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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Public-Private Partnerships (PPP); Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Higher Education; Collaborative Governance; Multinational Corporations; Huawei	Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are increasingly recognised as essential mechanisms for advancing sustainable development, particularly in developing countries facing educational and socioeconomic challenges. This study examines the roles of multinational corporations (MNCs), government institutions, and higher education institutions (HEIs) in promoting sustainable higher education development in Pakistan, using the case study of the partnership between Huawei Technologies and Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC). Grounded in collaborative governance and stakeholder theory, the research explores how corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives can contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 (Quality Education) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through seven semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from Huawei, HEC, and HEIs, complemented by archival analysis of corporate sustainability reports, policy documents, and official announcements. Thematic analysis identified three core dimensions of partnership effectiveness: public value creation, stakeholder collaboration, and collaborative governance. Findings reveal that the Huawei-HEC collaboration significantly supports youth skill development, scholarship provision, digital inclusion, and enhanced employability. At the same time, HEC plays a critical mediating role in ensuring transparency, regulatory oversight, and policy coordination. The study highlights that effective PPPs can strengthen educational sustainability, reduce governmental resource burdens, and enhance social innovation in developing contexts. Policy implications emphasise the need for stronger institutional frameworks, expanded corporate engagement, and enhanced governance mechanisms to maximise the developmental impact of CSR-driven educational partnerships.
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Introduction

As a developing country, Pakistan faces a critical demographic and developmental challenge due to its rapidly expanding youth population. In 2021, Pakistan ranked among the world's largest youth populations, creating both an opportunity and a policy challenge for sustainable national development (Idris, 2023). Effectively channelling this youth bulge into productive economic participation remains a central concern for policymakers, particularly amid persistent educational inequalities, limited skill development, and rising unemployment. In this context, governments in developing countries must increasingly look beyond traditional public financing mechanisms and foster partnerships with private sector actors, including multinational corporations (MNCs), to address social and economic challenges. Campbell (2007) argues that governments can play a proactive role by establishing institutional and regulatory environments that encourage corporations to contribute to societal development through corporate social responsibility (CSR), thereby reducing pressure on public resources.

The role of public-private partnerships (PPPs) has become increasingly significant in advancing sustainable development, particularly in higher education. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 emphasises partnerships among governments, the private sector, and civil society as essential to achieving broader development goals. Within this framework, collaboration between higher education institutions (HEIs) and multinational enterprises (MNEs) is particularly important, as education systems serve as both producers of human capital and drivers of social mobility (Cockayne et al., 2020). MNCs can significantly influence higher education through scholarship programs, curriculum development, technological investment, and employment pathways, thereby shaping the broader educational and economic landscape (Li, 2017; Freeman, 2003).

Corporate social responsibility has evolved from a philanthropic concept into a strategic governance mechanism through which corporations address societal, economic, and environmental concerns. CSR initiatives increasingly encompass educational development, youth empowerment, digital inclusion, and climate sustainability, particularly in developing nations where institutional capacity may be constrained (Thirukkovela & Thirumuru, 2015). In Pakistan, however, CSR remains relatively underdeveloped within domestic corporate practice, and regulatory frameworks governing corporate social engagement are still evolving (Hayat et al., 2021). This creates a policy gap, leaving multinational corporations instrumental in supporting national development priorities, especially in sectors such as education and workforce development.

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan serves as the primary regulatory and coordinating body for higher education policy and institutional governance. Through partnerships with international corporations, HEC has increasingly positioned itself as a mediator facilitating the distribution of scholarship, skill development, and institutional collaboration. Among such partnerships, Huawei Technologies' "Seeds for the Future" program represents a particularly significant case of CSR-driven educational engagement. Huawei's global scholarship and digital capacity-building initiatives span more than 150 countries, have benefited more than 2.2 million digital professionals, have established over 2,200 ICT academies, and aim to expand the Asia-

Pacific digital skills pool by 500,000 individuals by 2026. These initiatives illustrate the potential of multinational CSR programs to contribute meaningfully to sustainable educational development.

