

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The impact of community-oriented social responsibility of small and medium-sized enterprises on their resilience

Yangyang<sup>1,2</sup>, Ali Khatibi<sup>2</sup>, Jacqueline Tham<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hefei Technology College, Hefei, 230012, China

<sup>2</sup> Post Graduate Centre, Management and Science University, Shah Alam, 40100, Malaysia

\* Corresponding author: Yang Yang; yanghfzy1986@163.com

## ABSTRACT

The community functions as a critical stakeholder for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as the survival and development of SMEs are inherently community-based. However, with the expanding role and influence of SMEs, their significance in addressing socially relevant issues—such as boosting employment, driving innovation, and enhancing living standards—has become increasingly prominent. This shift has made the fulfillment of community-oriented social responsibility for SMEs an unavoidable imperative. The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of community-oriented social responsibility initiatives adopted by SMEs on enterprise resilience, while simultaneously investigating the mediating role of employees' psychological capital. Building on the existing literature, this study focuses on the theme of “the influence mechanism of SMEs' community-oriented social responsibility on enterprise resilience” and employs a cross-sectional research design, with data collected from employees of SMEs. The results indicate two key findings: First, community-oriented social responsibility initiatives significantly enhance the organizational resilience of SMEs. Second, employees' psychological capital plays a full mediating role in the relationship between community-oriented social responsibility and SMEs organizational resilience. Ultimately, prioritizing the implementation of community-oriented social responsibility enables SMEs to achieve a win-win outcome. On one hand, it helps SMEs build a positive public image; on the other hand, it improves employees' psychological capital—empowering SMEs to develop enterprise resilience and better cope with crises.

**Keywords:** Community; enterprise resilience; psychological capital; social responsibility

## 1. Introduction

Since the 21st century, the development pace of Chinese enterprises has been accelerating, but the increasing environmental uncertainty and frequent disasters are threatening enterprises, they are facing severe tests. As previous crises have shown, these threats not only trigger severe economic downturns, but also threaten the survival of businesses. These threats highlight the importance of resilience in helping businesses survive, adapt, and grow in difficult situations, as well as maintaining organizational stability and security in uncertain environments. Resilience is necessary for individuals, organizations, and society to cope with the challenges brought by new economic and social impacts<sup>[1]</sup>. A resilient company should be able to

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withstand the impact of shocks. Several studies have incorporated the concept of organizational resilience, seeking to explain why certain enterprises possess sufficient resilience to survive and thrive amid adversities. Organizational resilience enables enterprises to effectively respond to changes in the external environment<sup>[2]</sup>, thereby holding profound strategic significance for their survival and sustainable development.

The implementation of corporate social responsibility(CSR) is crucial for companies to respond to crises, especially in the later stages of the crisis<sup>[3]</sup>. In the existing literature on organizational resilience, it has been repeatedly mentioned that CSR activities play a crucial role as they can provide a strong social foundation or reputation to buffer or interrupt crises<sup>[4]</sup>. CSR is recognized as a strategic approach to mitigate the adverse impacts of the external environment<sup>[5]</sup>.

While a growing body of literature has documented the facilitative role of CSR in enhancing organizational resilience<sup>[6]</sup>, there remain research gaps in micro-level research on CSR—particularly, studies focusing on the community as a stakeholder group remain limited. As stakeholders of enterprises, communities, although occupying an important position in the network, have not yet become the focus of research<sup>[7]</sup>. Numerous recommendations for future research have emphasized expanding micro-level research on CSR<sup>[8]</sup>. CSR has become a reflection of corporate reputation and a part of maintaining corporate ethics through appropriate social behavior. The success of CSR projects depends on the perspective of the local community<sup>[9]</sup>.

According to stakeholder theory, CSR is of interest to various stakeholder groups such as employees, consumers, communities, governments, and the environment<sup>[10]</sup>. The establishment of each enterprise has an impact on the community and has a symbiotic relationship with it. If a company encounters problems, the community can also become an entity that can express opinions<sup>[11]</sup>. Due to this interdependence, organizations need to support each other. Enterprises rely on society to provide personnel, safety, and purchase their goods and services; On the other hand, the community expects them to make contributions, and only when they do not disappoint each other can there be harmonious relationships<sup>[12]</sup>. At the same time, due to the close proximity of businesses to the community, it is necessary to maintain a balanced relationship with stakeholders. In this case, the interests of the community need to be considered, and collaboration among businesses, governments, and communities must be based on mutual openness. The sustainability of every CSR plan should be achieved by prioritizing local communities.

Implementing Community-Oriented Social Responsibility (COSR) is essential for several reasons. This includes compliance with regulations, laws, and rules, social investment as a positive image for the company, obtaining business licenses from local communities as part of the business strategy, and as part of enterprise risk management to mitigate and avoid social conflicts. In this case, CSR reflects a commitment to sustainable development while taking into account both economic and environmental factors. This also establishes the trust of the community in the company<sup>[13]</sup>.

A large body of literature suggests that ensuring that COSR practices align with the wishes and expectations of local communities in community related activities may contribute to the long-term sustainability of the relationship between businesses and communities<sup>[14]</sup>. If the community has a positive impression of the company, the good relationship between the company and the surrounding community will undoubtedly be successfully achieved. Meanwhile, trust established through ongoing COSR activities can bring long-term community support and sustainable business operations<sup>[15]</sup>.

However, little evidence exists regarding whether and how COSR contributes to enterprise resilience(ER). Consequently, as an integral component of CSR activities, there is a need to conduct

quantitative measurement of COSR, thereby investigating its impact on ER. Drawing on stakeholder theory, some scholars have argued that COSR practices may facilitate the acquisition of organizational resilience<sup>[16]</sup>.

At the same time, the focus of research on CSR, especially the views of stakeholders on CSR, has largely been on large companies<sup>[17]</sup>. The application of CSR to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is of great significance and is a driving force for their future sustainable development. Fulfilling social responsibility is crucial for private enterprises to establish political relationships<sup>[18]</sup>. The level of CSR participation has a positive contribution to organizational resilience<sup>[19]</sup>.

