Corporate Social Responsibility And Digital Learning Initiatives: Assessing Corporate-Supported Skill Enhancement Programs

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Abstract
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has now gone further than engaging in philanthropy to encompass digital learning and skill development programs that would help enhance workforce preparedness. The research study evaluates the efficiency of digital learning programs sponsored by corporations in improving the skills, employability perceptions of the participants, and their overall satisfaction. The quantitative cross sectional research design was adopted with a structured questionnaire being given to 90 participants that had taken part in digital training programs funded by CSR. The instrument was used to measure program access, quality of digital content, perceived skill development, and employability change, and overall satisfaction. Descriptive statistics showed that there were high degree of agreement with all constructs especially when it comes to skill development and satisfaction. The analysis of correlation showed that there are significant positive associations between skill enhancement, impact on employability, and overall satisfaction. The outcome of regression showed that the quality of content and the improvement of skills are significant predictors of satisfaction among the participants. The results indicate that digital learning programs based on CSR have a beneficial impact on perceived employability and the development of digital competence. Nevertheless, structural and practical exposure issues are also areas where the same can be improved. The research gives empirical data to the adoption of structured data training as part of CSR strategies in the form of sustainable skill development and inclusive economic participation.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Digital Learning, Skill Enhancement, Employability, Workforce Development.

1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has developed to become a fringe philanthropic involvement into an organizational strategic necessity. The contemporary companies are becoming increasingly anticipated to not only work in economic growth but also of social improvement and the environmentally sound community progress. CSR disclosure and

implementation in the university sector and the wider institutional setting have been at the core of organizational legitimacy and stakeholder relationship, especially in knowledge-based industries (Adhikariparajuli et al., 2021). Such change can be attributed to an increasing awareness that the activities of corporations should be consistent with the expectations of the society, transparency levels, and sustainability goals over time. CSR is ceasing to be the case of environmental management or philanthropy and is expanding to include workforce, ethical governance, digital inclusion, and educational empowerment. Companies are considering CSR as part of their business strategies to build shared value, enhance trust between them and their stakeholders and to boost organizational performance.

Employee impact is one of the important internal impacts of CSR engagement. The studies prove that CSR programs may also contribute to employee engagement as they can allow the members to match their own values to the organizational missions (Glavas, 2016). By feeling that their organization is socially responsible, employees tend to display commitment, intrinsic drive, and discretional effort. This inner aspect of CSR highlights the need to incorporate the socially responsible practices in the human resource development initiatives. Moreover, CSR has been linked to better employee welfare and performance result. The psychological well-being, employee engagement, and performance of tasks are affected positively by corporate programs that show social commitment (Kim and Kim, 2021). These results underscore the applicability of CSR in determining the perception of external stakeholders, as well as internal organizational processes.

CSR execution involves a regular planning, monitoring and evaluation to have quantifiable results. The current studies indicate that integrative frameworks, linking CSR strategy with organizational learning and performance measures are needed (Fatima and Elbanna, 2023). Successful implementation of CSR encompasses cross functional collaboration, leadership, and alignment of CSR to organizational goals. Moreover, the CSR activities that support ethical organizational environments lead to healthier working environments and minimized work-related stress (Schwepker et al., 2021). These ethical structures support the belief in the CSR activities and employee trust. These changes imply that digital learning programs are CSR-driven activities that must be developed in a strategic manner to create social and organizational value.

The intensive development of digital technologies has changed the character of work, organizational processes and skills. Technology is still transforming job descriptions, workforce, and work organization (Cascio and Montealegre, 2016). With the growing pace of digitalization, organizations are forced to invest in lifelong learning in order to stay competitive and socially responsible. There are opportunities and challenges associated with digital transformation. The complexity of technology, the need to adapt the workforce, and the need to realign the strategies often require the involvement of multiple stakeholders (Brunetti et al., 2020). The staff might have issues regarding technological redundancy and displacement in fast-evolving digital spaces (Brougham and Haar, 2017). Growingly, therefore, corporations are adding digital skill growth programs in their CSR agendas to alleviate technological disparities and facilitate workforce resilience. Recent research has underscored the need to have coded digital competency models to steer change programs (Bouwmans et al., 2024). The frameworks aid organizations to identify competency gaps in a systematic manner and develop specific learning interventions. In addition, digital innovation capabilities have been associated with better CSR performance, which is a reciprocal relation between technological development and social responsibility (Li et al., 2024).