Grounded in collaborative governance and stakeholder theory, this study examines the Huawei-HEC partnership as a case study of public-private collaboration in Pakistan's higher education sector. Specifically, the research evaluates how HEC, Huawei, and HEIs collectively contribute to SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) through the provision of scholarships, digital skills development, and youth employability initiatives. The study seeks to answer the following research question: How do public-private partnerships between multinational corporations and public institutions strengthen sustainable development in Pakistan's higher education sector?

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding how CSR-driven PPPs can address structural educational and socioeconomic challenges in developing countries. By examining the intersection of corporate investment, public governance, and educational sustainability, this research provides practical and theoretical insights for policymakers, higher education administrators, and corporate leaders seeking to enhance sustainable development outcomes through collaborative frameworks (Hinduja et al., 2023). Ultimately, the study offers policy-relevant recommendations to strengthen institutional mechanisms that maximise the developmental impact of multinational partnerships in emerging economies.

Literature Review

Multinational Corporations, Public Policy, and Sustainable Development

Multinational enterprises (MNEs) and multinational corporations (MNCs) have become increasingly influential actors in shaping economic, social, and governance structures in both developed and developing countries. MNEs are generally associated with foreign direct investment (FDI), international trade expansion, and cross-border economic integration (Singh & Awasthi, 2016; Dey et al., 2018; Ekienabor et al., 2016). As globalisation has intensified, MNCs have expanded beyond purely commercial functions to become important stakeholders in public governance and policy implementation. Singh (2009) argues that MNCs increasingly influence domestic and foreign policymaking, particularly in developing states, where institutional and resource constraints create opportunities for private-sector engagement. Earlier scholarship similarly suggests that multinational corporations can shape public policy agendas through investment decisions, strategic partnerships, and resource mobilisation (Vernon, 1971; Ray, 1972; Kaufman, 1977; Korten, 1995; Rondinelli, 2002; Cohen & Küpçü, 2005; Richani, 2005).

In developing countries, MNCs often serve as supplementary actors in addressing social and developmental challenges by providing employment, infrastructure, technological innovation, and social investments. Through partnerships with governments and educational institutions, MNCs can reduce public-sector burdens while advancing sustainable development objectives (Nehru, 2016; Bedawy & Shawky, 2013; Shetty, 2014; Thirukkovela & Thirumuru, 2015; Singh & Kaur, 2016).

This expanded role reflects broader governance transformations in which private corporations increasingly contribute to policy solutions that were traditionally the responsibility of the state.

Corporate Social Responsibility as a Governance Mechanism

Corporate social responsibility has evolved substantially from early philanthropic models to a broader strategic and ethical governance framework. Bowen (2013) conceptualised CSR as the obligation of businesses to pursue socially desirable policies and actions that benefit society. Contemporary scholarship further emphasises CSR as a multidimensional strategy that integrates social, economic, and environmental sustainability into corporate operations (Burchell, 2020; Phillips et al., 2020). As corporations expand globally, CSR initiatives increasingly address issues such as educational development, climate sustainability, community welfare, digital inclusion, and human rights.

From an ethical perspective, CSR is grounded in the notion that corporations possess broader societal obligations beyond profit generation (Samantara & Dhawan, 2020; Ervits, 2021; Amoako et al., 2022; Sharma & Aggarwal, 2022). Barnett et al. (2020) note, however, that CSR programmes are often criticised for prioritising corporate image over meaningful stakeholder engagement and measurable grassroots social impact. Consequently, effective CSR requires genuine collaboration with public institutions and local communities to ensure sustainable and equitable developmental outcomes.

In developing countries such as Pakistan, CSR frameworks remain relatively underdeveloped, with limited institutional regulation and enforcement (Hayat et al., 2021). This creates an environment in which multinational corporations can play an especially important role in supporting social innovation and addressing developmental gaps, particularly in education and workforce development.

