Corporate Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility Integrity: How Board Characteristics Influence CSR Decoupling

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.32782/2707-8019/2024-1-17

Abstract. Purpose: *This study examines how specific attributes of corporate governance influence Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) decoupling, aiming to clarify the disconnect between declared CSR policies and actual practices. It explores how governance characteristics impact the alignment of CSR intentions with outcomes, providing insights into fostering genuine CSR integration within corporations.* ***Design/methodology/approach:*** *Using empirical data from publicly listed companies in China, this study investigates the role of governance attributes such as board independence, diversity, size, CEO duality, and the number of board committees in affecting CSR decoupling. Utilizing data from the China Stock Market & Accounting Research Database (CSMAR) and HEXUN, the study analyzes a sample of 2,676 companies with a total of 22,795 observations. The research leverages an econometric model to examine CSR decoupling as a function of these corporate governance variables, alongside control factors like company size and leverage.* ***Findings:*** *The study reveals that certain governance attributes, including board independence, supervisory board size, and CEO duality, significantly influence CSR decoupling. Independent directors and larger boards reduce CSR gaps, while CEO duality increases decoupling risks due to concentrated decision-making power. Conversely, attributes like board diversity and the number of board committees show mixed impacts, potentially limited by symbolic compliance.* ***Research limitations/implications:*** *Focusing on Chinese listed firms, these findings may vary in different governance contexts. Future studies could investigate similar dynamics across various industries or cultural settings to expand the findings.* ***Practical implications:*** *Understanding the influence of governance on CSR decoupling can help corporations and regulators design governance structures that enhance CSR transparency, enabling organizations to bridge the gap between CSR commitments and practices.* ***Originality/value:*** *This study advances CSR literature by examining CSR decoupling through a governance lens, emphasizing the importance of aligning governance attributes with CSR objectives to promote meaningful corporate responsibility.*

Keywords: *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) decoupling, Corporate governance, Board characteristics, CEO duality, CSR alignment.*

JEL Classification: *G34, M14, M41*

1 Introduction

In recent decades, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has gained significant attention as a core component of corporate strategy, largely driven by increasing societal expectations and regulatory requirements (Pasko et al., 2023). As stakeholders – ranging from consumers and investors to policymakers – prioritize ethical practices and environmental sustainability, corporations are under growing pressure to adopt CSR policies aimed at addressing these demands (Pasko et al., 2021). CSR initiatives encompass a broad spectrum of issues, including environmental stewardship, social equity, and community engagement, aligning corporate agendas with global sustainable development goals.

However, while many organizations publicly commit to ambitious CSR objectives, there often remains a substantial gap between these commitments and the practical outcomes of their policies – a phenomenon known as "CSR decoupling" (Gull et al., 2023). This decoupling reflects a misalignment between what companies pledge to achieve through CSR and the realworld impact of their efforts. The causes of CSR decoupling are varied and complex, including resource constraints, lack of genuine organizational commitment, and the challenging nature of implementing CSR practices that generate measurable societal benefits. Consequently, the phenomenon of CSR decoupling has emerged as a critical subject of analysis for researchers, policymakers, and business leaders seeking to understand the underlying dynamics that influence the authenticity and effectiveness of CSR.

This paper seeks to analyze the phenomenon of CSR decoupling, with a specific focus on the corporate governance factors that influence the gap between CSR policies and their practical outcomes. By investigating the motivations, structural challenges, and organizational dynamics underlying CSR decoupling, we aim to offer insights into how companies can bridge this gap to foster greater authenticity and effectiveness in their CSR initiatives. Specifically, this research will address the following questions: What governance structures and managerial practices contribute to CSR decoupling? How do certain corporate governance attributes - such as board independence, diversity, and CEO duality - impact the alignment of CSR policies with tangible outcomes? And what changes can organizations implement to ensure their CSR efforts translate into genuine social and environmental contributions?

2 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

The decoupling of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies from actual practices is a topic that has sparked significant debate within academic and business communities. For the purposes of further discussion, we will use the following working definition of this concept: CSR decoupling refers to the misalignment within an organization's corporate social responsibility commitments, where there is a disconnect between the company's stated CSR objectives and its actual practices or the efficacy of its chosen methods.

Therefore, it is important to emphasize that there are several types of decoupling to distinguish between, namely Means – Ends Decoupling and Policy – Practice Decoupling (Figure 1).

Means – Ends Decoupling and Policy – Practice Decoupling are concepts that reveal discrepancies within corporate social responsibility (CSR) processes. These terms describe instances where a company's actual activities diverge from its stated goals, strategies, or policies, highlighting potential gaps in its commitment to CSR (Luan, 2024; Wang, Yu, et al., 2024).