The community serves as a critical stakeholder for SMEs<sup>[20]</sup>. This is because CSR in small firms operates at a local scale<sup>[21]</sup>—a characteristic shaped by "the embeddedness of firms in social and local interdependent relationships"<sup>[22]</sup>. By focusing on the local community, firms can benefit from local regulations that offer favorable tax reductions, thereby minimizing compliance costs<sup>[23]</sup>.

By supporting the local community—through charitable activities, employee donations, or volunteer services—SMEs enhance their social capital, as well as customer and workforce loyalty, thereby boosting sales. COSR initiatives can serve as free advertising for SMEs in their direct markets<sup>[24]</sup>. This not only drives sales growth but also reduces costs, which in turn contributes to cost advantages, sustained cost competitiveness, and the availability of additional resources for firm expansion. COSR also enhances a firm's reputation, helping attract new employees and strengthen their organizational commitment<sup>[25]</sup>, it also improves the quality of the local workforce<sup>[23]</sup>, thereby enhancing productivity and operational efficiency<sup>[26]</sup>. The European Commission (2011) highlighted the importance of shared value between businesses and society, while acknowledging that CSR processes may remain informal for the majority of SMEs<sup>[27]</sup>.

While the importance of human capital is well-recognized—for instance, in terms of employees' responses to organizational change<sup>[28]</sup>,—limited research has been conducted on the contributions of employees' psychological capital to organizational resilience, particularly in the aftermath of crises and disasters<sup>[29]</sup>. Scholars have acknowledged the significance of human resource management practices in fostering organizational resilience, specifically through long-term planning and the adoption of an operational perspective<sup>[30]</sup>. Yet, limited understanding exists regarding the individual and contextual factors that facilitate organizational resilience<sup>[31]</sup>. Employees, as one of the most critical stakeholder groups within firms, possess tacit knowledge of the business and understand the motivations behind CSR more deeply than other stakeholders<sup>[32]</sup>. Thus, the way employees are psychologically impacted by CSR initiatives deserves close attention from researchers and managers, as these psychological impacts have the potential to exert a positive effect on productivity<sup>[33]</sup>. In today's dynamic business environment, psychological capital is crucial to organizational success<sup>[34]</sup>. Employees play a central role in CSR. On the one hand, as stakeholders, they are strongly influenced by an organization's CSR activities. On the other hand, employees exert a significant influence on the success of an organization's CSR and its sustainability. Specifically, CSR initiatives help attract more talented and qualified employees, enhance employee effort and motivation, or generate higher-quality outputs through the use of non-monetary tools<sup>[35]</sup>. Therefore, SMEs should regard CSR as an essential component for enhancing employee psychological capital (EPC)<sup>[36]</sup>.

Therefore, this study proposes that EPC plays a mediating role in the relationship between COSR and ER. However, prior literature has devoted limited attention to exploring the mediating role associated with CSR in this context. Against this backdrop, the present study employs a mediating model framework to clarify the relationship between COSR and ER, thereby contributing to the existing body of literature.

Governments in emerging market economies hold expectations for enterprises' CSR practices, with a particular emphasis on the expectation that enterprises should assume greater responsibility in enhancing and

improving the capabilities of local communities<sup>[37]</sup>. Given the paucity of research focusing on developing markets<sup>[38]</sup>, this study primarily takes SMEs in Anhui Province, China, as its research subjects. To examine the influence relationship between COSR and ER among SMEs, as well as the mediating role of employees' psychological capital in the relationship between COSR and ER, this study explores four key research themes: (1) the relationship between COSR and EPC ; (2) the relationship between EPC and ER; (3) the relationship between COSR and ER; and (4) the mediating effect of EPC on the influence of COSR on ER.

The next section discusses literature review and hypothesis development, Section 3 explains data sources and research design, and Section 4 presents the results. Finally, we will discuss and summarize our findings in Section 5.

## **2. Literature review and hypothesis development**

### **2.1. COSR and ER**

According to Mackey (2007), CSR is defined as "voluntary corporate action aimed at improving social or environmental conditions". Although the law does not explicitly require CSR, the social welfare it generates can in turn bring commercial benefits<sup>[39]</sup>. CSR promotes the survival of businesses by obtaining social capital and moral legitimacy from both primary and secondary stakeholders<sup>[16]</sup>. Mutually beneficial interactions with stakeholders are key to building organizational resilience. The important role of CSR in organizational resilience is reflected in two different aspects, namely performance improvement and performance guarantee mechanisms<sup>[40]</sup>. Magrizos et al. (2021) found that during economic crises, CSR is positively correlated with the financial performance of SMEs<sup>[41]</sup>. The local community is one of the stakeholders of the company and plays an important role in CSR implementation<sup>[9]</sup>.

COSR typically manifests in forms such as public welfare and charity, which can help increase the company's image and enhance consumer appeal to its products. By focusing on the interests of shareholders and stakeholders, it makes it easier for them to generate profits in the form of profits<sup>[42]</sup>. The role of COSR in organizational resilience mainly lies in the social reputation it brings, which can not only create value and improve performance for enterprises, but also reduce financial fluctuations caused by environmental impacts. Many empirical studies have found that charitable activities can help earn a good reputation and drive product or service sales<sup>[43]</sup>, significantly increase corporate value, promote business growth<sup>[44]</sup>, and bring long-term benefits<sup>[45]</sup>. Especially in emerging economies, participating in COSR can further convey the ability of enterprises to fill institutional gaps to the capital market<sup>[46]</sup>.

Although in the past, the main goal of business organizations was to maximize profits, companies now consider maintaining their reputation and appropriate performance as key organizational goals<sup>[47]</sup>. Werner (2015) proved that political reputation is an important component of the reputation brought about by corporate community responsibility<sup>[48]</sup>. Political reputation can influence the attitude of policy makers, determine whether a company is eligible to participate in the policy-making process of regulatory agencies, and receive support for innovative activities, preferential tariffs and taxes, and other preferential policies, which create significant competitive advantages for the company<sup>[49]</sup>. Corporate charitable activities can also generate and accumulate moral capital among the public, which can greatly help companies alleviate image crises caused by violations, prevent a sharp decline in trust, restore corporate reputation, and maintain stable financial performance in times of crisis or impact<sup>[40]</sup>.