Higher Education, Internationalisation, and Public-Private Partnerships

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have increasingly become central actors in national development strategies due to their role in human capital formation, research innovation, and social mobility. Traditionally, state institutions have exercised primary control over higher education systems (Carnoy, 1992), but globalisation has significantly expanded the influence of multinational corporations and international actors in shaping educational priorities (Desjardins, 2009). Corporations now influence multiple aspects of higher education, including admissions priorities, curriculum design, employability pathways, and skill development (Farrell, 2013).

Since the 1990s, higher education has undergone significant internationalisation, characterised by cross-border academic partnerships, student and faculty mobility, international research collaborations, and technological integration (Wang, 2013). HEIs have increasingly adopted global competitiveness strategies through partnerships, internships, foreign exchange programs, and industry collaborations (Hou, 2011; Khalid et al., 2017). Public-private partnerships within higher

education have emerged as important mechanisms for bridging skill gaps, improving employability, and fostering sustainable educational development.

Cockayne et al. (2020) emphasise that effective collaboration between HEIs and MNCs is essential for sustainable national development, as corporations benefit from a skilled labour force while educational institutions gain financial resources, technological expertise, and employment opportunities for graduates. Such partnerships are particularly important in developing contexts where educational systems often face chronic underfunding and institutional limitations.

Sustainable Development, SDGs, and Higher Education

Sustainability in higher education extends beyond environmental protection to encompass socioeconomic equity, institutional resilience, and intergenerational development (Raza et al., 2023). Higher education institutions are increasingly expected to contribute directly to sustainable development by integrating innovative teaching, community engagement, policy research, and social responsibility into their operations (Hinduja et al., 2023).

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), provides a global policy framework for strengthening sustainable educational systems through collaborative governance. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), promoted through UNESCO initiatives, positions universities as catalysts for social innovation, capacity building, and community transformation (Hinduja et al., 2023). Within Pakistan, the HEC plays a critical governance role by establishing policy frameworks, regulatory standards, and partnership mechanisms that align higher education with national sustainability objectives (Omazic & Zunk, 2021).

Huawei's CSR and Educational Partnerships

Huawei Technologies represents a prominent example of a multinational corporation integrating CSR into sustainable educational development. Huawei's global CSR strategy emphasises digital inclusion, environmental sustainability, and technological capacity-building. According to Huawei's sustainability reports, the company has invested extensively in ICT education, digital skill development, and green technological innovation (CRHU-SR2021). Huawei's "Seeds for the Future" and ICT Academy programs have established collaborations with thousands of educational institutions globally, supporting millions of students through digital training and scholarship opportunities (Lee et al., 2021).

In Pakistan, Huawei has maintained a longstanding presence and actively integrated CSR initiatives into national development priorities, particularly through collaboration with HEC. These partnerships support the provision of scholarships, ICT academies, digital infrastructure, and youth employability within broader initiatives such as "Digital Pakistan" (NAV-MAG). Sihong and Yiyi (2021) argue that Huawei's CSR model is distinctive because it adapts to host-country developmental needs while promoting both social innovation and strategic corporate legitimacy.

Research Gap

Although existing scholarship extensively explores CSR, multinational corporations, and sustainable development independently, limited research specifically examines the governance dynamics of CSR-driven public-private partnerships between multinational corporations and higher education regulatory bodies in developing countries such as Pakistan. In particular, there is insufficient empirical analysis of how multinational CSR initiatives interact with national educational governance systems to advance SDGs through collaborative governance structures.

This study addresses this gap by examining the Huawei-HEC partnership as a case of CSR-enabled collaborative governance, contributing to theoretical and policy understanding of how multinational corporations, public institutions, and higher education systems can collectively advance sustainable development goals in emerging economies.