Digital learning programs sponsored by corporations are one of the practical spaces of the intersection of CSR and workforce development. It is important to assess the effectiveness

of such programs to ensure that the programs bring about the desired outcomes in terms of skills improvement. The results of studies on corporate e-learning versus classroom training show that formal assessment processes are essential to measuring training effectiveness and learning transfer (Beinicke and Bipp, 2018). The transfer of training into performance outcome also depends on the support systems at the workplace. Organizational support and favorable learning environments promote the use of new skills gained (Chauhan et al., 2016). These observations indicate that it is vital to evaluate the perceptions of participants regarding accessibility, quality of content, and applicability in the real world, in addition to the design of digital learning programs. Creating and training also holds a key role in the propagation of organizational CSR agendas. By incorporating CSR principles into learning plans, corporate training can help to achieve wider social goals, such as employability and community development (Miller and Akdere, 2019). CSR-based digital learning programs are thus effective on two fronts: they improve individual skills and address social responsibilities of organizations.

Although the existing literature increasingly indicates that CSR, digital transformation, and workforce development are interconnected, there is a shortage of empirical studies that assess the corporate-sponsored digital learning programs through the lens of the beneficiaries. Although the topic of CSR disclosure and reporting has been widely studied (Adhikariparajuli et al., 2021), there has been a paucity of studies that objectively assess the impact of such initiatives on perceived skill growth and employability. Since technological changes are swiftly affecting the organization of work (Cascio and Montealegre, 2016), organizations need to make sure that digital learning initiatives motivated by CSR can fill knowledge gaps and improve workforce preparedness.

The main aim of the research is to evaluate the efficiency of digital learning programs sponsored by the corporation and run on the frames of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs in terms of increasing the skills and employability of the participants. In particular, the study intends to assess the perception of the beneficiaries regarding the availability of programs and the quality of digital content, assess the level of perceived skill development, the effect on the outcomes of employability, and factors that affect satisfaction with participants in general.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The research design chosen in this study was a quantitative research design based on cross-sectional survey design. The aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of the corporate-sponsored digital learning programs under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs. A survey-based approach has been chosen to gather standardized data in the form of the questionnaires with the beneficiaries in a systematic manner about their perception of the quality of the program, skill development, employability, and overall satisfaction. The design was the basis of statistical analysis of the relationships between variables and gave quantifiable data of program success.

2.2 Study Setting and Population

The research was carried out among the beneficiaries who had attended or were attending CSR-sponsored digital learning and skill development courses. These programs involved online technical training, digital literacy courses and soft skills development programs funded by corporate bodies. The population targeted was those who had attended the programs at least three months and above, and aged 18 years and above, to be able to assess the outcomes.

2.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study used a total of 90 respondents. The sample size was identified according to the possibility, the availability of participants and the need to employ statistical analysis in survey-based research. The purposive sampling method was used to obtain the sample that fulfilled the inclusion criteria, i.e., participants who had attended or are still attending CSR-supported online learning programs. This methodology took care of relevancy of the data collected to the study objectives and representative of direct beneficiaries of the program.

2.4 Data Collection Instrument

The instrument of data collection was a structured self-administered questionnaire that came up with the questionnaire due to available literature on CSR initiatives, digital learning, and skill development programs. The questionnaire had two major sections. The initial section included demographic data like age, gender, the level of education, and employment status. This second section evaluated the main research variables such as affordability of the programs, the quality of the digital content, the perceived skills improvement, the effect of employability, and the satisfaction. The measurements of responses were conducted on a Likert scale of five points, and the responses were in strongly disagree, strongly agree. The tool has been crafted in such a way that it is clear, relevant and in line with the objectives of the study.

