

Communication in Economic Decision-Making Among Target Families of a CSR Program in East Jatigede

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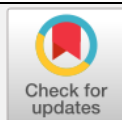
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ABSTRACT

At the micro or local level, many Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs are beneficial to communities. Most CSR initiatives focus on the economic aspect through income-generating activities. Previous researchers have extensively discussed the implementation processes and benefits of CSR programs for communities. However, a common challenge in the implementation of these programs is the difficulty faced by organizers in engaging target groups, due to factors such as family communication and internal references. This issue has attracted researchers to explore how communication influences decision-making regarding participation among beneficiaries or target groups of CSR programs, particularly in ensuring that the economic objectives set for target families can be successfully achieved. This study employs a qualitative method, utilizing structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) involving 120 informants from CSR target groups considered representative. The findings indicate that the head of the household, as the primary target of the CSR program, communicates with his spouse and extended family when making decisions. The involvement of individuals outside the extended family is based on considerations of trust. The outcomes of these communication processes – among the head of the family, spouse, extended family, and trusted individuals – are significant in shaping a family's decision to participate in a CSR program. Understanding who serves as a source of influence and inspiration in encouraging families to engage in CSR activities can enhance participation and interest among target communities, ultimately contributing to the success of the program.

Keywords: Communication; Corporate Social Responsibility; Decision-Making; Family Dynamics; Social Trust

1. Introduction

At every level of society, there are growing aspirations for economic improvement, better education, and an enhanced quality of life. In addition to the state, corporations are increasingly seen as key actors capable of promoting public welfare, particularly through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs (Friedman & Miles, 2002). CSR initiatives have contributed to welfare enhancement in various countries (Odongo et al., 2019; Schiefelbein, 2012), including Indonesia.

The Indonesian government appreciates CSR programs that have supported national development, especially in the environmental sector. One long-running CSR evaluation initiative is the *Public Disclosure Program for Environmental Compliance* (PDPEC), which has been implemented for over 25 years. This program has driven numerous social innovations, particularly in food security and the empowerment of farmers, ranchers, and fishermen. In 2022, the program recorded IDR 1.89 trillion in revolving funds allocated to community empowerment initiatives – an increase of 3.25% from the previous year. It is widely regarded as having contributed significantly to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

CSR has addressed various aspects of development, including healthcare services (mostly in the form of charitable programs), economic empowerment (particularly income-generating activities), and environmental conservation. The success of these initiatives depends not only on the quality of program design by the implementing companies but also on the support of the targeted communities and government institutions. According to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, which conducts annual evaluations, CSR success is achieved through effective collaboration among stakeholders and through robust communication mechanisms. Schiefelbein emphasized that effective communication is a key factor in ensuring CSR programs have positive impacts and can prevent negative public perceptions of companies (Schiefelbein, 2012).

CSR success is often more observable at the micro level, such as in households or rural communities (Visser, 2012). Economic aspects tend to receive the most attention, as they are viewed as essential elements of community well-being (Haynes et al., 2012). For example, a CSR initiative in Cisarua, West Bandung Regency, resulted in a 16.31% increase in cow's milk sales turnover, a 42.60% decrease in sheep and goat feed costs, a 55.49% increase in milk profit, and a 32.44% increase in livestock sales turnover. It also contributed to groundwater savings of 4,752 m³ per year.

One of the current target groups of CSR programs by several state-owned enterprises (BUMN) includes communities affected by the construction of the Jatigede Reservoir. These relocated communities, whether resettled through government initiatives or independently, now reside predominantly in the eastern ring of the Jatigede area. Demographically, CSR programs in this region are primarily aimed at heads of households. Programmatically, the focus is on improving the family economy.

Preliminary observations reveal three main reasons why heads of households in this area are targeted by CSR programs. First, in the eastern Jatigede community, the head of the household traditionally makes key decisions regarding family and community affairs. Second, because of this role, they are viewed as central to the future success of the family. Third, their

influence extends to other household members, giving them a dual impact within the family unit. These characteristics are consistent with findings by Morrissey et al., which show that men are typically responsible for income generation, while women handle household and childcare duties (Morrissey et al., 2020). Similarly, a 2015 thesis from the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of the Western Cape, concluded that the decisions made by heads of households significantly shape both family and societal outcomes.