Data and Method

This study employs a qualitative case study design to examine the role of public-private partnerships in promoting sustainable development of higher education through collaboration among Huawei Technologies, the HEC of Pakistan, and HEIs. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for exploring governance processes, stakeholder relationships, and CSR-driven institutional collaborations in complex policy environments (De Villiers & Dimes, 2020; Jamali & Mirshak, 2007; Russo-Spena et al., 2018).

Research Design

Grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, this research adopts an inductive case study strategy to generate in-depth insights into how multinational corporations' CSR initiatives interact with public educational governance structures. The study is informed by collaborative governance and stakeholder theory, enabling an exploration of how different institutional actors collectively contribute to SDGs, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Data Collection

Primary data were collected through seven semi-structured interviews conducted with key informants representing multinational corporations (Huawei and other scholarship partners), HEC officials, and higher education institutional administrators. Interview participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling, ensuring that respondents had direct experience and expertise in scholarship administration, CSR partnerships, and educational governance. Contact details were obtained through official scholarship advertisements, institutional websites, and professional referrals.

The interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted 30-40 minutes each, following a structured interview guide adapted from Patton's (1980) semi-structured interviewing framework

(see Interview Guide in Appendix B). Open-ended questions enabled participants to provide detailed reflections on:

- The importance of public-private partnerships in higher education,
- CSR’s role in addressing educational and social challenges,
- Institutional governance and regulatory coordination,
- Stakeholder collaboration,
- The practical experiences of multinational partnerships with and without HEC involvement.

All interviews were transcribed, translated where necessary, and verified by respondents to ensure accuracy and credibility. Follow-up communications were conducted when clarification or refinement of responses was required.

To ensure methodological rigour and stakeholder diversity, seven key informants were purposively selected from organisations directly involved in multinational scholarship administration, higher education governance, and university-level financial aid management. Respondents represented multinational corporations, the HEC, and HEIs, ensuring a multi-stakeholder perspective on CSR-driven public-private partnerships.

Table 1. Profile of Semi-Structured Interview Participants

Participant ID	Designation	Organisation/Department
Respondent A	Assistant Director	Key informant of Mitsubishi Japanese Scholarship
Respondent B	Assistant Director	Key informant of the Huawei Scholarship Program
Respondent C	Assistant Director	Key informant of the Huawei Scholarship Program
Respondent D	Assistant Director	HEC Staff for Overseas Scholarships
Respondent E	Deputy Registrar	HEI Financial Aid Office
Respondent F	Deputy Registrar	HEI Financial Aid Office
Respondent G	Assistant	HEI Financial Aid Office

These respondents were selected based on their direct involvement in scholarship management, CSR coordination, educational governance, and institutional implementation. Their combined expertise provided rich qualitative insights into the operational, strategic, and governance dimensions of multinational educational partnerships in Pakistan.

Archival Data

To strengthen triangulation and contextual depth, primary interview data were supplemented with extensive archival analysis. Secondary sources included Huawei’s annual reports, Huawei

sustainability reports, HEC official announcements, HEC annual reports, corporate CSR reports, media reports, news articles, social media releases, publicly available videos, and official organisational websites (Appendix A). These diverse documentary sources were used to validate interview findings, provide institutional and policy context, and enrich the analysis of Huawei–HEC collaboration within Pakistan’s higher education and sustainable development framework.

These sources were used to validate interview findings, provide institutional context, and supplement statistical and programmatic information related to Huawei’s educational CSR initiatives.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2021), supported by coding principles derived from Wood’s (1991) Corporate Social Performance Model and CSR governance frameworks (Ervi, 2021). The analytical process proceeded through multiple stages. In the first-order coding phase, interview transcripts were summarised, recurring concepts identified, and stakeholder experiences descriptively categorised. During the second-order categorisation stage, pattern coding was applied to group related concepts into broader governance and CSR categories. In the third-order thematic development stage, these categories were synthesised into overarching analytical themes. Through this structured process, three principal themes emerged: Public Value Creation, Stakeholder Collaboration, and Collaborative Governance. This analytical framework enabled the study to systematically identify both the operational and policy dimensions of Huawei–HEC collaboration in promoting sustainable higher education development (see details of the Thematic Analysis in Appendix C).