Enterprise resilience refers to the ability of a company to reduce vulnerabilities, change and adapt, and quickly recover from unforeseen events<sup>[50]</sup>. Organizational resilience emphasizes active planning, strong communication, and strategic partnerships<sup>[51]</sup>. Companies can enhance their resilience, reduce vulnerability,

and cultivate strong stakeholder relationships, ultimately benefiting the communities they serve. Support for community related activities has a positive impact on CSR communication outcomes, and organizations that improve their CSR communication outcomes may strengthen their relationships with stakeholders and garner more support for their initiatives<sup>[52]</sup>. By focusing on CSR activities related to the community, SMEs have improved their reputation in the local community, which is often their target market<sup>[25]</sup>, thereby increasing consumer loyalty and attracting new consumers. In addition, SMEs promote intellectual capital and entrepreneurial spirit by participating in community activities, strengthening supplier and customer relationships, and facilitating information exchange between companies<sup>[53]</sup>, thereby enhancing innovation, differentiation advantages, and growth of the enterprise.

Lv et al. (2019) conducted a study on the impact of COSR on organizational resilience using non-financial listed companies in China from 2010 to 2017 as samples. The study found that COSR was significantly negatively correlated with corporate financial volatility<sup>[40]</sup>.

Zuriat(2024) used a secondary data collection source and selected 12 listed deposit banks in Nigeria as samples. Using the least squares regression analysis method, it was found that local community relationship disclosure has a significant impact on the strong financial performance of listed deposit banks in Nigeria. Companies should allocate more funds for social donations and gifts to further promote the relevance and rationality of CSR<sup>[47]</sup>.

Newman et al. (2020) used a sample of over 5000 Vietnamese companies to explore the impact of CSR on productivity. They found a positive correlation between CSR participation and corporate efficiency, which is mainly driven by COSR.

On average, for every additional COSR initiative, labor productivity increases by 0.5% to 0.6%. The community related effects of CSR are stronger in companies rooted in local communities, where labor productivity is mainly driven by COSR initiatives. It is not surprising to see a strong COSR effect when the enterprise is deeply rooted in the local community<sup>[54]</sup>.

Stoian&Gilman (2017) used multiple logistic analyses of survey data from 211 UK SMEs and found that SMEs pursuing cost leadership strategies and implementing COSR activities are more likely to experience rapid growth rather than slow growth, stagnation, or decline. COSR activities have increased the awareness of SMEs among their direct customer base and potential labor resources (i.e. local communities). This saves on advertising, employee turnover, and recruitment costs, thereby contributing to cost competitiveness and promoting business growth<sup>[44]</sup>.

In summary, similar to other dimensions of CSR, COSR can also help businesses mitigate the impact of negative events and avoid significant financial fluctuations. Corporate social welfare activities help establish a positive social image, bridge the gap with the public, and gain their trust, confidence, and goodwill<sup>[55]</sup>. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: COSR exerts a positive influence on ER.

## **2.2. COSR and EPC**

Psychological capital is an important resource foundation for individuals, referring to their self-efficacy in the process of growth and development, as well as positive psychological states characterized by hope, resilience, and optimism. It is a higher-order structure<sup>[56]</sup>. High levels of psychological capital, including hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy, are associated with higher job satisfaction and overall happiness<sup>[57]</sup>. This positive psychological state enhances individuals' ability to work happily and to manage stress more effectively and recover from setbacks<sup>[58]</sup>.

There is a close relationship between CSR and employee or enterprise behavior<sup>[59]</sup>. Employees are also influenced by CSR. Socially responsible enterprises have an advantage in hiring motivated and skilled employees, which leads to higher labor productivity<sup>[60]</sup>. When employees identify with a reputable organization, their self-image is strengthened, which can enhance their self-awareness and identification with the organization, making their work more important and valuable<sup>[61]</sup>. At the same time, employees' positive behavior is influenced by their views on company policies and practices<sup>[62]</sup>. COSR enhances employees' positive emotions and mitigates negative perceptions of the company's business model.

Employees seem to enjoy working for organizations with a sense of social responsibility because it provides opportunities for personal and psychological growth<sup>[63]</sup>. When employees believe that the organization upholds their ethical principles, they are more likely to adhere to these ideals as part of the organization<sup>[64]</sup>. The studies have found that when organizations support employees in caring for and influencing social causes in the community, employees are inspired, work harder, and feel more satisfied with their work<sup>[65]</sup>. By fulfilling their charitable social responsibility and striving to meet the demands of non-governmental organizations to improve local communities, employees' psychological capital increases<sup>[66]</sup>.

Donations providing financial assistance also enhance the quality of human resources or material infrastructure, which are essential for the long-term success of enterprises. The employee volunteer service program is important in reaching out to the community, ensuring that the company meets the real needs of specific communities. Meanwhile, employees play a crucial role in participating in charitable communities<sup>[7]</sup>, and these actions can enhance confidence. The charitable returns and social development efforts of an organization are positively correlated with employee satisfaction. Through charitable initiatives and community development projects, employees' sense of pride and mission is cultivated, which in turn leads to a significant increase in income and employee satisfaction<sup>[67]</sup>. In conclusion, SMEs should regard COSR as an essential component for enhancing employees' psychological capital<sup>[68]</sup>. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: COSR exerts a positive influence on EPC.

### **2.3. EPC and ER**

Psychological capital has become an important factor related to enterprise performance<sup>[69]</sup>. Psychological capital is a positive characteristic of employees in overcoming work pressure and achieving organizational goals<sup>[70]</sup>. Employees with higher levels of psychological capital typically exhibit more optimistic prospects, stronger resilience, and effective response to challenges<sup>[71]</sup>.