In this context, Kabeer argued that agricultural development planners—particularly those focused on cash crop production—should prioritize increasing male productivity, as this is often directly linked to household income (Kabeer, 1994). In recent decades, household economic instability has increased (Morrissey et al., 2020), driven by factors such as job loss (Gundersen & Gruber, 2001) or food insecurity (Jackowitz et al., 2015; Leete & Bania, 2010). In Jatigede, the loss of agricultural land due to reservoir development has led to widespread unemployment among OTD (resettled) communities, impacting health, education, and economic conditions for both adults and children. Although these findings are context-specific, similar phenomena have been reported in other regions (Hardy, 2014; Hill et al., 2013; Kerkmann et al., 2000; Pryor et al., 2019; Wolf & Morrissey, 2017), particularly concerning the impact of financial hardship on family stability.

In conditions of economic instability, the ability to make sound decisions regarding household financial issues becomes increasingly vital, as it is often the first step in addressing broader social problems. This underscores the importance of understanding family decision-making processes at micro (family and community), meso, and macro levels. Booyesen emphasized that decision-making is foundational for addressing development challenges and reducing rural poverty, especially among farmers in developing countries (Booyesen, 2013). Moreover, the success of poverty alleviation programs often depends on the participation of the target group—participation that is frequently driven by economic motivations (Hayden et al., 2021; Wilson & Hart, 2000).

In practice, however, many government and NGO programs that seek to increase household income through interventions targeting heads of households have not achieved satisfactory outcomes. This suggests that additional mediating factors must be considered to ensure meaningful engagement from target groups.

Drawing on prior studies and theoretical insights, this research identifies a gap in understanding the role of family decision-making—particularly by heads of households—in shaping the effectiveness of CSR programs. While most research focuses on macro-level outcomes, the influence of micro-level family dynamics remains underexplored. This study posits that CSR program success is dependent on the ability of Community Development Officers (CDOs) to understand the decision-making behaviors of heads of households, especially concerning economic issues facing potential CSR beneficiaries. This understanding is crucial for encouraging active participation in CSR initiatives, such as those being implemented in the eastern ring of Jatigede.

This study aims to investigate how intra-family communication influences decision-making regarding participation in CSR programs and how this communication impacts the overall success and sustainability of CSR efforts. Specifically, it explores the decision-making dynamics within targeted families, identifies the dominant actors in such decisions, and examines how these dynamics affect the implementation of economic empowerment programs.

The research was conducted in three villages within the Jatigede area: Jemah, Cirangem, and Mekar Asih. These villages were selected based on several criteria: (1) they have previously received but still require improved empowerment efforts—including CSR programs

influence decisions related to participation in CSR programs—especially by heads of households—family members play a significant role.

It is undeniable that the family has a profound influence on individuals, whether as fathers, mothers, or children. This crucial role has been highlighted in numerous studies. The family serves as a source of emotional support (Harrell, 2018; Leiter, 1990), a producer of social capital (Arregle et al., 2015), a forum for cooperation, shared work, and learning, as well as a source of comfort and information exchange (Ensley & Pearson, 2005; Luo, 2011). It also provides a channel for managing uncertainty (Arregle et al., 2015). Epstein et al. further explain that the family is important because it involves problem-solving, communication, role distribution, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, and behavioral control (Epstein et al., 1983). These dynamics exist because the use of limited resources—such as time, money, and energy—requires prioritization and balance with other needs (Kim et al., 2017).

A range of socioeconomic factors and resources—including social capital in the form of intra-family networks—needs to be carefully mapped to inform the planning, implementation, and evaluation of CSR programs. Another essential aspect to be mapped is the behavior and motivation of the target group. Understanding these elements can help program implementers anticipate likely responses to different interventions. Importantly, the family itself is a defining characteristic of the target group that must not be overlooked.