Validity and Reliability

Methodological rigour was enhanced through multiple strategies that strengthened the study’s credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness. Data triangulation was achieved by integrating semi-structured interviews with archival records, including corporate reports, policy documents, and official institutional sources. Respondent transcript verification was employed to ensure the accuracy of interview data and to confirm the authenticity of participants’ perspectives. Standardised interview protocols were used throughout data collection to maintain consistency across interviews, while systematic thematic coding procedures ensured analytical coherence during data interpretation. Theoretical saturation was achieved through repeated thematic convergence across the seven expert interviews, indicating sufficient depth and consistency of findings (Creswell et al., 2003; Creswell et al., 2022). Together, these methodological safeguards enhanced the overall validity, reliability, and scholarly robustness of the research design.

Scope and Limitations

This study focuses specifically on Huawei–HEC educational partnerships within Pakistan’s higher education sector. While the case study approach allows for rich contextual analysis, findings may not be fully generalisable across all multinational CSR partnerships or educational systems.

However, the case provides significant analytical insights into governance structures, CSR implementation, and sustainable development mechanisms in developing country contexts.

Overall, this methodological approach provides a robust framework for examining how multinational corporations, public institutions, and educational organisations collaboratively address sustainability challenges through strategic public-private partnerships.

Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and archival data identified three overarching themes that explain the role of Huawei-HEC collaboration in promoting sustainable higher education development in Pakistan: public value creation, stakeholder collaboration, and collaborative governance. These themes collectively demonstrate how corporate social responsibility (CSR)-driven public-private partnerships function as important mechanisms for strengthening educational sustainability, youth employability, and institutional governance in financially constrained higher education systems.

Public Value Creation

A central finding of this study is that all respondents viewed public-private partnerships as essential for achieving SDG 17 within Pakistan's higher education sector. Participants consistently emphasised that collaboration among MNCs, public institutions such as HEC, and HEIs has become increasingly necessary due to the persistent financial pressures facing Pakistan's public universities. Declining governmental funding, inflation, scholarship shortages, and institutional budget limitations were identified as major barriers to equitable educational access and sustainability.

Respondents stressed that, in the face of these financial challenges, HEC's role in facilitating partnerships with multinational corporations is crucial to supplementing public education financing and expanding developmental opportunities for youth. These findings reinforce the importance of collaborative governance structures in contexts where state institutions face resource constraints.

Huawei's CSR initiatives emerged as a particularly significant contributor to public value creation. Interviewees and archival sources reported that Huawei Pakistan has made substantial contributions through taxation, local procurement, employment generation, research funding, scholarship programs, and digital skills development. Huawei's educational investments, including ICT academies, scholarship programs, roadshows, and strategic collaborations such as its partnership with GIKI to establish Pakistan's first undergraduate degree in Artificial Intelligence, demonstrate how CSR can support sustainable educational infrastructure and long-term development goals.

These initiatives significantly contribute to Pakistan's digital transformation by promoting technological inclusion, skill development, employability, and innovation. The findings suggest

that multinational CSR investments can generate broader societal benefits by strengthening both economic and educational systems.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Skills Development

The second major theme concerns stakeholder collaboration, particularly the alignment between corporate CSR strategies and educational development objectives. Respondents consistently noted that multinational corporations are increasingly focused not only on technical education but also on graduates' broader employability and professional readiness.

