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From CSR Communication to Stakeholder Reciprocity: A Relational Governance Model of Credibility, Participation, Trust Repair, and Long-Term Organizational Legitimacy

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Abstract

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) scholarship increasingly recognizes stakeholder engagement as relational, yet communication-centered accounts can still leave unclear when interaction becomes consequential governance. This article develops a proposed relational governance model that separates CSR communication from credibility, participation, stakeholder agency, reciprocity, trust repair, and organizational legitimacy. The analysis integrates evidence on communication–practice relations, stakeholder governance, deliberation, marginalization, value conflict, misconduct, and trust repair. It proposes that communication provides claims and interpretive cues but does not itself constitute reciprocal engagement. Credibility supplies a revisable relational warrant; participation becomes agency only where stakeholders can meaningfully contest, influence, or reshape subsequent organizational interpretation and action. Reciprocity is therefore conceptualized not as symmetry or routine responsiveness, but as an ongoing governance condition in which stakeholder influence can have organizational consequences despite unequal resources and persistent disagreement. Trust damage creates a distinct pathway: after perceived violation, additional positive communication cannot be assumed to restore prior relational standing, and repair depends on substantive corrective action, response coherence, accountability, and stakeholder interpretation. Organizational legitimacy is consequently treated as a temporally accumulated and potentially contested judgment rather than an automatic outcome of participation. The model foregrounds exclusion, power asymmetry, contextual variation, and engagement backfire as constitutive boundaries. Its contribution is theoretical rather than empirically validated; the integrated relationships require longitudinal, multilevel, comparative, and event-sensitive testing before claims about causal effectiveness or managerial performance are warranted.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, Stakeholder engagement, Reciprocity, Credibility, Stakeholder agency, Trust repair

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Introduction

CSR engagement concerns more than whether organizations disclose responsible activities or invite stakeholder reactions. Contemporary stakeholder scholarship characterizes engagement as a set of relational processes involving organizations and stakeholders whose purposes, forms, consequences, and tensions vary substantially [1]. The theoretical problem is therefore not simply how organizations communicate responsibility, but how communication enters relationships in which stakeholders interpret claims, develop expectations, exercise or lack influence, respond to organizational conduct, and revise judgments over time.

CSR communication can shape stakeholder knowledge, trust, and reputation, but communication is also organizationally constitutive and governance-laden: demands for explicit CSR talk may create authenticity and identity dilemmas, while relations between talk and practice may run in multiple temporal directions [2–4]. These observations caution against treating disclosure, dialogue, or message reception as equivalent to relational quality. They instead suggest a need to distinguish communicative activity from the governance arrangements through which stakeholder responses become consequential for organizational conduct.

This article develops a proposed relational governance model connecting credibility, participation, stakeholder agency, reciprocity, trust damage and repair, and longer-term legitimacy formation. Engagement scholarship supplies the broader relational foundation [1], while formative accounts of CSR communication show why talk and practice cannot be reduced to a one-directional sequence [4]. The model does not claim that these constructs form an empirically validated causal chain. Its purpose is to specify how they may be related while preserving disagreement, power differences, temporal discontinuities, multiple stakeholder audiences, and the possibility that engagement produces distrust or exclusion rather than legitimacy.

The limits of communication-centric CSR

A communication-centric account risks evaluating CSR engagement through message production, reception, or response while under-specifying what organizations subsequently permit stakeholders to influence. CSR communication does not produce uniformly favorable stakeholder responses; empirical and review scholarship documents conditional, skeptical, and potentially polarizing reactions [5–7]. Accordingly, greater communication cannot be presumed to increase support. Stakeholders may question motives, reject the relevance of a CSR signal, or interpret public positioning through wider contested discourses.

Digital environments further complicate the distinction between interaction and governance. Research on CSR communication through social-media platforms demonstrates observable forms of consumer engagement around organizational content [8]. Such interaction is relevant evidence of response, but platform activity does not by itself establish stakeholder agency: comments, reactions, sharing, or conversation reveal engagement behaviors without demonstrating that participants can alter decision premises, resource commitments, accountability arrangements, or subsequent organizational conduct.

