collection and analysis is discussed. The final section discusses our findings, the study's limitations, and the conclusions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

During the 1950s-1960s, CSR was advocated based on the concept that companies should serve as trustees for society's needs and concerns (Javeed & Lefen, 2019). In the 1970s, the focus shifted to corporate social responsiveness. While responsibility entails moral obligation and commitment, responsiveness is a mental behavior characterized by the how-to. Responsiveness is the responsibility framework; it is the how-to corporate senior manager performs (Carroll, 2021). In this sense, Carroll's model divides CSR into four areas: economic obligations, which are seen as the essential building blocks of a company for society, and the expectation that companies follow the law. The third area is to act ethically and adhere to unenforced societal standards of proper behavior. Finally, some stakeholders believe that a company must undertake philanthropic duties independently to be a good citizen. This model emphasizes the role of management responsiveness to social concerns. Their roles can be proactive, reactionary, accommodating, or defensive (Carroll, 2016). Subsequently, Wartick and Cohan expanded Carroll's model by emphasizing management approaches that emphasize responsiveness to social concerns. Their research established a new area of social management (Carroll & Brown, 2018).

A large number of theories attempt to explain the fluctuations of CSR between two extremes: one that limits the corporate obligation to obtain (the maximum feasible) profit for its shareholders (Friedman, 1970, cited in Orlitzky, 2015), and another that extends the company's obligation to encompass a wide range of actors with a stake in the company (shareholders, managers, employees, suppliers, cus-

tomers, competitors, etc.). From an ethical perspective, the stakeholder theory of CSR is more appealing than others, especially when ethics is broadly interpreted (Freeman & Dmytriiev, 2017).

According to CSR research, the dominant management approach is instrumental. Studies (Gao & Bansal, 2013; Agudo-Valiente et al., 2017; Havlinova & Kukacka, 2021) have demonstrated a hybrid instrumental-strategic approach to CSR that provides explicit assumptions that serve as guiding principles for management behavior toward CSR. Managers' instrumental use of CSR is related to individual interest fulfillment, profit maximization, and the fulfillment of shareholders and other stakeholder groups (Gao & Bansal, 2013; Agudo-Valiente et al., 2017). The liberal concept of CSR is often used as a starting point for discussions on instrumental CSR (Djelic & Etchanchu, 2017). According to Friedman, CSR is the pursuit of shareholder value maximization within the boundaries of the law and an ethical framework. He emphasized the need for management to be accountable to shareholders to maximize profits (Friedman, 1970, cited in Orlitzky, 2015). In this context, instrumental CSR is defined as CSR behaviors that focus primarily on strengthening stakeholder relationships in the short term (Agudo-Valiente et al., 2017). Beyond the standard definition of instrumental CSR, strategic CSR encompasses a broader range of behaviors and is defined as corporate behaviors that require a longer timeframe, high resource commitments, and significant structural changes within the company (Havlinova & Kukacka, 2021). The strategic CSR credo is: "Rethink your business" (Martinuzzi & Krumay, 2013, p.434).

Numerous studies have highlighted the significant role of senior managers in adopting and implementing CSR. Their decision-making establishes corporate responsiveness to social needs and concerns (Du et al., 2013; Kim & Thapa, 2018). According to Barry and Halfmann (2016) and Marquardt et al. (2021), decision-making is experienced through cognitive representation. Mindset may affect the mental image of a decision. A mindset, also referred to as a cognitive structure, cognitive filter, cognitive framework, or mental model, comprises conceptual frameworks for representing knowledge and associated sets of activities (Jiang et al., 2018). In line with Kahneman's Systems 1 and 2, a person's mindset impacts the information they acquire by focusing their attention on certain environmental characteristics as well as interpretations and refers to their attitude to or comprehension of information as well as their understanding and interpretation of that knowledge (Kahneman, 2011, cited in Barry & Halfmann, 2016). Mindset defines the accessibility of information that affects de-

cision-making. Individual differences in personal style, history, prior experience, and future self-continuity, such as the threats associated with particular future events, have a significant impact on decision-making (Barry & Halfmann, 2016; Zeng & Ouyang, 2020; Marquardt et al., 2021).

The lack of understanding of the managerial mindset regarding CSR can be attributed to the fact that the CSR field has not been sufficiently researched at the individual level of analysis (Pisani et al., 2017; Carroll & Laasch, 2020; Fatima & Elbanna, 2022). Although several studies have contributed to the CSR literature, CSR managerial mindsets have received insufficient attention, and most studies have focused on organizational and country-level analyses (Pisani et al., 2017; Fatima & Elbanna, 2022).