Participants highlighted substantial gaps in Pakistani graduates' soft skills, including communication, leadership, professional conduct, and workplace preparedness. According to respondents, multinational corporations increasingly expect universities and the HEC to produce graduates with both technical competence and professional capabilities. Consequently, CSR programs such as Huawei's "Seeds for the Future" and "Tech4Good" initiatives were viewed as valuable mechanisms for addressing these deficiencies by integrating leadership development, teamwork, innovation, and global exposure into student development programs.

This indicates that CSR-driven public-private partnerships are expanding beyond traditional scholarship provision into broader human capital development strategies. Huawei's initiatives, in particular, demonstrate how multinational partnerships can foster not only technical expertise but also social innovation and workforce competitiveness.

At the same time, respondents noted that multinational educational partnerships are heavily concentrated in commercially strategic fields such as engineering, information technology, data science, and business, while social sciences and humanities remain comparatively marginalised. This reflects the market-oriented priorities of corporate investment and highlights ongoing inequalities in the distribution of educational resources.

Gender inclusion also emerged as an important dimension of stakeholder collaboration. Huawei's targeted scholarship initiatives for women in STEM fields demonstrate the potential of CSR programs to advance broader social inclusion and gender empowerment within Pakistan's educational system.

Collaborative Governance and Institutional Mediation

The third major theme centres on collaborative governance, with HEC serving as a critical mediator among multinational corporations, donor agencies, and higher education institutions. Respondents consistently emphasised that multinational corporations encounter fewer administrative, operational, and governance-related challenges when educational partnerships are coordinated through HEC rather than directly with universities.

HEC's governance role was identified as essential in ensuring regulatory oversight, transparency, accountability, scholarship administration, policy coordination, and program evaluation. These

institutional functions increase trust among stakeholders by minimising risks associated with fund mismanagement, administrative inefficiencies, and fragmented communication.

Respondents reported that direct partnerships between multinational corporations and individual universities often face bureaucratic obstacles, procedural inconsistencies, and communication difficulties. In contrast, HEC-mediated collaborations provide standardised governance structures, formalised procedures, and improved coordination mechanisms, thereby facilitating more effective implementation.

Huawei's HAINA program and HEC-approved ICT academies serve as prominent examples of how institutional mediation can successfully expand CSR-driven educational initiatives across Pakistan, including remote and underserved regions. Through these governance structures, HEC enhances both the scale and legitimacy of multinational educational partnerships.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Huawei-HEC partnership represents an effective model of CSR-enabled public-private collaboration in higher education. Through the integration of corporate resources, public regulatory frameworks, and institutional implementation mechanisms, this partnership addresses critical educational challenges related to funding, employability, digital transformation, and sustainable development.

The results suggest that multinational corporations can play an increasingly important developmental role when their CSR strategies are effectively aligned with public policy frameworks and mediated through credible governance institutions. In Pakistan's context, HEC serves as a vital institutional intermediary, enhancing the effectiveness of partnerships by ensuring transparency, accountability, and policy coherence.

The case of the Huawei-HEC collaboration illustrates that sustainable higher education development in emerging economies increasingly depends on multi-stakeholder governance arrangements that combine corporate innovation, public-sector regulation, and institutional collaboration.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of public-private partnerships in promoting sustainable development of higher education in Pakistan, focusing on Huawei Technologies' collaboration with the HEC. The findings demonstrate that effective partnerships between multinational corporations, public regulatory institutions, and higher education institutions can significantly contribute to achieving SDGs, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

A key conclusion of this research is that HEC functions as a critical institutional mediator in facilitating successful CSR-driven educational partnerships. National and international donor agencies, as well as multinational corporations, consistently prefer collaborating through HEC due

to its regulatory credibility, effective governance, and institutional oversight. HEC's role extends beyond scholarship administration to include policy coordination, agenda setting, transparency assurance, stakeholder mediation, and program evaluation. Through mechanisms such as internal and external audits, fund utilisation monitoring, and institutional scholarship committees, HEC strengthens accountability and trust among stakeholders.