Psychological capital is considered a positive oriented psychological ability that can be measured and extended to improve workplace performance<sup>[72]</sup>. Previous studies have shown that developing psychological capital can affect the performance of employees in SMEs<sup>[73]</sup>. High levels of self-efficacy and hope are more likely to motivate people to work hard because they tend to believe that their efforts will be rewarded. Resilience helps people find motivation again in difficult situations, and optimism is no exception<sup>[74]</sup>. By cultivating resilience, problem-solving skills can be improved. Employees with high work flexibility can explore and implement appropriate strategies through thorough problem analysis to improve decision-making and organizational decision-making abilities, enabling organizations to quickly resume normal operations<sup>[75]</sup>. Psychological capital helps create a more innovative and creative work environment<sup>[76]</sup>. According to Permarupan et al. (2020), employee motivation is often problematic for small businesses, as employees tend to give up on their efforts to fulfill their responsibilities when they experience negative

emotions towards job achievement. At this point, utilizing psychological capital and enhancing motivation are crucial for improving employee productivity<sup>[77]</sup>.

Employees play a crucial role in building organizational resilience, therefore they need to enhance their abilities by establishing psychological capital<sup>[78]</sup>. Employees with a stronger sense of purpose and belief in the organizational vision are more likely to participate effectively in problem-solving and creativity, exhibit higher levels of psychological capital, and enhance the organization's ability to adapt to potential threats<sup>[79]</sup>. The specific elastic behavior of employees can enhance ER, giving them greater ability to benefit from external relationships and thus better promote the strengthening of ER<sup>[80]</sup>.

Malik and Garg (2020) observed that employee resilience serves as a key enabler for employee engagement and the development of learning organizations, which in turn contributes to the establishment of ER<sup>[81]</sup>. This implies that employees play a central role in ER by proactively responding to adversities and sustaining performance. Such a positive culture, in turn, fosters an environment where creativity and innovation can thrive, as employees feel empowered to share ideas and take appropriate risks<sup>[82]</sup>.

Salubre et al.(2024) used a descriptive correlation study design to randomly select 150 respondents and found a significant relationship between innovation in SMEs and employees' psychological capital. The level of employees' psychological capital has a significant impact on innovation strategies in SMEs<sup>[83]</sup>.

Psychological capital not only shapes individuals' creativity but also exerts a broader impact on their work performance and well-being. As an internal resource pool, it enables individuals to cope with challenges and seize opportunities for growth and innovation<sup>[84]</sup>. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: EPC exerts a positive influence on ER.

## **2.4. COSR, ER, and EPC**

One possible mechanism by which COSR affects enterprise performance is through employee incentives. In a model that considers moral hazard and heterogeneous principals and agents, it can be demonstrated that external monetary incentives (bonus payments) and intrinsic employee motivation can serve as substitutes<sup>[85]</sup>. Institutions guided by COSR can enhance employees' self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. Therefore, investing in COSR is a win-win situation for enterprises, as it not only gives back to society and establishes a good public image for the enterprise, but also enhances its psychological capital, which in turn makes the enterprise more resilient and better able to respond to crises<sup>[61]</sup>.

Psychological capital plays a crucial mediating role between mental health, different organizational factors, and work outcomes<sup>[86]</sup>. Psychological capital can stimulate and drive employees' creativity and innovation in the creative performance of the enterprise<sup>[87]</sup>. As an important mediator, psychological capital illuminates the pathways of mental health by influencing happiness at work and subsequently enhancing creativity<sup>[88]</sup>.

In today's constantly evolving and fiercely competitive business environment, organizations are constantly seeking strategies to improve their performance and ensure lasting success. In this environment, an increasing number of studies emphasize the crucial role of psychological capital in shaping workplace outcomes. Extensive previous research has highlighted the positive relationship between psychological capital and enterprise performance, thereby improving productivity, innovation, and profitability levels<sup>[89]</sup>.

Njaramba and Olukuru (2025), using survey data from 301 SMEs in Kenya and employing a multilevel structural equation modeling (ML-SEM) approach, found that employees' psychological capital plays a positive mediating role between transformational and directive leadership styles and organizational resilience.

Psychological capital serves as a critical resource for alleviating work demands and facilitating organizational recovery during crises<sup>[90]</sup>.

When enterprises support social causes that they care about and influence the community, employees are inspired, work harder, and feel more satisfied with their work <sup>[91]</sup>. When employees participate in their organizations' COSR initiatives, they tend to form positive perceptions of such initiatives. Specifically, engagement in these activities enhances their self-efficacy, hope, and optimism, which in turn helps them develop a more positive self-concept and greater psychological capital. This heightened psychological capital, in turn, leads to increased organizational attachment among employees<sup>[92]</sup>.

This study posits that employees' psychological capital functions as a mediating variable in the influence of COSR on ER. Further investigating how COSR shapes EPC will not only enhance employees' coping capabilities but also facilitate the restoration of organizational operations to a normal state<sup>[93]</sup>. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4. EPC mediates the relationship between COSR and ER.

## 2.5. Conceptual framework

Building on the aforementioned discussions, this study develops a conceptual model (see Fig. 1). In this model: COSR is operationalized with 4 measurement items. EPC includes 4 dimensions and 8 items. ER includes 3 dimensions and 8 items.

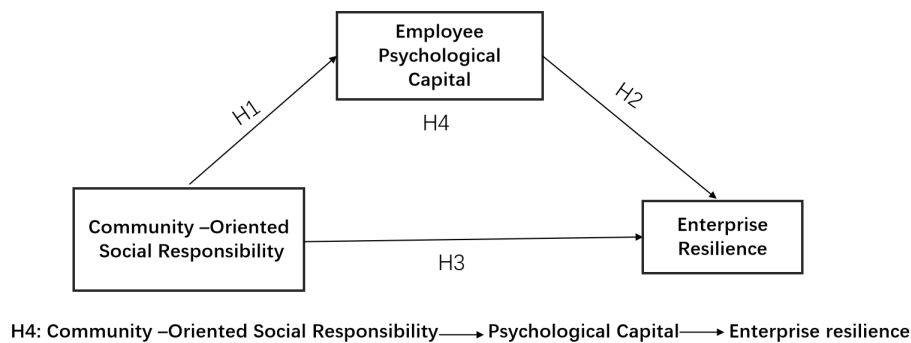


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Sampling and data

This study adopts a quantitative research approach. Systematic data collection and statistical analysis are employed to explore the relationships and patterns among the variables under investigation. Data were collected from September to November 2024.