The CSR mindset is viewed as a multi-dimensional concept (Jiang et al., 2018) that encompasses economic and noneconomic elements and emphasizes managers' accountability to various stakeholders (Carroll & Laasch, 2020). According to Jiang et al. (2018), the multi-dimensional nature of the CSR mindset was substantiated in a study of senior management values, in which senior managers identified the following three CSR dimensions: First, shareholders as defined by the shareholder profit maximization theory. Second, stakeholder theory defines the relationships between stakeholders. Third, there is a broad understanding of social welfare. Several studies have demonstrated the importance of managerial values and attitudes toward CSR and have established a positive correlation between them (Rosnan et al., 2013; Hu et al., 2018). A manager's perspective may affect their cognitive style and conduct (Wang, 2018). Therefore, there is a direct relationship between managers' mindsets towards CSR and CSR practices. It is categorized as reactive, defensive, accommodating, or proactive (Jiang et al., 2018). Due to their distinctive variance, managers' CSR mindsets vary regarding knowledge information processing and retention (Barry & Halfmann, 2016). Managers often act from certain mental perspectives, reflected in their fundamental values and beliefs about CSR (Soltani et al., 2015).

Furthermore, managers are involved in every stakeholder interaction; they affect and are affected by stakeholders. The external setting and moderating function of stakeholders are crucial in a manager's decision-making (Shubham et al., 2018). We believe it is more feasible to approach the CSR cognitive model from a multi-dimensional perspective and emphasize the managers' accountability to several actors, most notably shareholders, stakeholders, and their values.

The following section illustrates the CSR decision-making process and the managerial mindsets

that drive it by proposing a socially responsible decision-making conceptual model. This is followed by a qualitative study to validate the model and identify various managerial mindsets concerning CSR.

3. THE PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Given the scarcity of convincing theory and empirical evidence addressing the management mindsets towards CSR (Soltani et al., 2015; Jiang et al., 2018), the theoretical foundation of our conceptual model draws on a variety of perspectives and theories, including contingency theory, agency theory (Jiang et al., 2018), cognitive theory (Marquardt et al., 2021), and shareholders' and stakeholders' theories (Orlitzky, 2015; Freeman & Dmytriiev, 2017). The managerial CSR instrumental approach is based on theories about individual interests, meeting shareholders' profit maximization interests, and fulfilling stakeholders' expectations (Soltani et al., 2015). It is the prevailing managerial strategy in the CSR field. The mixed instrumental-strategic approach identifies the assumptions of CSR managers.

Two recent systematic reviews of CSR implementation have found that CSR decision-making is under-researched, and most studies focus on a single dimension, with most at the country or organizational level and few on individual or multilevel analyses. Only one study at the country level examined the CSR mindset. Both studies recommended that future CSR research be based on a multi-dimensional approach and consider individual or multilevel analysis (Chowdhury & Paul, 2020; Fatima & Elbanna, 2022). Due to the lack of understanding of the CSR decision-making process and the lack of research on CSR managerial mindset at an individual level of analysis, we believe that the multi-dimensional perspective and theoretical originality of our model, which was developed to illustrate the CSR decision-making process and the underlying mindset of managers at an individual level of analysis, will enhance CSR research.

The demarcation of main model attributes stems from contingency theory, which integrates several dimensions to illustrate how internal and external attributes can impact vital decisions such as CSR decisions. Since companies are open systems, there is no blueprint for corporate decisions, and proper management can successfully meet corporate desires while meeting external challenges (Jiang et al., 2018). Based on contingency theory, our model has two main attributes with multi-dimensional perspectives. First, the internal attributes represent the decision-maker's competency level. Second, the external attributes represent environmental incen-

tives, which are determined by: a) Shareholders' attributes: According to shareholder theory, managers must maximize shareholders' profit (Orlitzky, 2015), which is also in line with the agency theory (Jiang et al., 2018). b) The stakeholders' attributes: According to stakeholder theory, managers' decisions must encompass multiple stakeholders with a stake in the company (Freeman & Dmytriiev, 2017). According to cognitive theory, managers' acquisition and interpretation of information form the basis for their decisions. The cognitive process of managers' decision-making relies on the interrelatedness of internal and external attributes that determine their socially responsible decisions (Barry & Halfmann, 2016). The model's internal and external attributes are assigned values from 1 to 4, listed in Table 1, and serve as decision criteria. The decision-makers' choice of values (decision criteria) for each attribute influences how socially responsible the decision is.

Corporate CSR strategies are based on economic, legal, ethical, or philanthropic responsibilities (Carroll, 2021). Strategic decisions such as CSR decisions do not exist in a vacuum; they are heavily impacted by the internal and external attributes of the decision-makers and how their mindset influences the acquisition and interpretation of both attributes. Internal attributes that represent the manager's competency level are based on social consciousness (organizational culture and values attributes) (Miska et al., 2013), organizational skills (business experience and risk assessment attributes) (Glamuzina, 2015), and openness to change (perception of the big picture, ability to consider alternative scenarios, and proactive attributes) (Nedelko, 2015). External attributes in the CSR context are shareholders' and stakeholders' attributes and sub-attributes. Shareholders' influence depends on their level of involvement (long- and short-term vision, institutional shareholders, passive and scattered shareholders) (Drobetz et al., 2021). Stakeholder influence depends on their legitimacy (legal or moral obligation attributes), their urgency (independence and level of communication attributes), and their power (political, social, and economic power attributes) (Wood et al., 2021). Managers' socially responsible decisions thus depend on how they perceive the influence of external attributes together with their internal attributes (Barry & Halfmann, 2016; Zeng & Ouyang, 2020; Marquardt et al., 2021). Managers' decisions in our model can range from low to moderate to highly socially responsible.