Both forms of CSR decoupling reflect challenges in balancing transparency with credibility. Greenwashing erodes trust by exaggerating efforts, while brownwashing may prevent valuable CSR

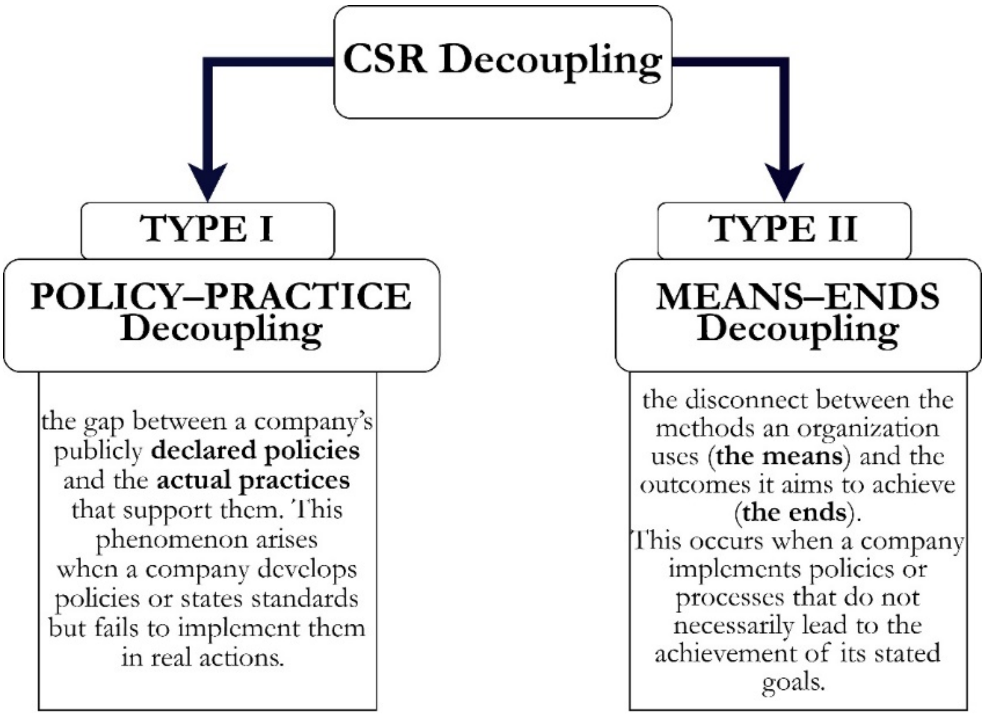

Figure 1 Two types of CSR decoupling

initiatives from gaining recognition and momentum. In either case, authenicity and openness are essential to building and maintaining a trustworthy CSR image (L. He & Gan, 2024).

Based on a thorough review of existing literature and the reasoning outlined within it, this research puts forward the following hypotheses for examination:

Hypothesis 1: Board independence is negatively correlated with CSR decoupling.

Hypothesis 2: Board diversity is negatively correlated with CSR decoupling.

Table 1 Prior studies on CSR decoupling

	Authors	Dependable variables	Independent variables	Sample	Main findings
1	(L. He & Gan, 2024)	CSR decoupling	public attention	5633 annual observations from Chinese A-share listed firms spanning 2011–2020	„Our results show that firms subjected to heightened public attention tend to engage less in CSR decoupling. … public attention effectively inhabits CSR decoupling through information and supervision channels” (L. He & Gan, 2024, p. 1)
2	(Khan et al., 2024)	CSR decoupling	financial expert CEOs	2,513 firms operating in 29 countries from 2006 to 2017	„The result shows that financial expert CEOs reduce the CSR gap” (Khan et al., 2024, p. 430).
3	(Wang, Wang, et al., 2024)	CSR decoupling	female CEOs and female directors	Chinese listed hospitality and tourism firms spanning 2009–2020	„The results obtained through the cluster-adjusted fixed effects regression method show that female CEOs are negatively correlated, suggesting that firms with a female CEO are unlikely to engage in CSR decoupling” (Wang, Wang, et al., 2024, p. 1).
4	(C. He et al., 2023)	CSR decoupling	financial performance	Chinese listed firms from 2008 to 2020	“that CSR decoupling is negatively associated with firms’ financial performance” (C. He et al., 2023, p. 1859)
5	(Ali Gull et al., 2023)	CSR decoupling	board gender diversity (BGD)	9276 firm-year observations for the period 2002–2017	“our results confirm that BGD is negatively associated with CSR decoupling” (Ali Gull et al., 2023, p. 2186)
6	(Gull et al., 2023)	CSR decoupling	the presence and composition of a corporate social responsibility (CSR) committee	listed firms drawn from 41 countries	“we found that the presence of a CSR committee on the corporate board is negatively associated with CSR decoupling. … larger CSR committee size and a greater independence and longer tenure of its members negatively affect CSR decoupling” (Gull et al., 2023, p. 349)
7	(Zhang, 2022)	CSR decoupling	analyst coverage	listed firms in China for 2010–2019	“analyst coverage decreases CSR decoupling, and that the negative association is more pronounced for non-state-owned firms and for firms with high information asymmetry” (Zhang, 2022, p. 620)
8	(Abweny et al., 2024)	CSR decoupling	CSR committees, standalone CSR reports, and CSR contracting	4884 firm-year observations corresponding to 445 UK-based firms listed on the FTSE All-Share Index between 2007 and 2017	«CSR-focused governance mechanisms diminish CSR decoupling and enhance CSR credibility in UK firms» (Abweny et al., 2024, p. 1)

Hypothesis 3: Board size is negatively correlated with CSR decoupling.