The proposed distinction is therefore between communication as relational input and engagement as governed influence. Communication can create claims, expectations, interpretive resources, and opportunities for response. Whether these become relationally consequential depends on credibility, access, influence, and organizational responsiveness that reaches beyond message management. This position is consistent with the documented complexity of explicit CSR talk [3] and with multidirectional relations between CSR communication and practice [4], but the stronger governance linkage proposed here requires direct empirical testing.

Stakeholder engagement as a relational governance problem

Once engagement is treated as potentially consequential rather than merely communicative, questions of coordination and governance become unavoidable. Stakeholder governance theory identifies collective-action problems surrounding joint value creation, including how actors contribute, cooperate, appropriate value, and sustain arrangements in which interests need not coincide [9]. CSR engagement can therefore be understood partly as a problem of designing relationships in which stakeholders possess different incentives, resources, dependencies, and capacities to affect collective outcomes.

Organizational arrangements can embed stakeholder engagement more deeply than episodic consultation. Evidence from B Corps illustrates that stakeholder engagement may be connected to governance structures and organizational practices rather than existing only at the level of external communication [10]. That context should not be generalized into a claim that a particular legal or organizational form is superior, but it demonstrates that stakeholder relations can be organized through institutionalized decision arrangements.

Relational governance is proposed here to denote the rules and practices governing who can enter an engagement process, what kinds of claims receive consideration, how disagreement is handled, what influence stakeholders can exercise, and how organizations become answerable for subsequent responses. This definition shifts attention from interaction volume to consequentiality. It also makes governance quality conceptually separable from stakeholder satisfaction: an engagement process can accommodate contestation and still be relationally meaningful if stakeholders retain genuine capacity to challenge and affect organizational interpretation.

Credibility and the formation of stakeholder expectations

Communication becomes relationally consequential partly through judgments about whether organizational claims merit reliance. Empirical research linking CSR associations, CSR credibility, organization–public relationships, and participation intentions indicates that credibility and relationship quality can connect communication with willingness to participate [11].

This evidence concerns customer-level perceptions and intentions rather than enacted organizational influence, but it supports treating credibility as an intermediate relational condition rather than as a synonym for reputation or participation.
Credibility is also vulnerable to interpretation. CSR signals need not produce attraction in every audience [5], and consumer skepticism research shows that stakeholders may interrogate CSR claims, motives, consistency, and authenticity rather than accepting them at face value [6]. Expectations formed through CSR communication can therefore become constraints on subsequent conduct: a credible claim creates a basis against which later actions may be compared, whereas inconsistency can change the meaning stakeholders attach to both previous and future communications.
The proposed model consequently treats credibility as a revisable relational warrant. It is neither a permanent organizational possession nor proof of responsible conduct. Communication, prior practice, perceived congruence, and subsequent organizational response may continuously alter whether stakeholders regard new commitments as believable. This dynamic interpretation is consistent with temporally complex talk–practice relations [4] and evidence connecting credibility with relational outcomes [11], but longitudinal research is needed to establish how quickly credibility accumulates, transfers across issues, or deteriorates after violations.

Participation and stakeholder agency
Participation should not be equated with agreement. Online stakeholder engagement can involve affect, contestation, and dissensus, indicating that disagreement may remain intrinsic to engagement rather than representing its automatic failure [12]. The relevant governance question is whether stakeholders can remain meaningful participants when interests and interpretations diverge, not whether deliberation produces consensus.
Persistent value pluralism further limits consensus-centered models. Stakeholder value conflict may require discursive justification and continuing engagement without assuming that competing values can ultimately be harmonized [13]. In the proposed model, stakeholder agency therefore includes the capacity to articulate objections, challenge reasons, and retain a consequential position in the relationship even when organizational and stakeholder preferences remain incompatible.
Meaningful participation depends on governance arrangements that expand deliberative capacity and counter structural marginalization rather than merely offering formal access [14–16]. Deliberative design can enlarge opportunities for considered participation, while research involving marginalized communities demonstrates that inclusion requires continuing attention to procedural fairness, domination, uncertainty, and changing relationships. Marginalized-stakeholder theory likewise cautions against organizing analysis only around actors already recognized as powerful or salient.
Accordingly, the model proposes four analytically distinct participation conditions: formal access, voice, consequential influence, and continuing agency. Access permits entry; voice permits expression; influence means stakeholder contributions can affect subsequent organizational interpretation or choice; continuing agency concerns the ability to remain engaged as relationships and issues evolve. These are proposed distinctions, not an established measurement scale. Their purpose is to prevent invited participation from being treated automatically as empowerment, reciprocity, or legitimacy.