2.5 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Expert evaluation by professionals in the area of corporate social responsibility, digital education, and research methodology was established as content validity. They included their feedback to enhance the questionnaire items that were relevant and clear. The pilot test was done using a limited number of participants to determine the understanding and suitability of the instrument. Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to test reliability to measure internal consistency of the scales with 0.70 as acceptable levels.

2.6 Data Collection Procedure

The program coordinators of the respective programs gave ethical approval and permission before data collection. The study participants were advised of the research objectives and guaranteed of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Before the questionnaire was administered, informed consent was recorded. The survey was presented accordingly electronically in online forms or in printed form based on access. The collecting of the data was done within a stipulated time to ensure that there was sufficient response and data completeness.

2.7 Data Analysis

The data obtained were coded and inputted into statistical software to analyze the data. Demographic characteristics, as well as responses to the items included in a questionnaire, were summarized using descriptive statistics frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Correlation analysis and regression analysis were the inferential statistical tests that were conducted to explore the relationships between program quality, skill improvement, and employability as well as participant satisfaction. The p-value of less than 0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

3. Results

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The respondents involved in the study were 90. The demographic situation suggests that the sample is rather young and career-oriented, which is the characteristic of the target audience of CSR-sponsored digital learning projects. Most of the respondents were aged 18-30 years and had an undergraduate degree or higher. It was found that there was a balanced gender representation and a significant percentage of respondents were unemployed or low-level career professionals when they registered in the program. To give a better picture of the composition of the sample, the demographic distribution of the respondents in detail has been given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 90)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–25 years	38	42.2
	26–30 years	27	30.0
	31–35 years	15	16.7
	Above 35 years	10	11.1
Gender	Male	46	51.1
	Female	44	48.9
Education	Diploma	18	20.0
	Undergraduate	49	54.4
	Postgraduate	23	25.6
Employment Status (Pre-Program)	Unemployed	34	37.8
	Student	26	28.9
	Employed	30	33.3

Most of the respondents were aged 18-25 (42.2% of the total respondents) and aged 26-30 years (30.0% of the total respondents) as depicted in Table 1. The highest category of education was the undergraduate degrees (54.4%). Employment status distribution shows that 37.8% did not have a job before the program, which explains the applicability of the CSR-funded digital learning programs to improve the employment opportunities. The statistics indicate that CSR online programs are mostly targeting young adults who want to improve employability and technical skills.

3.2 Descriptive Analysis of Key Study Variables

The descriptive statistics showed that there were generally positive perceptions towards digital learning initiatives that were supported by corporations. Respondents indicated a high rate of agreement in terms of accessibility, quality of content and outcomes in terms of skill enhancement. In order to summarize the perceptions of the respondents in the key constructs assessed in the questionnaire, the descriptive statistics are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Constructs

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Program Accessibility	3.92	0.68
Quality of Digital Content	4.08	0.61
Skill Enhancement	4.15	0.57
Employability Impact	3.87	0.72
Overall Satisfaction	4.12	0.59

Table 2 shows that the constructs had a mean score of above 3.80 which is generally positive responses. The relatively small values of standard deviation also indicate consistency in the perceptions of the respondents in the variables being measured. Skill Enhancement had the highest mean score (M = 4.15, SD = 0.57) as the representatives of the respondent group perceived a significant increase in the level of both technical and soft skills. Employability Impact had a very small mean, implying that the assumed direct employment results varied even though perceived skills had increased. Figure 1 below is provided to supply visual comparison of the mean scores in constructs.