The study further reveals that HEC-mediated partnerships significantly reduce many of the operational, administrative, and governance challenges that multinational corporations face when engaging directly with individual higher education institutions. Direct corporate-university partnerships often encounter bureaucratic delays, communication barriers, documentation complexities, and institutional inefficiencies. In contrast, HEC provides a centralised governance structure that enhances coordination, transparency, and policy coherence. This institutional mediation is particularly important in developing countries, where governance fragmentation can otherwise undermine the effectiveness of partnerships.

Huawei's CSR initiatives, particularly the "Seeds for the Future" program, ICT academies, and digital skills development projects, demonstrate the developmental potential of multinational educational partnerships. These initiatives have supported scholarships, technological capacity building, cross-cultural learning, digital inclusion, and the enhancement of employability among Pakistani youth. Huawei's collaboration with HEC also contributes directly to broader national priorities such as the "Digital Pakistan" strategy by fostering ICT skills and technological innovation.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to collaborative governance and stakeholder theory by illustrating how multinational CSR initiatives can evolve into governance instruments when effectively integrated with public institutions. Rather than functioning solely as philanthropic activities, CSR programs can serve as strategic platforms for policy implementation, institutional capacity building, and sustainable development. The findings reinforce the argument that sustainable educational governance in emerging economies increasingly depends on hybrid governance arrangements that combine public regulation, corporate investment, and stakeholder collaboration.

Policy implications suggest that governments should further strengthen institutional frameworks that facilitate public-private educational partnerships. Enhancing HEC's governance capacity, expanding CSR incentives for multinational corporations, establishing dedicated financial aid offices in universities, improving monitoring and evaluation systems, and broadening scholarship opportunities across disciplines would significantly improve partnership outcomes. Greater emphasis should also be placed on developing soft skills, promoting gender inclusion, and ensuring equitable access for marginalised students to maximise social impact.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its case-study focus and relatively small sample size, which may constrain its broader generalizability. Future research could expand comparative

analysis across multiple multinational partnerships, sectors, or countries to further strengthen the understanding of CSR-driven governance models in higher education.

Overall, this study concludes that the Huawei–HEC partnership offers a valuable model for leveraging corporate social responsibility through collaborative governance to address educational, economic, and developmental challenges in Pakistan. Strategic public-private partnerships, when supported by effective institutional mediation, can play a transformative role in advancing sustainable development within higher education systems.

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Appendix A: Archival Data

The following are the data codes and an overview source:

Type	Subtype	Sources	Code
Archive Huawei's reports and announcemen ts (CRHU)	1: 1.1: Huawei Investment & Annual Report	Huawei Annual Report ~ Huawei (https://www.huawei.com/en/annual-report)	CRHU -AR
	1.2: Huawei Investment Sustainability Report 2021	https://www.huawei.com/en/sustainability/the-latest , Sustainability @ consumer BG HUAWEI Pakistan	CRHU -SR
	2: 2.1: HEC Pakistan Announcemen ts	HEC Announcements Huawei Seeds for the Future Programme 2022	CRHE -AN
Archive HEC reports and announcemen ts from its official websites (CRHE)	2.2: HEC Pakistan Annual Report	https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/news/pages/Annual-Report.aspx	CRHE -AN
	3: 3.1: Newspapers and videos and from well- known media and press (NAV)	https://propakistani.pk/2022/09/05/all-you-need-to-know-about-hecs-huawei-seeds-for-the-future-program-2022/ , Nayatel & Huawei Technologies Pakistan celebrate a decade of business together ~ Trade Chronicle, Huawei's endearing legacy in Pakistan ~ Global Village Space, Huawei continues its Corporate Social Responsibility activities in Pakistan TNS World	NAV- MAG
	3.2: Social media and	CPEC, digital connectivity and Pakistan-China ties ~ Global Village Space	NAV- GV