We offer a conceptual model of socially responsible decision-making based on the preceding literature review and the inherent complexity of the CSR decision-making process. This model contributes to a better understanding of how CSR professionals

make decisions. It was constructed to shed light on the CSR decision-making process using an artificial intelligence (AI) technique, namely, the Doctus knowledge-based system (Velencei, 2017). AI is known for replicating human problem-solving skills with various AI solutions to address the complexity of human decision-making. The interaction of human brains with such applications frequently results in enhanced artificial and natural cognitive capacity (Vogel & Esposito, 2020).

Doctus is a shell system in which knowledge is acquired from experts in a relevant field (Velencei, 2017). This model was developed to illustrate how CSR experts make socially responsible decisions. Experts or senior managers concerned with business continuity aim to meet the demands of shareholders and other stakeholders (Shubham et al., 2018) in addition to their interests. These expectations and demands are dynamic and require senior managers to be responsive to their environment and surroundings (Feder & Weißenberger, 2019). The Doctus model was divided into knowledge acquisition, structuring, and sharing. Knowledge acquisition is a part of the complex process of knowledge engineering for systemizing and fine-tuning aspects of knowledge. Experts provide knowledge by defining the decision attributes and their respective values. The value assigned to an attribute is frequently symbolically expressed as a decision criterion. Attributes and their values indicate expert knowledge in the decision-making domain (Velencei, 2017).

Decision formulation is influenced by a manager's combination of internal and external characteristics that affect how he or she organizes the complicated mass of information into socially responsible decisions (Yu, 2015; Zabala, 2015). In the first phase of our conceptual model, we assign decision attributes with a given value representing the decision criterion. The values are assigned in ascending order. Certain values are expressed as existing and non-existing (see Table 1).

The model proposes two pillars of socially responsible decision-making: a) internal attributes, which represent the decision-makers' competency level, and b) external attributes, which represent the power and pressure forces that influence the decision-making process. Regarding internal attributes, competencies are a collection of individual characteristics, including cognition, motivation, personal traits, skills, and knowledge developed and used by the individual (Zabala, 2015). External attributes strongly affect managers' cognition and conduct (Yu, 2015). Managers' interactions with their external environment (e.g., shareholders and other stakeholders such as society, government, the media, customers, and

employees) establish motives and constraints for decision-making (Feder & Weißenberger, 2019). External pressure ensures a company fulfills its obligations to shareholders and other stakeholders (Doh & Quigley, 2014; Shubham et al., 2018). The model depends on decision attributes and subordinate decision attributes as follows:

- A. Internal attributes represent the decision maker's competency level and are contingent on the following attributes (see Figure 1):
 1. Social consciousness reflects managers' awareness of social and environmental concerns (Miska et al., 2013). This attribute is contingent upon the organization's culture and values (Havlinova & Kukacka, 2021). The organizational culture defines how members act within their organizations and with stakeholders. It encompasses the shared beliefs established by leaders, communicated through various methods, and determines how an organization and its members respond to different stakeholders. Organizational culture attributes are contingent upon responsible behavior toward stakeholders and responsible human resource policy, as employees are often considered the most important stakeholders (Havlinova & Kukacka, 2021). Furthermore, it is contingent upon responsible environmental behavior (Attig & Cleary, 2015). A manager's social consciousness is contingent on their values. There is widespread agreement that values shape managers' behavior and impact their decisions (Miska et al., 2013; Čalopa, 2017).
 2. Organizational skills reflect a collection of skills and techniques a manager has developed to effectively perform tasks, including problem-solving and decision-making (Glamuzina, 2015). This attribute depends on the manager's business experience and risk evaluation level. Business experience refers to a manager's ability to comprehend shifting trends, needs, and challenges in their field, which is necessary for decision-making (Doh & Quigley, 2014). While the risk evaluation level attribute refers to the capacity to evaluate risks associated with the market and industry (Shepherd, 2017), the latter attribute is contingent upon leadership capabilities, including communication, influence, and the ability to learn, all required for decision-making. In addition, it is contingent on their prediction capability. The capability to foresee upcoming business challenges and opportunities based on expertise and information (Trojak & Galić, 2020).
 3. Openness to change: This attribute reflects a manager's adaptability and willingness to change (Nedelko, 2015). This is contingent on