Reciprocity beyond one-way corporate responsiveness
Reciprocity cannot plausibly require equal resources or symmetrical power. Corporate responsibility relationships frequently operate within wider structures in which organizations and stakeholders differ substantially in economic, institutional, political, and discursive capacity [17]. The relevant issue is therefore whether asymmetric parties can nevertheless enter a relationship in which stakeholder claims have consequences, organizational responses remain contestable, and continued interaction can alter subsequent positions.
Nor should reciprocity be equated with harmony. Research on multi-stakeholder governance shows that contestation can contribute to democratic quality under some conditions [18]. This does not make every conflict constructive. It indicates, however, that disagreement can be relationally productive when governance permits challenge rather than defining opposition as evidence that engagement has failed.
Stakeholder positions may also change when governance arrangements change. Evidence concerning transitions toward benefit-corporation forms shows that stakeholder roles can evolve as organizational governance is reconfigured [19]. Such findings are context-specific, but they reinforce the proposition that reciprocity concerns more than the organization responding once to a stakeholder request.
We therefore propose stakeholder reciprocity as a governance condition in which organizational responsiveness is coupled with stakeholders' continuing capacity to affect subsequent interpretation, justification, and action. Reciprocity may exist under asymmetry and unresolved disagreement; what distinguishes it from one-way responsiveness is the preservation of consequential stakeholder agency across repeated exchanges.
Table 1 maps how the interaction patterns developed above can move engagement toward, or away from, reciprocal governance without assuming that any episode automatically generates trust or legitimacy.

Table 1. Stakeholder reciprocity episodes linking consequential influence to trust and legitimacy

Corporate action	Stakeholder agency/participation	Credibility cue	Reciprocal or nonreciprocal response	Trust effect	Governance requirement	Legitimacy consequence	Temporal persistence
Invite deliberation	Access plus contestable voice	Reasons open to challenge	Input alters reconsideration	Can support reliance	Decision traceability	Supports defensible process judgment	Requires repeated enactment
Answer contested claim	Continuing stakeholder challenge	Response–action congruence	Organization explains and adjusts	May stabilize trust	Accountable response	Legitimacy remains contestable	Persists only if practice follows
Reconfigure governance	Stakeholders gain consequential role	Formal commitment plus practice	Roles affect later decisions	May deepen warrant	Embedded influence	Can strengthen relational standing	Potentially durable, context-dependent
Consult without influence	Voice without consequence	Symbolic responsiveness	Input leaves decisions unchanged	Risks skepticism	Correct tokenism/exclusion	May weaken legitimacy claims	Negative interpretation can accumulate

Note. The episode map is a proposed synthesis. It distinguishes relational processes rather than asserting a universal causal sequence.

Trust damage and the need for repair

Trust introduces a temporal discontinuity into stakeholder relations because prior credibility does not guarantee resilience after perceived violation. Evidence from industry-wide crises indicates that legitimacy judgments can play a central role in consumer trust erosion when misconduct becomes salient [20]. This finding does not make trust and legitimacy interchangeable; rather, it shows that stakeholders' judgments about organizational appropriateness can become consequential for whether reliance is maintained.

After misconduct, organizations also face choices among substantively different corrective actions. Review evidence shows that corrective responses vary in form, target, and intended function, making it inappropriate to treat "response" as a single repair tactic [21]. In relational-governance terms, repair therefore requires attention to what is changed, who becomes accountable, and whether the response addresses the underlying violation rather than merely communicating renewed commitment.

Trust-repair research further indicates that repair outcomes are contingent on characteristics of the violation, relationship, and response [22]. Much of that synthesis concerns employee trust, so direct transfer to external stakeholder relationships would exceed its evidence base. Its appropriate contribution here is the more limited proposition that damaged trust should not be assumed to recover through a standardized sequence.