A cross-sectional research design was adopted, and a simple random sampling method was used to ensure that each eligible individual in the sampling frame had an equal probability of being selected. This method can reduce selection bias and improve sample representativeness. Participation in the investigation process is anonymous and voluntary, and strict measures are taken to ensure the confidentiality of the information. To eliminate the possibility of the interviewee's identity being investigated, the survey also underwent several pre tests. Through actual distribution surveys, it provides the possibility of contacting samples and resolving any issues or misunderstandings that may arise.



In this study, researchers collected sample data from employees of SMEs in Anhui Province, China, covering participants from multiple industries. During the questionnaire distribution process, 14 colleagues and acquaintances maintained long-term communication with the research team and assisted in collecting relevant data. A total of 1,250 questionnaires were distributed, and 1,180 were retrieved, resulting in a response rate of 94.4%. To ensure data quality, the collected data underwent selective screening: questionnaires with consecutive identical responses and those completed in less than 3 minutes were excluded. Ultimately, 826 valid questionnaires were obtained, corresponding to a validity rate of 70%<sup>[94]</sup>. The final data were subjected to rigorous analytical procedures. Using SPSS software, SPSS can process large amounts of data and perform all the analyses covered in this article.

### **3.2. Measurement of variables**

The research tools used in this study are derived from existing literature in the field and have been appropriately adapted to ensure robust and effective measurement of each variable of interest. The respondents were instructed to use a five point Likert scale to express their opinions and viewpoints, with a rating of "5" indicating "strongly agree" and a rating of "1" indicating "strongly disagree".

To measure the construct of COSR, this study adapted the measurement items developed by Martínez-Martínez et al. (2017)<sup>[95]</sup> and Magrizos et al.(2021) <sup>[96]</sup> with appropriate modifications to align with the research context. For the measurement of employees' psychological capital—encompassing the dimensions of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience—the items were adapted from the scale revised by Pathak and Joshi (2021)<sup>[97]</sup>. Additionally, to assess ER, the measurement items were modified based on the scale initially proposed by Zhang and Teng (2021)<sup>[98]</sup>. Among them, the four dimensions included in EPC are Self Efficiency (SEF), Optimism (OPT), Hope (HOP), and Resilience (REL), while the three dimensions included in ER are Adaptability (ADA), Anticipation (ANT) and Situational Awareness (SAW)<sup>[94]</sup>. Self efficacy refers to the ability of individuals to actively execute action plans in response to potential situations <sup>[99]</sup>, Optimism refers to having positive expectations for the future <sup>[100]</sup>. Hope refers to an individual's perceived ability to obtain pathways to achieve expected goals and motivate themselves to use these pathways through agency thinking <sup>[101]</sup>. Resilience refers to an employee's ability to quickly recover and achieve goals in adversity<sup>[102]</sup>. Adaptability refers to the ability to accept problems and promptly develop and implement solutions in response to internal and external changes<sup>[103]</sup>. Anticipation ability refers to the ability to predict unexpected events and prepare in advance<sup>[104]</sup>. Situational awareness refers to the ability to perceive events happening around an organization and understand how this information affects the organization<sup>[105]</sup>. This article examines the relationships between various variables from these perspectives.

During the adaptation of the questionnaire, targeted adjustments were made to align with the characteristics of SMEs. Specifically, regarding the dimension of COSR, SMEs typically face resource constraints and financial pressures. Therefore, the questionnaire was revised to place greater emphasis on two key aspects: SMEs' proactive awareness of implementing community responsibility and their relational quality with local community—adjustments that directly reflect the practical context of SMEs. In terms of linguistic accuracy, the research team engaged professional translators to review the questionnaire, ensuring the precision and rigor of the language used. Simultaneously, efforts were made to ensure that all questionnaire content directly corresponded to the core hypotheses of the study. Following expert review and a pre-test to validate content relevance and clarity, the final formal questionnaire was finalized<sup>[94]</sup>.

### **3.3. Statistical analysis**

Use SPSS to describe the items of each variable in the survey questionnaire, including mean and standard deviation; Descriptive statistical analysis of skewness and kurtosis. Using AMOS for confirmatory

factor analysis, before continuing with structural equation modeling, it is necessary to study the overall model's structural validity and reliability, and measure whether the model's fitting requirements meet its threshold. However, in measuring the model, all potential structures must pass three different types of validity, namely construct validity, aggregate validity, and discriminant validity. The three fitting indicators are absolute fitting (RAMSEA), incremental fitting (CFI), and chi square divided by degrees of freedom. The effectiveness of aggregation is achieved by calculating the Average Variance Extraction (AVE). Finally, discriminant validity provides the square root of AVE.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Demographic characteristics

This study conducted a survey of 826 employees from SMEs in Anhui Province. The background of the survey subjects was statistically analyzed based on the survey items, and the results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic profile of respondents

Category	Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Female	130	43.2	43.2	43.2
	Male	171	56.8	56.8	100
Age	20 years old and below	22	7.3	7.3	7.3
	21–30 years old	118	39.2	39.2	46.5
	31–40 years old	94	31.2	31.2	77.7
	41–50 years old	61	20.3	20.3	98
	51–60 years old	6	2	2	100
Education Level	Junior high school and below	49	16.3	16.3	16.3
	High school, vocational school, vocational school or technical school	37	12.3	12.3	28.6
	Junior college	163	54.2	54.2	82.7
	Undergraduate course	43	14.3	14.3	97
	Master's degree	9	3	3	100
Monthly Income	Less than RMB 3,000	49	16.3	16.3	16.3
	RMB3001–RMB 6,000	145	48.2	48.2	64.5
	RMB6,001–RMB 9,000	62	20.6	20.6	85
	RMB9,001–RMB 12,000	25	8.3	8.3	93.4
	RMB12,001–RMB 15,000	5	1.7	1.7	95
	More than RMB 15,000	15	5	5	100
Position held in the enterprise	Frontline employees	170	56.5	56.5	56.5
	First-line manager	93	30.9	30.9	87.4
	Middle manager	25	8.3	8.3	95.7
	Senior manager	13	4.3	4.3	100