TABLE 1. List of attributes

Attribute	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3	Value 4
Socially responsible decision	low	moderate	high	
Internal attributes: competency level	low	moderate	high	
Risk evaluation level	low	moderate	high	
External attributes: power_ pressure force	low	moderate	high	
Social consciousness	low	moderate	high	
Shareholders	not involved	low involved	moderately involved	highly involved
Short-term vision	low	moderate	high	
Long-term vision	low	moderate	high	
Business experience	none	low	moderate	high
Organizational skills	low	moderate	high	
Leadership capability	none	low	moderate	high
Predicting capability	low	moderate	high	
Perception of the whole picture	low	moderate	high	
Considering alternative scenarios, the capability	low	moderate	high	
Organization culture	low	moderate	high	
Values	low	moderate	high	
Collaborative	low	moderate	high	
Proactive	low	moderate	high	
Passive	low	moderate	high	
Openness to change	low	moderate	high	
Commitment	none	low	moderate	high
Scattered shareholders	none	exist		
Institutional shareholders	none	exist		
Stakeholders	not involved	low involved	moderately involved	highly involved
Economic power	low	moderate	high	
Political power	low	moderate	high	
Social power	low	moderate	high	
Power	low	moderate	high	
Legitimacy	absent legitimacy	present legitimacy		
Urgency	low	moderate	high	
Interdependence	low	moderate	high	
Potential of co-operation	low	moderate	high	
Potential of threat	low	moderate	high	
Level of communication	low	moderate	high	
Contractual/ legal obligation	none	exist		
Moral obligation	none	exist		
Switching cost	low	moderate	high	
Public pressure	low	moderate	high	
Socially constructed system	none	exist		
Responsible behavior toward stakeholders	irresponsible	moderately responsible	responsible	highly responsible
Responsible HR policies	irresponsible	moderately responsible	responsible	highly responsible
Responsible environmental behavior	irresponsible	moderate	responsible	highly responsible

SOURCE: Authors.

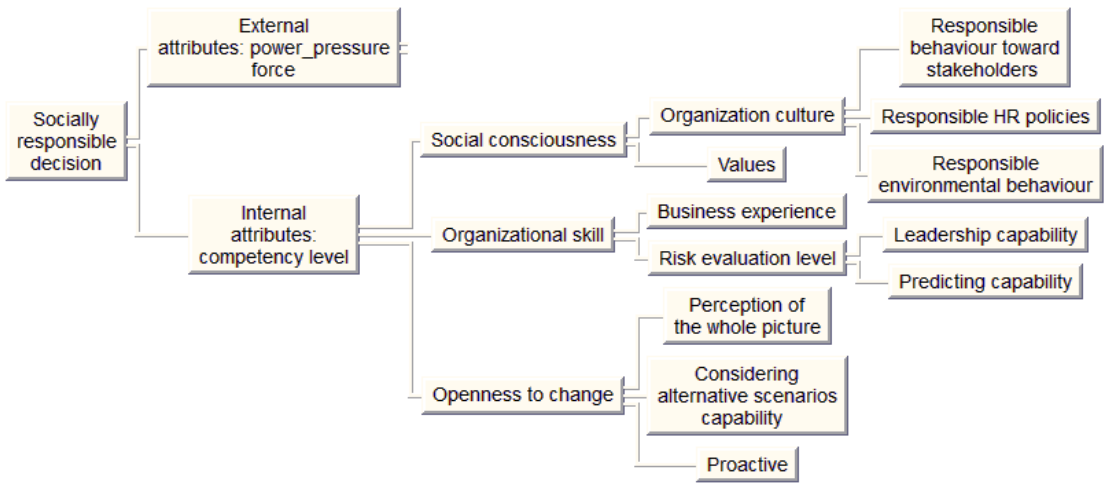


FIGURE 1. Internal attributes: competency level
SOURCE: Authors.

their perception of the whole picture as a general understanding of the circumstances and their potential impact on the organization and society. Openness to change also depends on considering alternative scenarios, which refers to the ability and knowledge to analyze alternative scenarios when necessary (Miska et al., 2013). Finally, it is contingent upon being proactive, which entails the manager initiating and creating scenarios based on their expertise and knowledge of their environment (Agudo-Valiente et al., 2017).

- B. External attributes represent the power and pressure forces that impact decision-making and are contingent upon the following attributes (see Figure 2):
- 1. Shareholders’ engagement in decision-making and proclivity to evaluate managers’ performance can be characterized by either a long- or short-term vision (Drobetz et al., 2021). The long-term vision may be demonstrated by institutional shareholders, who may have their own monitoring mechanisms to monitor management practices. Alternatively, it may be demonstrated by committed shareholders who invest in companies that pursue specific beneficial objectives, such as social responsibility (Dyck et al., 2019). Committed shareholders ensure that these companies continue to pursue their objectives. Their commitment obliges them to participate in and oversee managerial decisions

- (Dyck et al., 2019). Short-term oriented shareholders have one of two attributes: they are passive and do not participate in decision-making, or dispersed, which can lead to a free-rider situation, as shareholders may have divergent interests, risk preferences, objectives, and investment horizons, making it difficult to reach a consensual decision; therefore, their impact on management decisions is limited (Taleska, 2018).
- 2. As identified by Freeman, stakeholders are ‘any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives.’ (1984, cited in Thornock, 2016, p. 2). Five stakeholders are frequently considered in the context of CSR: shareholders (separately addressed in our model), employees, the government, customers, and competitors (Tian et al., 2021). We followed Mitchell et al. (1997), a well-known stakeholder salience model widely regarded as the most comprehensive model of stakeholder effects on corporate decisions. Stakeholders exert influence through at least one of the three attributes: legitimacy, urgency, or power (1997, cited in Wood et al., 2021). Doh and Quigley (2014) state that legitimacy is a legal or moral claim drawn by a company’s actions. It is contingent upon contractual legitimacy, where a formal agreement is reached between stakeholders and the company, or on moral obligations that bind the stakeholders’ relationship with the company (Doh & Quigley, 2014). The urgency attribute indicates the degree to