Communication also cannot be separated from substantive response after wrongdoing. Evidence concerning shareholders after corporate misconduct shows that incoherence between crisis communication and consequential organizational action can generate mixed signals affecting trust [23]. The proposed model therefore treats repair as re-earned relational warrant, not a reset to the pre-violation state. Corrective action, explanation, accountability, participation, and stakeholder interpretation may interact, but recovery is neither assured nor necessarily complete.

A relational governance model of csr engagement

The proposed model integrates six constructs that should remain analytically distinct: communication, credibility, participation and agency, reciprocity, trust and repair, and legitimacy. Engagement provides the relational domain [1]; communication–practice research establishes that talk and organizational conduct can interact recursively [4]; stakeholder governance identifies problems of joint action [9]; credibility research connects interpretation with participation intentions [11]; structural power constrains exchange [17]; and crisis evidence shows that trust can deteriorate through stakeholder judgment [20]. None of these sources directly tests the integrated architecture proposed here.

The central mechanism is not a linear communication-to-legitimacy chain. Dissensus can coexist with engagement [12], persistent value conflict can resist convergence [13], and deliberative arrangements can vary in their capacity to make participation consequential [14]. Marginalization can continue after stakeholders receive formal access [15], while stakeholder theory must account for actors whose interests are otherwise structurally peripheral [16]. Reciprocity is consequently modeled as power-sensitive and contestable rather than symmetrical.

Organizational governance forms the proposed translation layer between stakeholder input and consequential response. Collective-action theory indicates why governance structures matter [9], B Corp evidence demonstrates organizational embedding of engagement [10], and governance transitions can alter stakeholder roles [19]. The model therefore proposes that participation becomes reciprocal only when stakeholder input can enter later organizational interpretation, justification, or action; this relationship remains hypothesis-level rather than validated.

Trust damage creates a separate route rather than simply a lower position on the ordinary relationship pathway. Legitimacy-related judgments can accompany trust erosion [20], corrective actions differ materially [21], and trust repair is contingent rather than automatic [22]. Communication–action incoherence after misconduct further illustrates why positive messaging cannot be assumed to substitute for substantive response [23]. Repair is thus represented as recursive reassessment involving action, accountability, renewed participation, and stakeholder interpretation.

Finally, the model retains explicit boundaries around power, exclusion, temporality, context, and level of analysis. Evidence concerning consumers, employees, shareholders, communities, and organizations cannot be collapsed into a single unitary stakeholder response. Relationships represented below should therefore be read as evidence-informed conceptual linkages or explicitly proposed connections, not as established causal effects.

Figure 1 summarizes this architecture by separating ordinary relationship formation from trust-damage and repair pathways while retaining power, exclusion, and temporal feedback as visible constraints.