### 4.2. Descriptive statistics

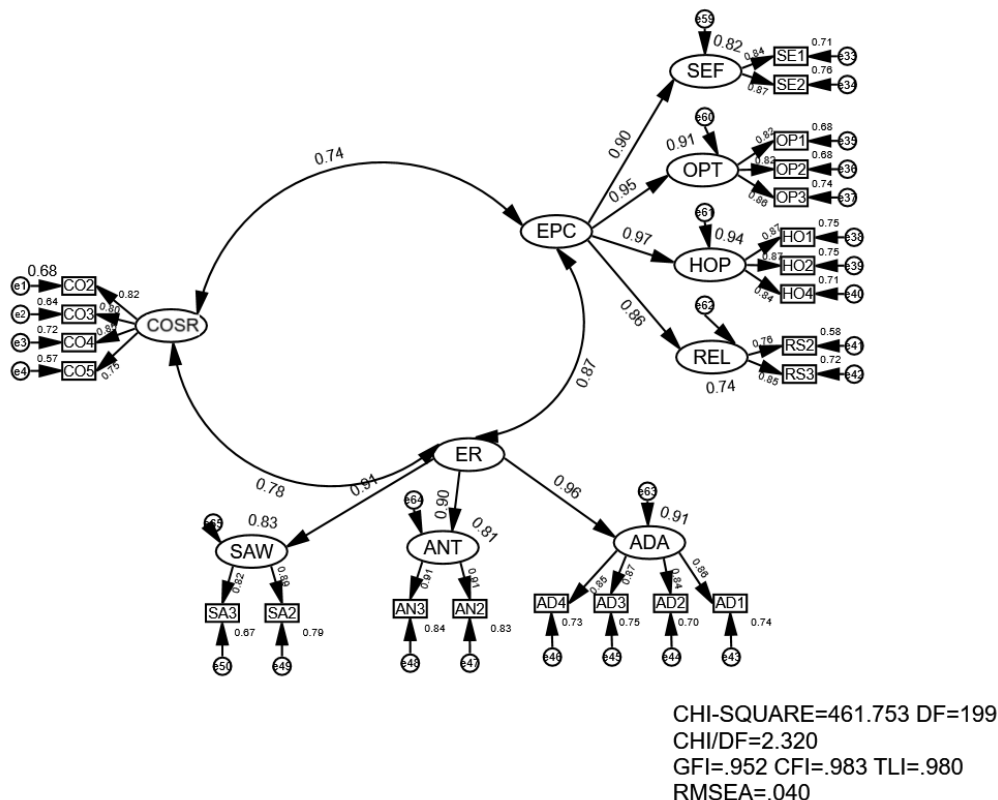
First, SPSS was used to conduct descriptive statistical analysis on the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of each measurement item. According to the general judgment criteria for descriptive

statistics, if the absolute value of skewness is less than 3 and the absolute value of kurtosis is less than 10, the item data can generally be considered to conform to a normal distribution. In this study, the statistical values of skewness and kurtosis for each construct were calculated, and the results are presented in Table 2. It is shown that the absolute value of skewness for all measurement items of each variable is less than 1, and the absolute value of kurtosis is less than 2—both of which satisfy the normal distribution assumption. These results meet the general requirements for samples and variables in the field of empirical research<sup>[94]</sup>.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics

**Variables**

### 4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis via Overall Measurement Model



**Figure 2.** Overall measurement model

Figure 2 presents the overall initial measurement model. COSR represents the independent variable of Community-Oriented Social Responsibility, where CO2, CO3, CO4, and CO4 respectively represent four measurement items, EPC represents the independent variable of employee psychological capital, SEF

represents the dimension of self-efficacy, including SE1 and SE2 measurement items, OPT represents the dimension of optimism, including OP1, OP2, and OP3 measurement items, HOP represents the dimension of hope, including HO1, HO2, and HO4 measurement items, REL represents the dimension of resilience, including RS2 and RS3 measurement items ER represents the independent variable of enterprise resilience, ADA represents the dimension of adaptability, which includes four measurement items AD1, AD2, AD3, and AD4, ANT represents the dimension of anticipation, which includes two measurement items AN2 and AN3, SAW represents the dimension of situational awareness, which includes two measurement items SA2 and SA3.

The results indicate that all constructs in this study exhibit very high factor loading coefficients. Specifically, the model's chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio ( $\chi^2/\text{df}$ ) is 2.320, which is less than the threshold of 3. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is 0.040, below the critical value of 0.08. Additionally, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) is 0.952, and both the comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) exceed 0.9. These fit indices collectively demonstrate that the measurement model achieves a good fit. Consequently, these constructs can effectively measure the influence of COSR on ER through EPC.

#### 4.4. Reliability and validity

**Table 3.** Reliability analysis results

Dimession	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Cronbach's Alpha	Number of item
COSR	0.897	0.964	4
SEF	0.845		2
OPT	0.874		3
HOP	0.894		3
REL	0.784		2
ADA	0.915		4
ANT	0.909		2
SAW	0.843		2

This study utilized SPSS to perform reliability and validity analyses, with the outcomes of the reliability analysis summarized in Table 2. As illustrated in Table 3, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient for each construct is above 0.7—a value that meets the widely accepted threshold for adequate internal consistency in empirical research. This result confirms that the measurement scale exhibits strong internal consistency, indicating that the constructs measured possess satisfactory reliability.

**Table 4.** Validity analysis results

Variables	ER	EPC	COSR	CR	AVE
ER	0.922			0.944	0.85
EPC	0.868	0.922		0.958	0.851
COR	0.784	0.744	0.806	0.881	0.650

The results of the validity analysis are presented in Table 4. As shown in Table 4, the composite reliability (CR) values for all measurement scales exceed 0.6, and the average variance extracted (AVE) values for each construct are greater than 0.5. These findings indicate that all scales demonstrate good convergent validity—an essential criterion for confirming that items within a construct effectively measure the same underlying concept.