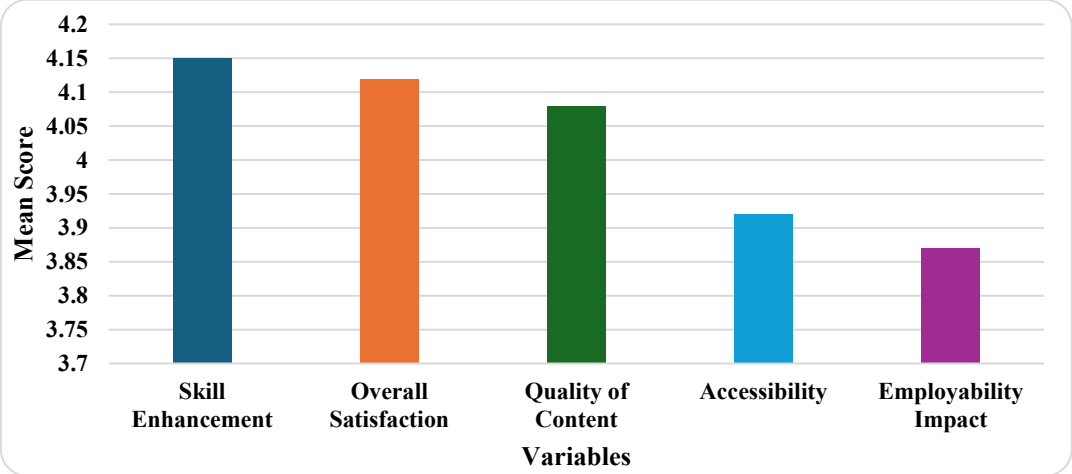


Figure 1. Mean Scores of Key Study Variables

Figure 1, which presents the findings graphically, supports the numerical results, which make it obvious that Skill Enhancement and Overall Satisfaction obtained the highest means scores of the measured variables. Figure 1 shows the average scores of the key constructs measured by the questionnaire as compared to each other.

3.3 Reliability Analysis

The alpha coefficients of Cronbach were used to investigate internal consistency reliability. Every construct portrayed an acceptable and high reliability, which indicated the consistency of the questionnaire instrument. The Table 3 summarizes the reliability statistics of each construct.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Program Accessibility	5	0.81
Quality of Digital Content	6	0.86
Skill Enhancement	6	0.88
Employability Impact	5	0.79
Overall Satisfaction	4	0.84

All the values of Cronbach alpha are above the recommended value of 0.70, as was shown in Table 3 and this implies that there is satisfactory internal consistency of all measurement scales. Any alpha of the measurement scales more than the acceptable level of 0.70 showed that these scales had high internal reliability.

3.4 Correlation Analysis

To test whether there is a relationship between the quality of the program, skill development, employability effects, and satisfaction, Pearson correlation analysis was used. The results of the correlations between the main constructs are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix

Variables	Quality of Content	Skill Enhancement	Employability Impact	Overall Satisfaction
Quality of Content	1.00	0.68**	0.54**	0.73**
Skill Enhancement	0.68**	1.00	0.71**	0.76**
Employability Impact	0.54**	0.71**	1.00	0.59**
Overall Satisfaction	0.73**	0.76**	0.59**	1.00

Note: $p < 0.01$

Table 4 shows the statistically significant positive relationships between all the variables at the 0.01 level of significance, indicating that there are significant relationships between quality of the program, skill improvement, effects of the program on employability, and satisfaction. The Skill Enhancement was found to have significant positive correlation with the Overall Satisfaction ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.01$) and the Employability Impact ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$). These results show that the perceived skills development is strongly related to the increased employment opportunities and level of satisfaction. In order to provide deeper information on the correlation between the improvement of skills and the effect of employability, Figure 2 is provided below.