	News channels	www.huawei.com/minisite/Huawei ~ Seeds For The Future ~ HOMEPAGE , Seeds for the Future ~ Huawei, www.huawei.com/media-center/multimedia/videos/2022/ , www.huawei.com/media-center/multimedia/videos/2023/seeds-for-future-ep2 , Company Facts ~ Huawei, BS in ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ~ PARTNERED BY HUAWEI agreement ~ Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology (giki.edu.pk) www.education.gov.pk/tv Huawei ICT Competition Program Part 2 (hec.gov.pk)	NAV-HU
Archive	4.	4.1: Interviews of HEC, HEI, and MNCs	NAV-HE
Semi-structured Interviews (INT)		MNE staff 1	INT-EXT-1
		MNE staff 2	INT-EXT-2
		MNE staff 3	INT-EXT-3
		HEC, Staff 4	INT-EXT-4
		HEI, Staff 5	INT-EXT-5
		HEI, Staff 6	INT-EXT-6
		HEI, Staff 7	INT-EXT-7

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Open-Ended Questions

Q.	Summary of key themes	Intended purpose
1-4	Interviewee introductory questions: organisation, job title, areas of responsibility, time in position;	For general information (to ensure sufficient expertise/knowledge levels) and to warm up the interview;
5-7	Background information about Sustainable Development in Higher Education Institutions	Contextual information;
8-11	Goal 17 Public -Private Partnership (a partnership between Government agencies (in this research, HEC in education), Private Sector (MNEs), and Local Communities (in	Value creation through Public-Private Partnership

	this research, Universities and their students),	
12-15	Discussion about solving social and education issues through MNCs' CSR activities. MNCs demand Soft Skills Development in youth.	Collaboration with Stakeholder
16-18	MNCs give Preferences to Partnership with Universities through HEC	Experience of MNEs with & without Commission
19-20	Commission role as a moderator, mediator and implementor of policies	Collaborative Governance

Appendix C: Thematic Analysis

1st Order Codes	2nd Order Categories	3rd Order Themes
Importance of Public-Private Partnership Crisis in Universities Financial Constraints resolving social and economic issues through partnership with MNCs Government's initiative to implement strategies for the involvement of the private sector in education Government should invite more corporations lessen the burden on governments HUAWEI job opportunities for Pakistani Youth HUAWEI joined hands with GIKI for an undergraduate degree in AI	Goal 17 main focus Importance of Public-Private Partnership address social & educational issues through MNCs' CSR strategies	Public Value Creation
HUAWEI Roadshow Activities in Colleges & Universities HUAWEI International Competitions		
MNCs want to support students through CSR activities The main purpose of MNCs is to improve Soft Skills Development HUAWEI Tech4Good Competition cultivates Leadership & teamwork for soft skills development Lack of communication skills in Universities Graduates Graduates have no vision & objective for society	Soft Skills Development in youth through CSR Strategies of MNCs	

Sense of Official dressing & communication		
MNCs' demand from educational institutions		
Interested in support to students of IT, Engineering & Sciences	MNCs	give Collaboration
HUAWEI set up HEC-approved ICT Academies	Preferences	to with
HUAWEI with HEC partnership promotes the central idea of "Digital Pakistan".	Partnership	with Stakeholder
Not giving preferences to the social sciences	Universities	
Experience of Multinational partnerships with universities	through HEC	
Experience of MNCs' partnerships with HEC & Universities		
HUAWEI Preferences a partnership with HEC (HAINA)		
Regulatory quality	Commission role as	
Create trust in donor agencies	a moderator &	
HEC helps in agenda setting	mediator between	
Advisory role in policy formulation	MNCs & HEIs	
Role in policy adoption		
Policy assessment & evaluation through HEC	Coordination	Collaborative
Ensure transparency	between MNCs &	Governance
Reduce administrative problems	HEIs in the	
HEC internal audits	implementation of	
Seeds for Future Program is a HUAWEI & HEC partnership	policies	