Furthermore, the square root of the AVE for each variable is higher than the correlation coefficients between that variable and all other variables in the study. This result meets the widely accepted standard for

discriminant validity in empirical research, confirming that each construct is conceptually distinct from the others and that the measurement scales can effectively differentiate between the focal variables.

#### 4.5. Hypotheses testing

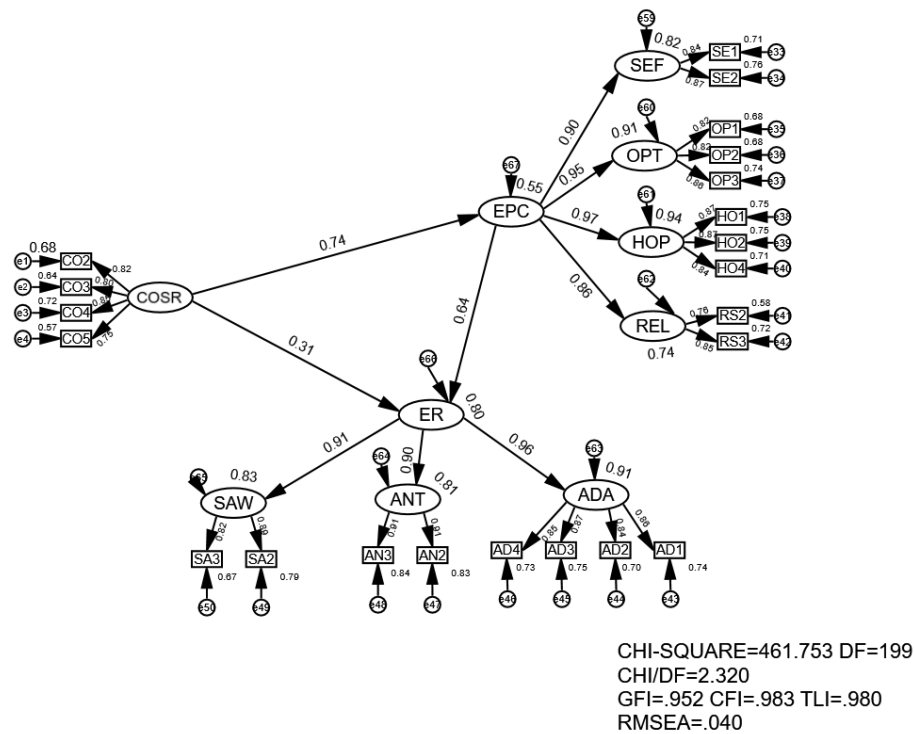


Figure 3. Structural models

Table 5. Analysis of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate (UE)	Estimate (SE)	S.E.	C.R.	P	Test result
H1	ER <-- COSR	0.327	0.308	0.037	18.617	***	significant
H2	ER <-- EPC	0.728	0.640	0.048	15.070	***	significant
H3	EPC <-- COSR	0.693	0.742	0.040	8.236	***	significant

Based on the reliability and validity test results reported earlier, the questionnaire data demonstrate acceptable reliability and validity. Consequently, AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures) was employed to establish the structural model. This structural model exhibits good consistency, with the following fit indices: chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio ( $\chi^2/df$ ) = 2.320; goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.952; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.983; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.980; and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.040. These indices collectively indicate that the structural model achieves a high level of goodness-of-fit, providing support for the hypothetical model proposed in this study (see Fig. 3).

As shown in Table 5, Regarding the path test results, the critical ratio (C.R.) values for Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are 18.617, 15.070, and 8.236, respectively—all exceeding the threshold of 1.96. Additionally, the p-values for all three hypotheses are less than 0.05, indicating statistically significant results. These findings confirm that Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are all supported.

**Table 6.** Analysis of mediating relationships

Hypothesis	Parameter	Effect	Estimate	SE	Z	Bias-Corrected		percentile	
						95%CI		95%CI	
						Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
H4	ER <-- COSR	Total Effect	0.831	0.038	21.868	0.760	0.908	0.758	0.906
		Indirect Effect	0.505	0.047	10.745	0.423	0.607	0.419	0.599
		Direct Effect	0.327	0.049	6.673	0.232	0.424	0.232	0.424

According to the test results (see Table 6), the z-values for the total effects, direct effects, and indirect effects of COSR on ER are 21.868, 6.673, and 10.745, respectively—all exceeding the critical value of 1.96, which indicates statistical significance at the 5% level. Additionally, the 95% confidence intervals (CIs) for the indirect effects (0.423–0.607; 0.419–0.599) do not include zero. These results confirm that EPC plays a mediating role in the relationship between COSR and ER, thereby supporting Hypothesis H4.

Furthermore, the 95% CIs for the direct effects (0.232–0.424; 0.232–0.424) also exclude zero, demonstrating the existence of a significant direct effect of COSR on ER. This finding indicates that the mediating role of EPC is partial (rather than full) mediation. Specifically, the point estimate for the indirect effect is 0.505, and the point estimate for the total effect is 0.831. The relative magnitude of the mediating effect can be measured by the ratio of the indirect effect to the total effect; accordingly, the mediating effect of EPC accounts for 60.1% of the total effect of COSR on ER.

## 5. Discussion

In this study, hypothesis 1 was validated Community–Oriented Social Responsibility (COR) and Enterprise resilience (ER). And there is a statistically significant correlation between EPC.

This study finds that when SMEs enhance their COSR initiatives, both EPC and ER are significantly increased. Additionally, the enhancement of EPC further strengthens ER. More importantly, the results confirm that EPC plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between COSR and ER. COSR is mainly reflected in the company's awareness of COSR, its relationship with the community and government, and whether the company encourages employees to participate in activities and projects that promote social welfare.

Creating a more comprehensive COSR plan is a common need for both businesses and communities. Enterprises can organize community service activities to assist children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, and encourage employees to participate in community projects or other non-profit social activities. Enterprises should actively participate in development actions and promote community welfare. The attention of enterprises to community relations may lead to favorable local regulations on tax reduction, which can reduce operating costs for enterprises<sup>[23]</sup>. At the same time, if this social impact can be perceived by employees, it can also increase their sense of honor and pride, and employees will trust the enterprise more and be more willing to serve it, thereby enhancing the resilience of the enterprise.