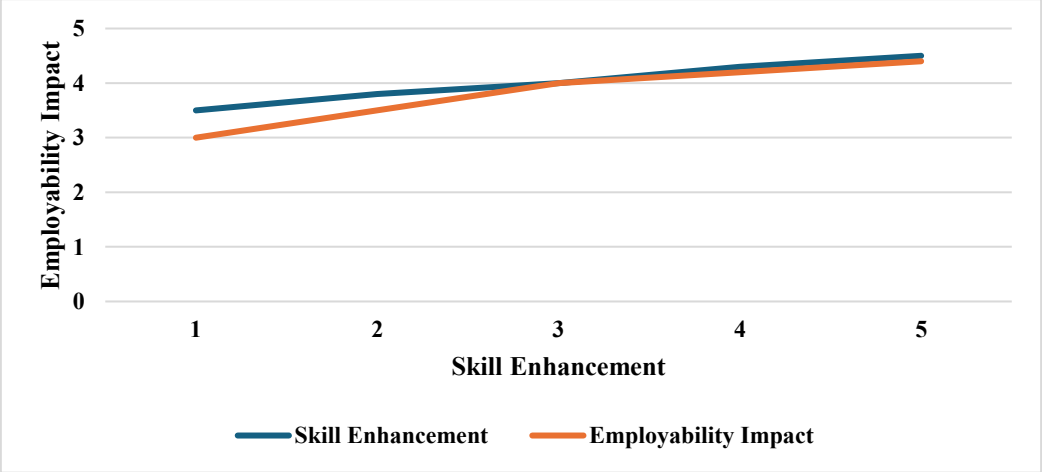


Figure 2. Correlation Between Skill Enhancement and Employability Impact

The scatter plot in Figure 2 shows a positive linear association, which proves the statistical correlation findings in the Pearson analysis. Figure 2 shows that the relationship between perceived skill enhancement and the outcome of employability is positive and linear.

3.5 Regression Analysis

To identify the predictors of overall satisfaction, multiple regression analysis was done. Quality of Digital Content and Skill Enhancement were typed as independent variables. The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 32.84$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 48% of the variance in overall satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.48$). Skill Enhancement emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.49$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Quality of Digital Content ($\beta = 0.37$,

$p < 0.01$). This means that betterment in competencies and content quality have a great impact on satisfaction of beneficiaries to CSR-supported initiatives. To have a better understanding of the relative contribution of each predictor, Figure 3 is drawn below.

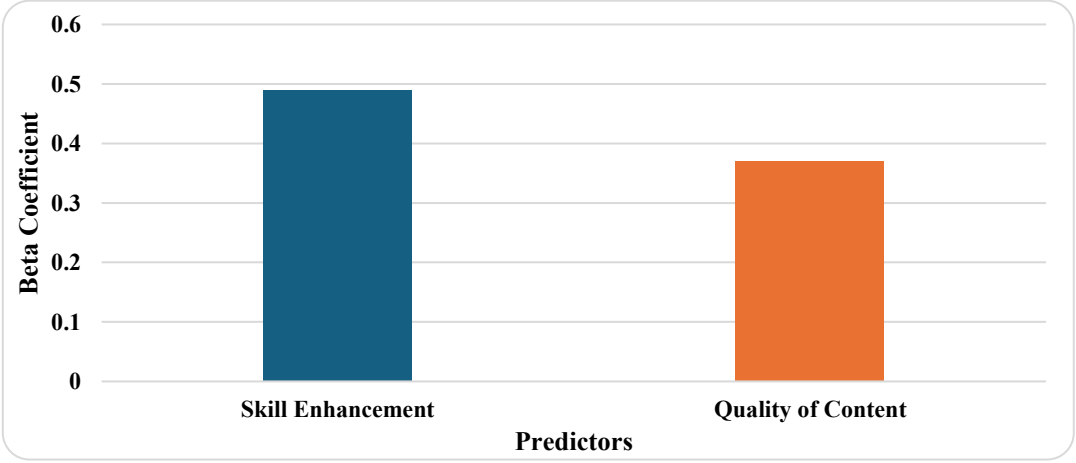


Figure 3. Standardized Regression Coefficients Predicting Satisfaction

As Figure 3 graphically proves, Skill Enhancement is more strongly standardized to influence overall satisfaction than Quality of Digital Content. The strength of the predictors affecting overall satisfaction is shown in figure 3.

3.6 Perceived Challenges in Program Implementation

Though the general impressions were favourable, respondents also indicated that they had several issues such as lack of internet access, time, and lack of hands-on exposure. Figure 4 shows a distribution of the reported challenges.