2.2. Barriers to Community Participation in CSR Programs

The family is a fundamental social institution, as it influences nearly every aspect of an individual's life (Alesina & Giuliano, 2014). The significance of the family is further reinforced by findings from Kim et al., which show that individuals interact with and are directly influenced by their families (Kim et al., 2017). Families often shape individuals' financial beliefs, attitudes, management styles, and behaviors. According to these findings, even though heads of families are primary decision-makers, their decisions are still influenced by other family members.

Most family decisions are made quickly in response to daily household challenges. In traditional families—such as those in the research area—decision-making typically rests with the head of the household, who is usually male (Astari et al., 2009; Sorys, 2021). However, each family member also plays specific roles in the decision-making process, including as initiators, users, influencers, decision-makers, approvers, buyers, and gatekeepers (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Family decisions are often made to fulfill essential family functions, particularly those related to economic matters (Rodgers, 2004). Therefore, it is not surprising that households must frequently make decisions about allocating labor, land, water, and capital resources to meet basic needs or generate income (Bjornlund et al., 2019). In this context, effective families are typically able to resolve most problems efficiently, although they may still face challenges in breaking down and organizing the necessary steps for decision-making and problem-solving (Epstein et al., 1983; Walsh, 2003).

Decisions about how to manage increasingly scarce resources—such as those faced by affected people (PAPs) or CSR program target groups in the eastern ring of Jatigede—are becoming more complex due to land scarcity, declining agricultural productivity, and reduced household income. These conditions support the argument by previous studies that financial decision-making within families is often complicated for heads of households (Bertocchi et al., 2014; Mader & Schneebaum, 2013).

Family decision-making is better understood as a dynamic interaction rather than a simple consultation (Trees et al., 2017). Such interaction allows family members to express their views

before the decision-maker makes a final decision that reflects the desires of loved ones. It creates a space to acknowledge and consider the thoughts and opinions of all family members.

Financial matters are often central to family decision-making, especially when they involve fulfilling the needs or desires of family members. However, families do not always have access to sufficient financial resources, even if assets such as livestock are available. In such cases, families often turn to relatives or trusted individuals for assistance. This illustrates the role of social capital in helping families cope with financial difficulties (Dewi et al., 2019; Sztaudynger, 2018).

In the eastern ring of Jatigede, trust is generally confined to a small, close-knit circle—typically those who are closely related to the decision-maker, such as siblings and blood relatives (Alesina & Giuliano, 2014). Siblings, in particular, are highly trusted and often provide support during times of need or crisis (Connidis, 1994; Thomas et al., 2017; Volkom, 2006).

Families and those with kinship ties are regarded as the most trusted and reliable sources of support in difficult times. In many communities, there is a strong belief in a social obligation among relatives to offer assistance—either in the form of material support or, at the very least, moral support (Jack & Jackson, 2017; Lewis & van den Berg, 2017). It is commonly understood that among family members and relatives, there is a shared responsibility to support one another in meeting the basic needs of life (Sorys, 2021).

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design. The descriptive qualitative method does not involve statistical analysis; rather, it explores social phenomena by interpreting the meaning of data considered to originate from those phenomena, and then presents the findings in a descriptive manner (Creswell, 2010). The purpose of this study is to identify the internal and external parties—within and outside the family—who influence the decisions of household heads to participate in CSR programs aimed at improving family income. In essence, this research seeks to capture and map the communication and trust dynamics among family members and relatives.

Structured interviews were used as the primary data collection technique, involving 120 respondents or informants who qualified as heads of households. These included fathers, single mothers, and adult children responsible for their families. Informants were selected randomly based on research needs, with consideration given to their representativeness across three research locations: Jemah Village, Cirangem Village, and Mekar Asih Village.