Working in a responsible and accountable enterprise, employees will believe that as long as they continue to contribute to the enterprise, they will have better benefits and development opportunities. Employees will emotionally lean towards such a company. So, when an enterprise is willing to implement good community responsibility, it forms a good image and reputation in the community, and when faced with difficulties, employees will show strong resilience. Employees can also participate in informal social activities and social interactions, such as giving them the opportunity to join community established clubs or

alliance organizations. All of these help pessimistic and negative employees reduce their sense of isolation and develop optimistic emotions. Employees' optimism tends to spiral upwards with every help they receive.

Moving forward, SMEs can further enhance their ER through two key pathways: first, by strengthening their COSR initiatives; and second, by fostering the development of EPC.

### **5.1. Theoretical implications**

This study has many noteworthy theoretical implications. Firstly, this article enriches the literature on CSR and resilience, especially at the level of SMEs. This study found that communities are potential important stakeholder groups in enterprise networks, and community participation can enhance the engagement of enterprise networks. This article focuses on one dimension of CSR, COSR, as the success of the enterprise and the success of the community are "complementary". This article focuses on the importance of community responsibility for SMEs, as small enterprises are often located close to their local communities and have close connections with them. SMEs that heavily rely on local resources and marketing must have a good reputation in the community or region<sup>[106]</sup>. In emerging markets, a reciprocal relationship exists between enterprises and governments. If governments provide favorable regulatory support, enterprises will also actively engage in CSR initiatives aimed at enhancing the well-being of their local communities, thereby assuming greater responsibility in advancing social welfare.

Secondly, this article enriches the relevant literature on psychological capital. In today's dynamic business environment, psychological capital is crucial for the success of enterprises. By enhancing psychological capital, enterprises can create an environment where employees feel more motivated, capable, and resilient, which in turn leads to increased happiness and creativity at work<sup>[107]</sup>. When employees work for those enterprises with high moral values and ethical standards, and are able to effectively implement COSR, it can enhance their self-awareness and increase their identification with the organization. Employees are willing to seek all opportunities to participate in work-related activities to improve organizational performance, recognize and cultivate EPC, which contributes to the success of the enterprise.

So, for SMEs, engaging in COSR can serve as an effective pathway to enhance ER. Beyond relying solely on employees' individual efforts, SMEs can also maintain and foster EPC through the practical implementation of COSR. This, in turn, further strengthens ER. Meanwhile, the findings of this study provide robust empirical evidence supporting the conclusion that EPC plays a significant partial mediating role in the process through which COSR enhances ER.

Finally, this study enriches the theoretical and empirical research on ER. Enriched the conceptual research on enterprise resilience and responded to scholars' call for attention to the study of resilience in SMEs.

### **5.2. Practical implications**

The current study holds significant practical implications for enterprise management and human resource practices. By highlighting the critical role of psychological resources in driving enterprise development, this research offers actionable insights for organizational practice.

The increasingly volatile business environment has made it imperative for enterprises to build resilience. One way for enterprises to address this challenge is to focus their efforts on CSR initiatives that are more likely to enhance their competitive advantage and drive growth—a strategy that is particularly critical for SMEs. Notably, SMEs play a vital role in boosting community development and local economic growth through their COSR practices<sup>[108]</sup>. For enterprises, active engagement in CSR activities aimed at community development appears to be the most practical, visible, and tangible approach to effectively meeting public

expectations and preferences. Enterprises should ensure that their strategic COSR initiatives are aligned with community needs and public preferences. This alignment enables enterprises to maximize the social and community benefits derived from their COSR investments while also securing favorable regulatory conditions from governments to support their business operations. The reciprocal relationship between enterprises and governments serves as a crucial mechanism in this process. Therefore, for enterprises, encouraging greater participation in COSR activities and fostering mutually beneficial relationships with governments can yield greater social benefits and competitive advantages. Concurrently, for governments, developing a supportive regulatory environment can incentivize enterprises to invest in COSR—ultimately benefiting both the enterprises themselves and the communities they serve.

Employees who possess self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and psychological resilience may affect the resilience of their company. The psychological capital of employees can instill confidence in the enterprise's ability to overcome adversity and achieve expected results. COSR initiatives can help attract more talented and qualified employees, increase their efforts and motivation. Employees are not only observers of COSR activities, but they are also directly and indirectly affected by these activities. SMEs need to involve employees more in COSR activities.

Investing in COSR creates a win-win situation for enterprises. Beyond giving back to society and building a positive public image for themselves, such investments also enhance EPC—which, in turn, equips enterprises with greater resilience to better navigate crises. For Enterprise human resources departments, leveraging relevant policies and practical cases can help foster the development of EPC. This, in turn, enables employees to think and act in more meaningful ways, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of the enterprise's competitive advantage.

Given the above discussion, policy makers may consider developing policy frameworks and regulations to promote comprehensive implementation of COSR by SMEs, and to send signals to enterprises about the importance of implementing corporate community responsibility. Managers of SMEs need to consider how to reduce vulnerability, establish the reputation of the enterprise in the public, and cultivate stable stakeholder relationships through the implementation of COSR. Together with the community, they can create social capital and guide employees to actively participate in the implementation of COSR and enhance their psychological capital, thereby promoting the future growth of the enterprise.

### **5.3. Limitations and recommendations**

This study first explored the impact of COSR on ER and conducted an empirical investigation using SMEs in an emerging market as the research context. The results yielded several novel findings that warrant further exploration, while also identifying certain limitations of the current research.

First, the sample of this study is restricted to SMEs in a single province of China. To enhance the generalizability of the research findings, future researchers are encouraged to re-examine these results using samples of firms from other emerging markets. Additionally, future studies may need to explore other relevant avenues, such as the impact of corporate customer responsibility on ER and the mediating role of government-business relationships. Furthermore, to address the limitations inherent in the cross-sectional design adopted in this study, future researchers could employ a longitudinal approach in their data collection methods.

### **Author Contributions**

Yang. contributed to the conception and design. Jacqueline and Alik performed research and analyzed the data. All of the authors drafted and revised the manuscript together and approved its final publication.



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## **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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