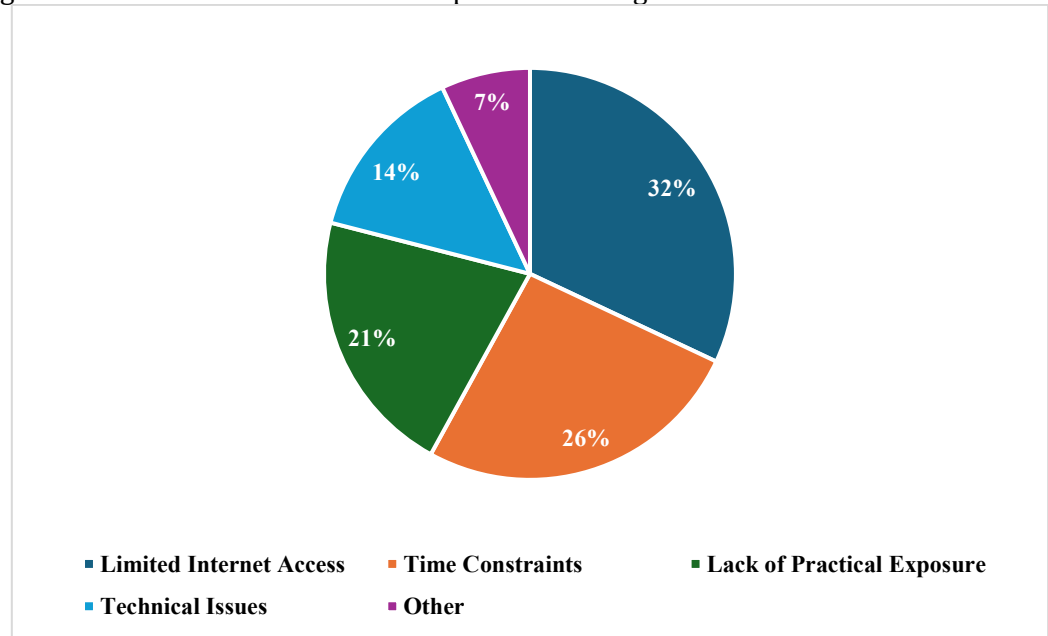


Figure 4. Reported Challenges Among Participants (%)

This is shown in figure 4 with limited internet access (32%), and time constraints (26%) being the most commonly reported barriers. These results reveal the constraints of the infrastructure and context in terms of the efficiency of CSR-based digital programs. Figure

4 shows the distribution of challenges that the respondents encountered during the participation in the programs. The results indicate that digital learning programs funded by corporations play a critical role in perceived development of skills and satisfaction of a participant, and that they are carriable with employability outcomes.

4. Discussion

The results of the current study suggest that the participants felt that the digital and transferable skills enhanced significantly upon taking part in the digital learning projects promoted by the corporations. These findings can be correlated with the larger discourses on digital literacy as a core competence in the contemporary learning and work contexts. Digital literacy goes further than technical skills and encompasses information processing and communication capabilities and critical thinking that a person needs to engage in digital ecosystems (Tinmaz et al., 2022). The fact that the means scores of skill improvement in this study were high implies that CSR-based programs are making a significant contribution to enhancing such skills. Moreover, positive view of developing digital competence is aligned with the previous proven measurement models that are used to measure digital skills in a systematic manner. The alignment of competence domains, stressed in the research of scale development, demonstrates the significance of the credible assessment instruments in the establishment of program efficacy (Tzafilkou et al., 2022). The good reliability values in this study support the high echelon of the measurement method and give assurance of the perceived skill gains interpretation.