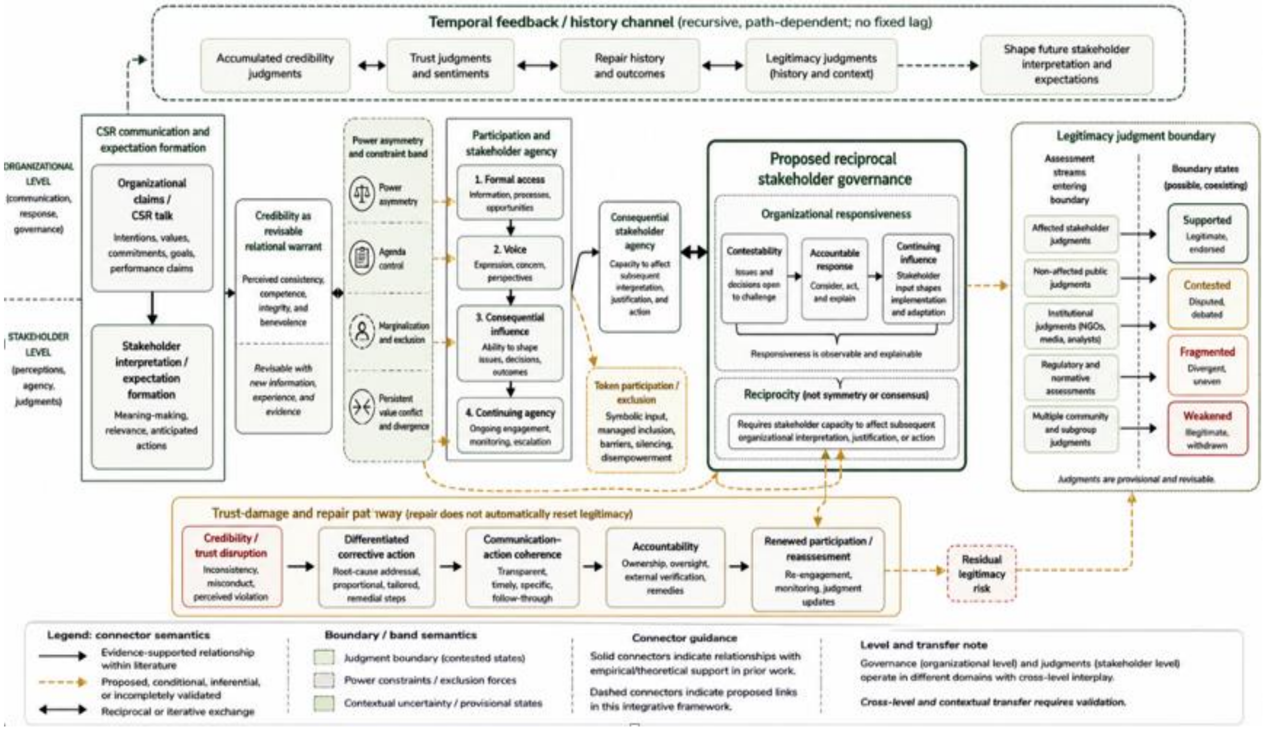

Figure 1. Reciprocal stakeholder governance connects credibility, consequential participation, and trust repair with legitimacy formation

Pathways from engagement to organizational legitimacy

Relational engagement does not culminate automatically in legitimacy. Even where an organization communicates, responds, and changes practices, internal dysfunction can obstruct legitimate standing. Longitudinal case-oriented analysis of sports governing bodies shows how organizational pathology can constrain legitimacy repair [24]. Stakeholder contact or corrective activity alone therefore does not establish that audiences will regard governance as appropriate.

Legitimacy may also be distributed across systems of interaction rather than produced by a single engagement episode. A deliberative-systems perspective on multi-stakeholder initiatives locates legitimacy across interconnected sites and functions of deliberation [25]. Organizations may consequently be judged not only by whether they invite participation but by how participation, contestation, decision making, accountability, and wider institutional relationships fit together.

The model proposes legitimacy as a repeated and potentially heterogeneous judgment of governance conduct. Trust erosion may be shaped by legitimacy judgments [20], yet trust and legitimacy remain distinct. System-level legitimacy likewise need not imply unanimous approval [25]. Different audiences can evaluate the same organization differently. Reciprocity is thus positioned as one possible relational basis for legitimacy formation, not a sufficient condition for it.

Asymmetry, power, and stakeholder exclusion

Formal inclusion does not establish consequential influence. Process evidence from community involvement shows that marginalization can persist after stakeholders enter an initiative and that domination, uncertainty, and disagreement require continuing management [15]. Marginalized-stakeholder theory similarly directs attention toward actors whose interests remain peripheral within conventional governance arrangements [16]. The relevant question is therefore not only who is present, but whose claims can shape agendas, reasons, and subsequent decisions.

Power asymmetry is structural as well as procedural. Critical work on transnational corporate responsibility shows how governance arrangements can reproduce unequal capacities across corporate and local actors [17]. Contestation can nevertheless have democratic value when institutional arrangements permit challenge rather than suppressing it [18]. Power differences therefore do not make reciprocity conceptually impossible, but they make its quality dependent on contestability and preserved stakeholder agency.

The proposed model accordingly separates unequal resources from absence of reciprocity. Reciprocity is deficient when stakeholder participation is systematically nonconsequential, exclusionary, or insulated from organizational response—not merely when parties possess unequal power. This distinction requires empirical operationalization and does not imply that severe asymmetries can always be governed successfully.