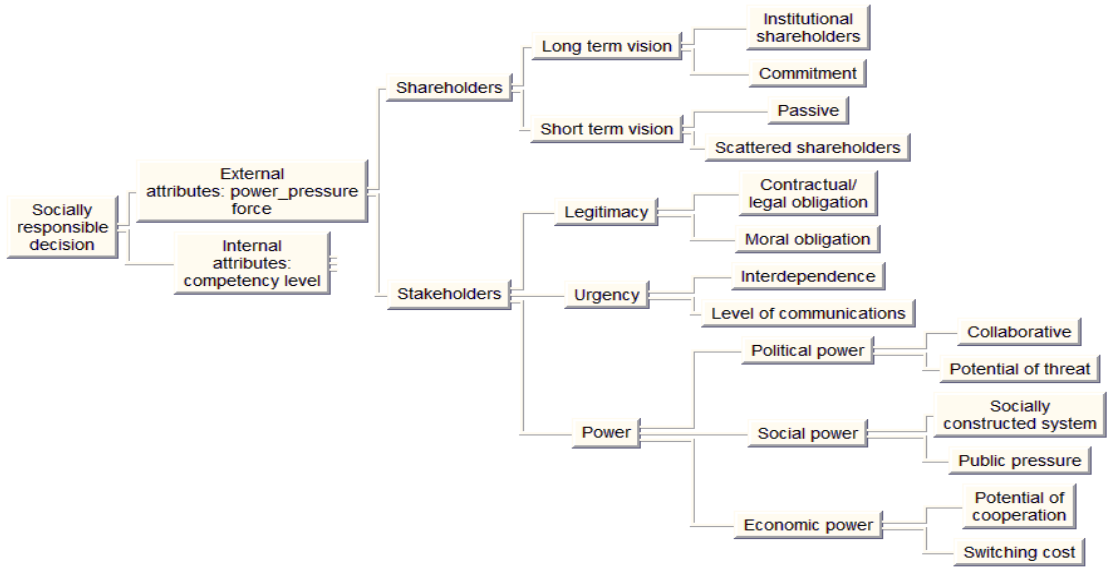


FIGURE 2. External attributes: power and pressure forces
 SOURCE: Authors.

which stakeholder demands require a rapid response. Urgency is contingent upon two attributes: interdependency, which refers to the degree of dependency between a company and its stakeholders, and communication level, which refers to the extent to which information and feedback are communicated and how feedback is crucial to the company (Doh & Quigley, 2014). The concept of ‘power’ describes a relationship in which one actor persuades management to make socially acceptable decisions without genuine claims (Doh & Quigley, 2014). Stakeholders can exercise political, social, or economic power. For political power attributes, the government may have political power over corporate decisions. This influence may be exercised collaboratively by assisting corporations in achieving socially desirable outcomes, or it may be exercised as a threat if the desired outcomes are not achieved (Chen et al., 2020). The social power attribute indicates social influence over corporations to achieve socially desired outcomes (Liu et al., 2015). This depends on socially constructed systems that monitor business operations for their social outcomes. Social power is also contingent on public pressure (Liu et al., 2015). Economic power refers to the ability of customers, competitors, local communities, and suppliers to exert economic influence on corporate decisions. Competitors may influence their

industries, affecting a company’s market share. Economic power is contingent on the potential for cooperation, which refers to the degree of cooperation that may improve a corporation’s economic position (Wang et al., 2020). It is also contingent on switching costs. Certain suppliers have extremely high switching costs, which has a significant impact on corporate decisions (Wang et al., 2020).

After completing the first phase of knowledge acquisition, which establishes socially responsible decision attributes and their values, the next phase is knowledge structuring, which determines the attribute-attribute relationship. The dependencies specify the attributes dependent on others by constructing a graph, in which the attributes are categorized in the form of a graph and hierarchically placed to build the graph, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. The conclusion runs from the input attributes to the dependent medians and, finally, to the top of the decision tree, where the ultimate decision is made. A conclusion results from the application of rule-based (deductive) reasoning to the assigned attributes (Velencei, 2017). The logical rules that connect the attributes in our model are if-then rules that represent CSR experts’ symbolic knowledge. As presented in Table 2, each dependent attribute contains a set of rules that assign a rule output to each combination of values in its subordinate attributes.

TABLE 2. Example of complex rules: rules of internal attributes

Openness to change		Low	Moderate	High
Organizational skills	Social consciousness			
low	low	low	low	low
low	moderate	low	low	low
low	high	low	low	low
moderate	low	low	low	moderate
moderate	moderate	low	moderate	moderate
moderate	high	low	moderate	high
high	low	low	moderate	moderate
high	moderate	low	moderate	high
high	high	low	moderate	high

SOURCE: Authors.