The positive association existing between skill improvement and employability effect identified in the present study indicates the increased value of workforce readiness in digitally transforming workplaces. Companies that are digitally transforming need to find workers who can become flexible to emerging technologies, procedures and teaming models. The digital transformation of workplaces is a multi-level process with such components as the support of leaders, flexibility among employees, and structured learning interventions (Trenerry et al., 2021). The current findings indicate that digital learning programs supported by CSR can play the role of preparatory mechanisms that make individuals better prepared to the digital transformation. Such initiatives are beneficial as they equip beneficiaries with appropriate competencies that can reduce the presence of skill gaps, which are a significant barrier to the adoption of technology. Such an outcome is especially pertinent in circumstances where a digital gap can otherwise limit the access to new opportunities.

The affirmative attitudes towards program accessibility and quality of content that the research found also make contributions to the topic of e-learning efficacy in organizations. A comparative study of the use of e-learning within companies shows that the digital systems can reinforce the workplace learning cultures if they are properly designed and facilitated (Yoo and Huang, 2016). These positive ratings of the accessibility in this research imply that digital programs funded by CSR have a potential to promote inclusive learning spaces where individuals are likely to engage and keep advancing. Effectiveness of e-learning however does not just depend on the technological infrastructure but also on the instructional design and the interaction of the learner. Empirical research shows that the process of socialization of trainees, as well as the level of training material, has a strong impact on the learning outcomes in the digital environment (Yanson and Johnson, 2016). The fairly high perceived skill improvement scores in this case might, thus, be indicative of considerate program design and well-designed delivery systems integrated into the CSR programmes.

Through digital innovations, including Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), wider landscape of digital education has been altered and has redefined the access to learning opportunities. Critical reviews, however, warn that when concluding about the universal

effectiveness, one should not omit the extensive evaluation of outcomes (Weinhardt and Sitzmann, 2019). This research paper is relevant to this discussion as it empirically evaluates the perception of the participants without being focused only on participation rates. The focus on the improvements in satisfaction, employability, and skills development gives a more comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of digital training. Also, the introduction of employee-led digital innovation has become an important tool that organizations can use to improve their technological capacities (Opland et al., 2022). The indirect means in which CSR-assisted digital learning programs can drive such innovation is by enabling the beneficiaries with relevant capabilities to make a creative contribution on an organizational level. Improving digital skills, corporations not only meet the requirements of the social responsibility but also develop the potential of innovation in the future or current workers.

The dynamics of leadership is important in influencing the level of learning and satisfaction. The linkage between skill development and the general satisfaction in this research can be partly explained by the understanding of perceptions of organizational support as a component of CSR programs. The leader member exchange theory is based on the significance of good quality relational exchange to stimulate motivation, commitment, and development opportunities (Bauer and Erdogan, 2015). In digital learning programs that are sustained by excellent mentorship and communication systems, members are bound to achieve positive results. Top management features on the strategic level play a pivotal role in digital innovation and transformation paths (Firk et al., 2022). The strategic value of technological competencies is the leadership understanding of the strategic value of CSR resources allocation to digital skills development. The outcome of the regression analysis conducted in the present study that finds skill development and quality of the content to be the main predictor of satisfaction is an indicator of the relevance of managerial dedication to properly designed digital programs.

5. Conclusion

The present study has investigated the success of digital learning programs funded by a corporation through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs that are specifically focused on skill development, effect on employability, and satisfaction of the participants. The results prove that the beneficiaries experience a significant change in digital competencies and transferable skills, which proves that CSR-based educational interventions can make a considerable contribution to the workforce development. The favorable links established between quality of content, improvement of skills and general satisfaction also serve to emphasize the significance of properly designed and easy to use digital learning environments. The findings also indicate that corporate investment in digital training programs goes beyond philanthropic activities, and it is a strategic process of mitigating gaps in skills during a dynamic technological environment. Even though the results on perceived employability were mediocre, they underscore the necessity of further congruency between training content and the labor market requirements. In general, the paper empirically validates the concept of the implementation of structured digital learning programs into CSR strategies. Corporations can increase the social impact by ensuring inclusive access to skills development opportunities and at the same time support long-term economic participation. Future research needs to aim at reinforcing the practical components of exposure and solving structural issues to ensure the greatest long run gains to participants.

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