Conditions under which engagement backfires

Engagement can backfire when its relational promises exceed the governance conditions supporting them. Context matters: evidence from Ghanaian firms indicates that regulatory uncertainty can condition relationships among stakeholder management, CSR commitment, and corporate social performance [26]. This does not establish a universal regulatory effect, but it cautions against assuming identical engagement arrangements carry the same meaning across institutional environments.

Governance mechanisms may themselves become part of the failure. Research reviewing directors and organizational misconduct shows that governance can fail before, during, or after wrongdoing rather than functioning automatically as a safeguard [27]. CSR activity must also not be treated as the numerical opposite of corporate social irresponsibility; integrative scholarship emphasizes that the two can coexist and require separate explanation [28]. Positive engagement therefore cannot simply cancel unresolved harm.

The proposed backfire conditions include incredibility, invited participation without influence, exclusion, suppressed contestation, communication–action incoherence, and unresolved misconduct. Conditional CSR reactions [5], polarization [7], persistent marginalization [15], and mixed post-misconduct signals [23] illustrate distinct routes through which engagement can become relationally damaging. **Table 2** differentiates these episodes by the relational asset damaged and the governance response required, without assuming repair will succeed.

Table 2. Engagement failures and the governance work required for trust repair

Failure trigger	Relational asset damaged	Stakeholder interpretation/ response	Why communication is insufficient	Repair mechanism	Accountability or participation change	Residual legitimacy risk	Repair unlikely when
Claim–practice inconsistency	Credibility	Skepticism or withdrawal	Repetition leaves contradiction intact	Substantive correction and explanation	Traceable responsibility	Earlier claims remain discounted	Contradiction persists
Voice without influence	Agency	Tokenism or disengagement	More consultation reproduces failure	Reopen decision influence	Consequential participation	Inclusion claims lose standing	Decisions remain insulated
Exclusion or domination	Fair participation	Contestation or rejection	Messaging cannot redistribute access	Procedural redesign	Anti-marginalization safeguards	Unequal governance remains visible	Power cannot be challenged
Misconduct plus mixed response	Trust	Doubt about sincerity	Reassurance conflicts with action	Coherent corrective action	Accountability plus renewed scrutiny	Harm may remain salient	Underlying violation remains unresolved

Note. This playbook is a proposed governance synthesis; repair requirements are conditional and do not imply guaranteed restoration.

Temporal dynamics of trust accumulation and repair

Relational governance is history-dependent. CSR talk and practice can relate in multiple temporal directions rather than following a fixed sequence [4], while community-engagement evidence shows that inclusion and marginalization must be managed over time [15]. Credibility and agency should therefore be understood as revisable states produced through repeated encounters rather than achievements secured once.

Trust damage introduces temporal asymmetry. In crisis contexts, legitimacy judgments can contribute to trust erosion [20], creating a relationship condition different from ordinary accumulation. Corrective-action research identifies substantively different organizational responses after misconduct [21], while trust-repair evidence emphasizes contingency across

violations, relationships, and responses [22]. Post-misconduct communication can also conflict with substantive organizational action [23].
The model thus proposes that building trust and repairing trust are not interchangeable processes. Repair occurs under the shadow of known violation, accumulated expectations, and prior responses. Organizational pathology can further obstruct legitimacy restoration [24]. Later positive engagement may therefore be interpreted through unresolved history, and successful correction on one issue need not erase broader distrust. Longitudinal research is needed to establish how these trajectories vary across stakeholders and contexts.

Contributions to csr and stakeholder theory
Institutional scholarship shows that CSR is shaped by values and institutional configurations rather than carrying a context-free organizational meaning [29]. The proposed model contributes by placing this contextual insight inside a relational architecture separating communicative claims from governance processes through which stakeholders influence, contest, and reassess organizational conduct.
First, it separates CSR communication from relational governance. Engagement scholarship is broader than communication [1], formative communication theory complicates talk–practice sequencing [4], and stakeholder-governance theory centers collective-action arrangements [9]. Communication is consequently treated as a possible input to relationships, not as evidence that reciprocal governance exists.
Second, the model separates reciprocity from responsiveness and symmetry. Persistent value pluralism [13], deliberative governance [14], structural marginalization [15], critical power analysis [17], and contestation [18] make a consensus-based definition too restrictive. Reciprocity is proposed instead as continuing consequential influence under conditions that may remain unequal and contested.
Third, the model integrates trust repair into legitimacy formation rather than isolating it as crisis messaging. Trust erosion [20], differentiated corrective action [21], repair contingency [22], and legitimacy pathology [24] establish separate pieces of this problem. Their integration here is theoretical: it identifies a distinct repair route and temporal boundary requiring empirical validation rather than a demonstrated causal sequence.