The interview data were analyzed to identify individuals who influenced the household head's decision to participate in the CSR program. The analysis followed two main steps: (1) transcription of interview recordings, and (2) thematic analysis of the transcripts. Responses were grouped based on themes such as family needs, communication patterns, and the attitudes of household heads. This thematic approach was used to identify common patterns that emerged from participants' responses (Whittington, 2015).

4. Results

This study aims to identify the individuals who influence the decision-making processes of heads of households within CSR program target communities, particularly in relation to income development. Understanding this aspect is essential for creating an environment that supports decision-making regarding participation and engagement in CSR initiatives—especially those targeting economic improvement for families, most of whom are smallholder farmers and/or agricultural laborers.

Previous studies identified three key aspects to consider in understanding farmers' decision-making: the antecedent aspect, the mediating aspect, and the outcome aspect (Hayden et al., 2021; Willock et al., 1999). This research focuses primarily on the mediating aspect; however, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding, it also examines the origin aspect, which refers to the defining characteristics of the target group.

4.1. Role of Decision-Making

Sociodemographic factor analysis is one of the most commonly used approaches to understanding farmers' decision-making (Githinji et al., 2023). Among the most relevant demographic variables for this study is income. Field findings indicate that many families targeted by the CSR program fall into the poor category, with 13.33% classified as poor. However, with government assistance through the Family Hope Program (*Program Keluarga Harapan* or PKH), the number of households with an income below IDR 2.32 million per month (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Sumedang, 2022) has decreased to 10.83%.

According to several key informants in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), the high poverty rate among these families is largely due to "the loss of their primary income sources (agricultural land) submerged by the dam project, and the incomplete process of adapting to new environments, including new employment or business opportunities. In addition, the compensation received for the land was already spent." The combination of low income and the absence of capital assets such as land has placed these families in economically vulnerable positions.

Income difficulties are more pronounced during the dry season. At this time, employment opportunities diminish due to reduced agricultural activity, and work in construction is scarce. These conditions reveal the community's high dependency on natural cycles. For communities in the eastern Jatigede area, these challenges reflect not only the complexity of financial decision-making, as discussed by previous studies (Bertocchi et al., 2014; Mader & Schneebaum, 2013), but also the difficulty of deciding how to generate income in the first place. For families in this socioeconomic bracket, decision-making becomes increasingly complex, as it involves identifying sources of income and prioritizing family needs. Table 1 presents an overview of the needs expressed by families in the study area.

Table 1. Family Needs

Type of Need	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Focus on current deficiencies/needs	56	46.67%
Focus on the future	34	28.33%
Combination (mixed)	30	25.00%

As shown in Table 1, the most commonly reported financial challenge among families is meeting immediate needs. These urgent needs typically cannot be postponed and must be addressed as they arise. According to several respondents, such needs include "healthcare costs, food, school expenses, and electricity bills."

In most families, the wife is the first person to communicate these needs. This is consistent with the gender roles observed in the study area, where women are responsible for managing the household and caring for children, while men (as heads of households) function as primary income earners. Similar patterns have been observed in other studies, notably in the work of

Morrissey et al., which highlights consistent findings across different but related settings (Morrissey et al., 2020).

Field findings indicate that the household head’s response to emerging needs is influenced by two main factors: (1) the financial scale of the need, and (2) the availability of savings at the time the need arises. The first factor distinguishes between “small” and “large” financial needs, where the definitions vary depending on each family's income level. The second factor concerns whether the family can cover the expense with existing savings or must seek alternative solutions.

Regardless of the circumstances, addressing these needs requires family decision-making. Field data indicate that “all major financial decisions in the study area are made by the head of the household,” although some routine or minor financial matters are delegated to the wife. FGDs revealed that such delegated decisions typically involve “small daily expenses such as food purchases.” The wife is often referred to locally as *pabeasan*, which means “the one who saves and organizes.” Even so, the wife usually reports these expenses informally to the husband during casual or unscheduled conversations.

In contrast, decisions that involve larger sums – such as medical costs or non-routine school fees – are made directly by the household head. However, even for such decisions, the household head often consults with people he trusts. **Table 2** presents an overview of those typically consulted.