In the Doctus, the complex rules of deductive reasoning are illustrated using the if-then rule tabulation (Velencei, 2017), where Rule 1-1 indicates that the first value for each of the two subordinate attributes should be considered. Rule 1-3-2 states that the first value is taken from the first subordinate attribute, the third value from the second subordinate attribute, and the second value from the third subordinate attribute. The complex rules of the internal attributes (see Table 2) consist of 27 rules derived from the three subordinate attributes of organizational skills, social awareness, and openness to change. For instance, the internal attribute rule 1-1-1 may be read as follows: if the organizational skills were rated low, the social consciousness was rated low, the openness to change was rated low, and the internal attributes were rated low. The internal attribute rule 1-2-2 may be read as follows: if organizational skills were rated low, social consciousness was rated moderate, and openness to change was rated moderate, then the internal attributes were rated low.

The final phase consisted of applying the model to one or more real-life scenarios. We asked real experts from the CSR sector to validate our decision-making model. This validation phase, as well as the investigation of the decision-makers' mindset, was conducted through a qualitative study, particularly through semi-structured interviews with three business experts working as executive officers and senior managers in a multinational group of agricultural companies, as discussed in the following section.

4. METHODS

Due to the lack of research on CSR decision-making and managers' mindset towards CSR, we applied a qualitative study approach. We conducted semi-structured interviews with CSR experts, with the objectives of 1) empirically investigating and validating the conceptual model of socially responsible decision-making and 2) identifying the different managerial mindsets towards CSR.

Qualitative studies often provide detailed descriptions and information about the background of a study. Semi-structured interviews aim to provide real-life experiences in the form of opinions, words, expressions, feelings, and motives, all of which are crucial for reaching conclusions and are difficult to achieve using other research methodologies (Bearman, 2019). According to Sechelski and Onwuegbuzie (2019), semi-structured interviews are regarded as a collaborative effort between the interviewer and the respondent rather than as a data gathering by one party. The interviewer's tasks were to guide the interview, ensure that the respondents' thoughts were expressed clearly and without implications or suggestions, and observe and record the respondent's body language and other gestures. Additionally, it allows for a comparison of responses.

5. DATA COLLECTION

Due to the inductive nature of our qualitative study, multiple data collection methods were applied and continued until theoretical saturation was reached and no further data were revealed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, cited in Cho & Lee, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect primary data, while secondary data were gathered from the companies' websites and sustainability reports.

The interviews were conducted in English and lasted approximately 90 minutes or until the respondents provided all pertinent information. The interviews were recorded, and notes were taken on their content and context. The questions focused on the respondents' educational and professional backgrounds and their inclination toward CSR decisions and practices. In line with Sechelski and Onwuegbuzie (2019), the respondents were contacted by phone and e-mail before the interviews to emphasize that the study's objective was to assess CSR without providing additional context. At the beginning of each interview, the purpose of the study, ethical concerns, and the option to attend to its defense and receive a copy of its final edition were all properly stated. Not all respondents agreed to disclose their identities. Therefore, it was decided that their identity and name would remain unknown.

Table 3 illustrates the selection criteria for the respondents: they should be experts in CSR and make socially responsible decisions (Adams, 2015). They should also have a good educational background. The three respondents work for the same multinational group of companies that operate worldwide and are leaders in adopting CSR policies (Adams, 2015). Their multinational group is a market leader in the agricultural sector, employing over 49,000 people in more than 100 countries and generating a reported revenue of USD 23 billion by 2020. The group aims to improve agriculture through customized solutions that bene-

fit millions of farmers, societies, and the world. The solutions offered help both large and small farmers overcome various obstacles and enable them to feed the globe safely while protecting the planet by conserving resources and protecting the environment. They seek to improve the agricultural sector's sustainability, quality, and safety by providing the most cutting-edge technology and ingenious solutions for the more efficient use of scarce agricultural resources. The company is committed to increasing agricultural production, promoting biodiversity, rehabilitating degraded land, and empowering rural communities through collaborative strategies and initiatives (from the company's website).

The interview guide is divided into two sections. The first section consisted of questions about every decision attribute in our model, the value assigned to each attribute, and respondents' opinions of these attributes. After the respondents agreed with the conceptual model of socially responsible decision-making, we applied the model to their circumstances to obtain their decision-making conclusions. In the second section of the interview, the respondents were asked questions to ascertain their awareness of CSR and to understand the challenges and mindsets involved in CSR decision-making.

6. RESULTS

Following Ridder (2017), we analyzed the data for each semi-structured interview separately and in conjunction with other interviews. We began by writing a full analysis of each semi-structured interview to identify the presence of a specific pattern. In the interim analysis, we then tried to find patterns, similarities, and differences between the interviews (Ridder, 2017). We thoroughly examined the transcripts of all data, including interview notes, transcripts, and secondary data obtained from the company's website

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TABLE 3. An overview of the respondents' information

Details	Respondent No. 1	Respondent No. 2	Respondent No. 3
Hierarchy	Executive officer	Executive officer	Senior manager
Function	Head of Corporate Affairs, South East Europe	Director of Corporate Affairs/Public Policy Advisor	Head of Strategic and Business Communications
Tenure	25	23	20
Educational level	Ph.D.	Ph.D.	Ph.D.

SOURCE: Authors.

and sustainability reports, along with data from other semi-structured interviews. Consequently, notes were taken on all topics related to the CSR decision-making process or the managers' CSR mindsets. We opted for the exploratory 'investigative' style of analysis in order to better understand CSR decision-making and mindset concerning CSR (Ridder, 2017).