Governance and managerial implications
The model suggests diagnostic implications rather than proven managerial prescriptions. Organizations should distinguish communication capacity from governance capacity: engagement volume matters less than whether stakeholders can enter, contest, influence, and obtain accountable responses. Stakeholder-governance theory [9], evidence on organizationally embedded engagement [10], and deliberative-design scholarship [14] support examining the arrangements translating participation into decisions.
After relational damage, governance should distinguish reassurance from correction. Corrective actions differ materially [21], and communication incoherent with substantive action can undermine trust [23]. Repair therefore requires attention to responsibility, response–action consistency, and opportunities for stakeholder reassessment.
Managers should also treat marginalization and context as governance constraints. Inclusion can require continuing procedural work [15], structural power remains consequential [17], and regulatory uncertainty can alter CSR relationships [26]. These are evidence-bounded design implications, not proof that particular interventions will reliably improve legitimacy.

Future research agenda
The model first requires construct discrimination. Research should test whether communication exposure, credibility, formal participation, consequential agency, reciprocity, trust, and legitimacy are empirically distinguishable rather than indicators of one favorable stakeholder orientation. Existing credibility evidence [11] and legitimacy-related trust evidence [20] provide starting points but do not validate the integrated architecture.
Second, temporal ordering should be examined through longitudinal stakeholder panels, repeated-event designs, and process studies capable of separating ordinary trust accumulation from violation and repair. Communication–practice temporality [4], continuing inclusion [15], and repair scholarship [22] indicate why cross-sectional designs may be insufficient.
Third, power and exclusion require multilevel and comparative designs. Studies should examine who enters engagement, whose claims alter decisions, and whether apparent reciprocity persists across institutional settings, stakeholder dependencies, and regulatory conditions [26].
Finally, the model should be challenged through failure cases. Research should identify circumstances in which extensive communication and participation coexist with exclusion, irresponsibility, or declining legitimacy [28]. Disconfirming evidence should refine or reject proposed pathways rather than simply being absorbed as another contingency.

Limitations

The evidence base combines heterogeneous units and relationships. Consumer communication studies [2], applicant responses [5], customer participation intentions [11], community processes [15], consumer crisis judgments [20], employee trust-repair studies [22], and shareholder responses [23] cannot be treated as observations of one stakeholder mechanism. The model therefore advances cross-level propositions that remain to be tested directly.

Contextual heterogeneity creates a second boundary. Evidence spans B Corps [10], community initiatives [15], misconduct settings [20], sports governing bodies [24], multi-stakeholder initiatives [25], and firms operating under regulatory uncertainty [26]. These settings support theoretical differentiation but not universal transferability.

Finally, the architecture integrates conceptual, review, and context-specific empirical evidence rather than prospective tests of the complete model. Stakeholder-governance theory [9], deliberative-systems theory [25], and CSR–irresponsibility integration [28] help establish mechanisms and boundaries but do not validate the proposed sequence. The framework should therefore be treated as a structured research proposition requiring direct testing.

Conclusion

CSR engagement becomes theoretically richer when communication is separated from the governance of stakeholder relationships. This article proposes that credibility, participation, agency, reciprocity, trust repair, and legitimacy are related but noninterchangeable constructs. Reciprocity denotes consequential stakeholder influence across continuing exchange, not symmetry, consensus, or routine corporate responsiveness. Trust damage creates a distinct historical condition in which corrective action and renewed accountability may be necessary, while legitimacy remains plural, contested, and institutionally situated.

The model is deliberately bounded. Power can restrict agency, participation can be tokenistic, engagement can backfire, repair can remain incomplete, and evidence from one stakeholder level or context cannot automatically transfer to another. The contribution is an evidence-informed relational governance architecture and propositions for testing, not an empirically validated causal model or implementation formula.

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