Table 2. Individuals Consulted for Financial Decision-Making

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Family	57	47.5%
Respected figures	18	15.0%
Neighbours	39	32.5%
Associates	6	5.0%
Total	120	100%

As shown in **Table 2**, family members are the most frequently consulted (47.5%) in the decision-making process. Respondents define “family” broadly, including both nuclear and extended family members from both the husband’s and wife’s sides – such as parents (biological and in-laws) and siblings.

Among family members, the wife is the person most frequently consulted for decisions related to financial needs. Some decisions are made solely by the household head without involving the extended family – especially when they involve minor expenses covered by readily available savings. This type of money is often referred to by FGD participants as *duit lalakina* – meaning “a man’s money” used for transportation, cigarettes, or other minor needs.

In addition to the wife, household heads may also consult their children – particularly those considered mature or financially responsible. There is no formal age threshold for a child to be involved in financial decisions. In low-income or fatherless households (due to divorce or death), children who contribute to the household income are often involved in decision-making. However, in more affluent families, even if children are of legal age or attending university, they are seldom included in such discussions. One reason frequently cited by FGD participants is a desire “not to burden the child with family financial concerns.”

In conclusion, this study finds that family members – especially those with close blood relations – play a central role in household financial decision-making. This aligns with findings

from other regions and studies (Kim et al., 2017), which emphasize the importance of family networks in navigating financial challenges.

4.2. Trust Factors and External Influence

Not all economic challenges faced by families can be resolved solely through decisions made by the head of the household—even when extended family members are involved. This indicates that the head of household often needs to take additional steps or make further decisions to address financial issues. According to FGD participants, these additional decisions typically relate to "financial needs for education at the beginning of the school year, medical expenses for hospital visits, business capital, wedding celebrations for children, or circumcision ceremonies"—all of which are considered significant financial burdens.

However, not all financial issues discussed with family or close blood relatives can be resolved. The financial capacity of those involved in the discussion is a key determinant of whether the problem can be addressed. In cases where families have sought help from relatives but did not receive material assistance, FGD participants noted that relatives still offer moral support—such as recommending others who might be able to help, or offering to accompany them in seeking further assistance. These findings reinforce the importance of open family communication in addressing both financial challenges and emotional well-being. Despite differences in setting, the results are consistent with those found by Baek and Devaney, who also highlight the value of communicative family dynamics in financial decision-making (Baek & DeVaney, 2010).

When the family members prioritized for consultation by the head of household are unable to help, the head of household must then make a follow-up decision. According to FGD participants, in such situations they are "faced with two options": either to seek help from others or to leave the issue unresolved. Table 3 presents the actions taken by heads of households when their initial efforts to address the problem fail.

Table 3. Head of Household's Actions When the First Decision Does Not Resolve the Problem

Action	Frequency	Percentage
Communicating with other family members	38	31.67%
Communicating with a community leader	23	19.17%
Communicating with neighbours	17	14.16%
Not communicating with others	42	35.00%
Total	120	100%

Several key findings emerge from Table 3. First, family members—on both the wife's and husband's sides—remain the primary source of support (31.67%) when the head of household faces financial difficulty. In such situations, the head of household often turns to their parents (biological or in-laws) or siblings. According to FGD participants, the decision to reach out is based on two considerations: (1) past experiences of receiving or giving support within the family, and (2) an assessment of the financial capacity of the person being asked for help.

These findings indicate that, for heads of households in the study area, family and kinship-based institutions play a vital role in providing support—whether material or emotional. This is consistent with recent studies showing that strong family networks function as critical buffers during periods of economic hardship. For instance, Taylor et al. found that kin-based social

support significantly moderated the effects of financial stress, highlighting the protective function of familial ties (Taylor et al., 2024). Similarly, Cudjoe and Chiu emphasize that kinship care remains a culturally grounded and effective strategy for sustaining household welfare in times of vulnerability, particularly in contexts with limited formal support systems (Cudjoe & Chiu, 2021).