We asked the respondents for their opinions on the proposed conceptual model of socially responsible decision-making and on each given attribute and value assigned to determine its validity. Considering the degree to which the respondents' responses were similar or dissimilar (Ridder, 2017), the three respondents agreed with the proposed holistic structure of the decision-making model. The respondents agreed on the duality of the internal and external attributes of the decision-making model. They agreed on the first pillar of attributes (internal attributes) and the second pillar of attributes (external attributes), along with their subordinate attributes and values. After they agreed to the proposed model, we applied the socially responsible decision-making model individually to each respondent.

The first respondent's case in the decision-making model: The outcome decision was rated as moderately socially responsible. His responses indicated that his internal attributes representing the competency level were rated as moderate, the values of his subordinates' social consciousness and organizational skills were rated as high, and his openness to change was rated as moderate. The impact of the external attributes on the decision was rated as moderate, as the shareholders' impact was rated as moderately involved in the decision-making process, and the stakeholders' impact was highly involved in the decision-making process.

The case of the second respondent in the decision-making model: The outcome of the decision was rated as highly socially responsible. His responses indicated that his internal attributes, representing competency level, were rated highly, as were the values of his subordinates' attributes. The impact of external attributes on his decision was moderate, as shareholder influence was moderate and stakeholder influence was highly involved in the decision-making process.

In the third respondent's case in the decision-making model, the outcome decision was rated as moderately socially responsible. His responses indicated that his internal attributes representing the competency level were rated as moderate, as his subordinates' social consciousness values were rated as high, while his organizational skills and openness to change were rated as moderate. The impact of external attributes on his decision was rated as moderate because shareholders' and stakeholders' impacts on

decision-making were rated as moderately involved.

In the second section of the interview, the respondents were asked questions such as: How long have you been working in the field of CSR? What challenges do CSR decision-makers face? How do you explain your motivation for making CSR decisions?

The first respondent stated that in the agricultural sector, various socioeconomic and environmental concerns put pressure on their group to meet the growing demand for food due to global population growth. He also explained that the group is widely recognized as a leader in health, safety, and environment (HSE) and referred to its responsibility in all aspects of product development, use, and disposal. As he emphasized, excellence in HSE is critical to ensuring the business's longevity and stakeholders' trust. He noted that the group's Code of Conduct (CoC) laid the groundwork for preserving corporate responsibility in all economic, social, and environmental activities. He also explained that managers and staff received the Code of Conduct training. He stated that while aware of societal demands and expectations, he favored a compliance-oriented approach when making CSR decisions. He preferred to adhere to the group's prevalent culture, norms, and strategies and would not deviate from established standards. According to Havlinova and Kukacka (2021), corporate culture reflects its members' values and beliefs and significantly impacts managers' decisions and actions, especially those who choose a compliance approach. Pech emphasized that managers act in line with corporate strategies (2001, cited in Gutierrez, 2014). The respondent said that he remains loyal to the group's strategies. He perceived managers were hired to implement established strategies rather than acquire new ones. From this perspective, companies prefer to hire managers who adhere to their strategies. According to Fotohabadi and Kelly (2018), managers' loyalty to a group's status quo prevents them from taking risks that could jeopardize their senior position, which is consistent with the risk-averse perspective of Aschauer et al. (2021). According to the respondent, he ensures that his CSR decisions align with the group's existing strategies.

The second respondent stated that their group had several responsibilities for stakeholders. Their responsibilities were voluntary, contractual, and moral. He explained that as the world population grows and the need for food increases exponentially, there is growing concern about land degradation. He emphasized that the optimal solution is to rely on technologies that increase agricultural production. However, new technologies are developed through extremely costly research and development (R&D), which may take several years (on average 20 years) to develop.

Furthermore, he emphasized that executives and senior managers are compensated for their work; therefore, he would be certain that his CSR decisions would allow him to continue to receive his bonuses. According to Feldman and Halali (2019), this type of senior management is at the center of attention. They pursue their interests (financial or otherwise) and actively seek opportunities for themselves, prioritizing their interests over those of stakeholders and the community.

The third respondent stated that he is well aware of the agricultural sector's environmental issues and that his group is committed to acting ethically with the utmost integrity by being accountable to shareholders and other stakeholders (employees, customers, and society). However, he described this as the ideal situation. The real conundrum he alludes to is that senior managers face significant obstacles in their decision-making: to satisfy shareholders by prioritizing their interests over those of other stakeholders, which is achieved by optimizing shareholder profits. According to Ferrero et al. (2014), although shareholders' primary objective is profit, stakeholders have different requirements and expectations. The respondent emphasized that when he makes decisions, he prioritizes the shareholders' goal of maximizing profit over other stakeholders' requirements, as he sees his responsibility as a senior manager to fulfill shareholders' desires. Senior managers driven by shareholders' satisfaction/profit make their CSR decisions in the best interest of shareholders rather than stakeholders (Jiang et al., 2018).