Another noteworthy finding is that 35% of heads of households choose not to communicate their economic difficulties with anyone outside the family. Instead, they often delay or attempt to cope with the issue independently. FGD participants provided examples such as "allowing themselves to remain ill in the hope of self-recovery." When treatment is unaffordable, they choose to care for the sick person at home, despite lacking medical skills or knowledge.

The FGD discussions also revealed another reason for this reluctance to seek help: privacy and dignity. Several participants expressed sentiments such as, "We have certain boundaries regarding who can and cannot be involved in family matters." Others emphasized that "these boundaries are important to maintain harmony with others." Participants also noted that such boundaries are not rigid but evolve depending on the urgency of the situation.

For some heads of households, discussing financial problems with others is linked to personal pride and social image. One common perspective from the FGDs was the desire to be perceived as a capable provider rather than someone who fails to meet family needs. As a result, when the head of household chooses not to communicate about financial hardship, the wife also remains silent to protect her husband's dignity. This dynamic is consistent with findings from previous research (Foster, 2008; Karpel, 1980), both of whom emphasized how family members may withhold discussions of financial hardship to preserve individual or relational dignity within the household. Such patterns of silence are often rooted in cultural or gendered expectations about the role of the provider and the fear of social judgment. Vangelisti conceptualizes this phenomenon as a form of external privacy, wherein individuals deliberately manage the flow of information to those outside the immediate family in order to protect the family's collective image and maintain perceived social stability (Vangelisti, 1994).

Another important observation from **Table 3** is the absence of heads of households seeking help from financial institutions. FGD participants cited several reasons: "lengthy procedures, the cost of fulfilling administrative requirements (even if small), and the need for collateral to access loans." As an alternative, some heads of households choose to discuss their financial concerns with trusted neighbors (14.16%) or community leaders (19.17%)—individuals perceived as trustworthy and of higher socioeconomic standing.

These patterns reveal a strong preference for seeking help only from trusted individuals, particularly within the immediate and extended family. There is a noticeable lack of institutional trust, with trust being reserved for a limited circle of family members and familiar figures in the community.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that community participation in CSR programs can be enhanced by adopting a more micro-level, household-based approach. By understanding the dynamics of family needs and trust, CSR programs can be designed to better align with household realities. This approach has the potential to strengthen social capital, improve family welfare, and support more inclusive and sustainable development. Clear, needs-based micro-level policy interventions are essential to ensure that CSR efforts produce meaningful and lasting impacts on target communities.

5. Conclusion

The economic (financial) decisions made by the head of the household are not solely the result of communication within the nuclear family, but also involve interactions with members of the extended family. The experience of receiving prior support plays a critical role in shaping the head of household's judgment about whom – such as neighbors or community leaders – can be consulted when making important financial decisions for the family.

The value placed on self-esteem by the head of household is another significant factor that influences decision-making. A sense of dignity often determines whether or not a financial issue will be communicated to others, and if so, with whom outside the extended family it should be discussed. These considerations reflect the complex interplay between social roles, psychological factors, and cultural norms in household decision-making.

Although the implications of this research are micro-level, they offer valuable insights for designing more effective community-based interventions. This study enhances understanding of which individuals can be involved to foster greater participation in CSR programs.

The findings are expected to contribute to the existing literature on the relationship between CSR and social trust, particularly by highlighting how psychological considerations and social roles shape household decisions regarding participation in CSR programs and efforts to improve family income. The results also offer policy recommendations for improving CSR implementation, including strategies to increase community engagement, build social trust, and boost the confidence of heads of households – especially by promoting entrepreneurship, soft skills development, and the strategic involvement of influential community figures as change agents.

This study is limited to a micro-level perspective using a qualitative approach; therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to broader populations. Future research using quantitative methods is recommended to systematically assess the impact of CSR on household economic decision-making. Additionally, since social and cultural factors may influence how families communicate and make financial decisions, further studies are needed to explore whether these findings hold across different regions of Indonesia.

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7. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest regarding this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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