The group has a global reputation and approach to promoting multi-stakeholder relationships by integrating stakeholders' economic, societal, and environmental concerns into its corporate strategy. The interview analysis suggested that respondents agreed with the proposed model. They show different results when viewed as cases where experts make socially responsible decisions. This is in line with Barry and Halfmann (2016), Zeng and Ouyang (2020), and Marquardt et al. (2021), who find that managerial variances affect decision-making. Their mindsets influence decision-making (Barry & Halfmann, 2016). Although all respondents work for the same group of companies and are required to contribute to their CSR goals, the rationale for the differences in their socially responsible decisions is attributed to the respondents' managerial mindset regarding CSR. Their mindset determines the way each individual perceives and responds to corporate responsibility. Senior managers' instrumental (Gao & Bansal, 2013; Agudo-Valiente et al., 2017) and strategic use of CSR (Planer-Friedrich & Sahm, 2020) exist in their mindsets, which may be classified as seeking financial outcomes and bene-

fits (Havlinova & Kukacka, 2021), or pursuing non-financial outcomes and benefits (Mahmood & Bashir, 2020). According to our analysis of the data collected, the following managerial mindsets can be identified: A) conformist mindsets, where their primary motivation for CSR is the desire to adhere to established corporate strategies, cultures, and norms to avoid jeopardizing their senior position if they propose changes; B) Self-interest mindsets, where senior managers prioritize their interests over those of others and where self-centered gains and benefits are the primary motivators for CSR decisions; C) Shareholders' profit-driven mindsets, where senior managers prioritize shareholders' satisfaction in the same manner that they prioritize profit maximization. Their motivation for CSR decisions is to maximize shareholder profits.

7. LIMITATIONS

Despite the time and effort invested in designing our research, this study had some limitations. First, a well-known limitation of qualitative research is that it relies on convenience sampling, which requires data collection from individuals who can participate in the study (Adams, 2015). Due to the underrepresentation of the sample, the findings of our study have limited generalizability. However, these findings can be used and expanded in future studies. Semi-structured interviews with highly experienced and knowledgeable business people provided sufficient data and insights for our research. The semi-structured interviews with three CSR experts were sufficient to analyze the qualitative research. Second, the study focused on analyzing at an individual level. According to Fatima and Elbanna (2022), CSR studies are scarce based on multilevel analyses. Future research could include multiple levels of analysis (individual, organizational, and country).

Furthermore, we acknowledge the importance of normative dimensions in CSR (Ross & Robertson, 2003) and encourage future research. However, our model does not determine managerial values and ethics in decision-making but focuses on how the decision-maker's internal and external attributes impact socially responsible decisions. Thus, our focus is on the decision-making process and management's attitude towards ethical decision-making rather than the ethical decision-making process.

8. CONCLUSION

This study addresses the research gap in the field of CSR decision-making and senior management mindsets regarding CSR, which has been considered a

“Black Box” (Wang et al., 2015, p. 666). We offer a conceptual model of socially responsible decision-making based on the Doctus knowledge-based system. This was empirically examined and verified through semi-structured interviews with CSR experts. The variances in the results of the CSR experts were further investigated in semi-structured interviews. These variances are attributed to their mindsets. Mindsets shape how individuals receive, interpret, and comprehend the information they encounter and guide their decision-making processes. We find that CSR’s instrumental and strategic use exists in senior management mindsets.

Inductive examination of the qualitative data using an individual-level analysis revealed three distinct senior management mindsets: conformist mindsets, where their primary motivation for CSR decisions is a personal desire to conform to existing corporate strategies; self-interest mindsets, where one’s benefit takes precedence over the benefit of others, and their primary motivation for CSR decisions is self-centered gains and benefits; and finally, shareholders’ satisfaction/profit-driven mindsets, which prioritize shareholders’ satisfaction with profit maximization as their primary motivation for CSR decisions. In addition to the mindsets uncovered, our findings contribute to the CSR literature by using individual rather than organizational or country-level analyses, in contrast to the bulk of CSR research. This study is a starting point for further research on the underlying decision-making processes that result in and promote CSR.

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STAVOVI VIŠEG MENADŽMENTA ZA DRUŠTVENU ODGOVORNOST PODUZEĆA (DOP)

SAŽETAK

Unatoč velikoj količini činjeničnih podataka o značajnoj ulozi višeg menadžmenta u postizanju društvene odgovornosti poduzeća (DOP), malo je napora uloženo u osvjetljavanje procesa donošenja odluka o DOP-u i menadžerskih stavova koji ga pokreću. Kako bi se popunila ta praznina u istraživanju DOP-a, ova studija istražuje proces donošenja odluka o DOP-u i stavove višeg menadžmenta prema DOP-u, induktivno potaknute literaturom o DOP-u i kvalitativnom studijom. Ova studija nudi konceptualni model društveno odgovornog donošenja odluka temeljen na Doctus sustavu zasnovanom na znanju. Model je empirijski analiziran i verificiran kroz polustrukturirane intervjue s ekspertima za DOP. Nadalje, induktivni pregled kvalitativnih podataka korištenjem analize na razini pojedinca otkrio je tri različita stava višeg menadžmenta prema DOP-u: konformistički, sebični i stavovi usmjereni na zadovoljstvo dioničara/profit.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: *društvena odgovornost poduzeća, model donošenja odluka, mentaliteti.*