Hypothesis 4: Supervisory board size is negatively correlated with CSR decoupling.

Hypothesis 5: Management experience is positively correlated with CSR decoupling.

Hypothesis 6: The chairman concurrently serving as CEO is positively correlated with CSR decoupling.

Hypothesis 7: The number of board committees is negatively correlated with CSR decoupling.

Hypothesis 8: The number of senior executives is negatively correlated with CSR decoupling.

3 Method

3.1 Measuring CSR Decoupling

CSR decoupling denotes the gap between a company's stated CSR activities and its actual CSR practices. For Chinese listed companies, CSR disclosure data is sourced from the CSMAR database (hereafter referred to as CSRD), while CSR performance scores are provided by Hexun.com (hereafter referred to as CSRScore). The following formula is used to quantify CSR decoupling:

$$\mathrm{CSR}_{\mathrm{Decoupling}} = \frac{CSRD - meanCSRD}{sd(CSRD)} - \frac{CSRScore - meanCSRScore}{sd(CSRScore)} \quad (1)$$

3.2 Econometric Model

To assess the impact of corporate governance structure variables on CSR decoupling, we employ an empirical model that incorporates eight corporate governance variables along with four control variables.

$$\begin{aligned}\mathrm{CSR}_{\mathrm{Decoupling}i,t} &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 \mathrm{BoardIndependence}_{i,t} + \\ &+ \beta_2 \mathrm{FemaleBoardRatio}_{i,t} + \beta_3 \mathrm{Boardsize}_{i,t} + \\ &+ \beta_4 \mathrm{SupBoardSize}_{i,t} + \beta_5 \mathrm{AverageAge}_{i,t} + \\ &\beta_6 \mathrm{CEODuality}_{i,t} + \beta_7 \mathrm{CommitteeNum}_{i,t} + \\ &+ \beta_8 \mathrm{ExecutivesNumber}_{i,t} + \beta_9 \mathrm{LnSize}_{i,t} + \\ &+ \beta_{10} \mathrm{Leverage}_{i,t} + \beta_{11} \mathrm{ListYears}_{i,t} + \\ &+ \beta_{12} \mathrm{IndustryID}_{i,t} + u_{i,t} \qquad (2)\end{aligned}$$

There,

The dependent variable, BoardIndependence, is the proportion of independent directors;

FemaleBoardRatio is the proportion of female directors;

Boardsize is the number of board members;

SupBoardSize is the number of supervisory board members;

AverageAge is the average age of management personnel;

CEODuality represents whether the chairman also serves as the CEO;

CommitteeNum is the number of committees;

ExecutivesNumber is the number of senior executives;

LnSize is the natural logarithm of total assets, used to measure company size;

Leverage is the leverage ratio;

ListedYears is the number of years since listing;

IndustryID is the industry code, used to control for industry differences.

Table 1 lists the definitions and calculation methods of the variables.

3.3 Sample selection and data processing

This study selected publicly listed companies in China as the research sample, with the initial dataset comprising annual report data for all companies listed on China's A-share market from 2010 to 2022. Given that CSR scores on Hexun.com are available starting in 2010, our analysis spans a 13-year period from 2010 to 2022.

Data on financial indicators and corporate governance attributes were obtained from the CSMAR database, with any missing values supplemented from the annual reports of the listed companies. Obvious errors in the data were removed to ensure accuracy. Following best practices from similar studies, we screened and refined the initial sample. Specifically, we excluded companies from the financial industry, such as banks and insurance firms, as well as companies that had received delisting warnings or ceased trading. To minimize the influence of outliers on regression outcomes, we conducted a manual check for outliers and applied winsorization to continuous variables at the 1% and 99% levels. This final dataset includes 2,676 companies and a total of 22,795 observations.

For data analysis, we employed Stata 18.0 to perform descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The regression analysis controlled for variables such as company size, leverage ratio, listing years, and industry classification. Table 2 presents the annual distribution of the data, showing a year-by-year increase in observations.

Table 3 presents the industry distribution of observations. The largest sector represented is manufacturing, which accounts for 63% of the total observations, followed by wholesale and retail at 6.11%, and real estate at 5.61%.

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for 22,795 observations from 2010 to 2022, detailing the minimum, maximum, mean, median, and standard deviation for each variable. A lower CSR

Table 1 Variables Definition

Variable	Abbreviation	Definition
Dependent variables		
Account conservatism	CSR_Decoupling	Formula (1)
Independent variables		
Ratio of independent directors	Board Independence	Number of independent directors / Number of board members
Percentage of female directors	FemaleBoardRatio	Number of female directors/board size
Board Size	BoardSize	Number of board members
Size of the Supervisory Board	SupBoardSize	Number of Supervisors
Average age of management	AverageAge	Mean(age of management)
CEO Duality	CEODuality	1 = Chairman and CEO are the same person 0 = Other Situation
Number of committees	CommitteeNum	Number of special committees established by the board of directors
Number of senior management personnel	ExecutivesNumber	Number of senior managers
Control variables		
Firm Size	LnSize	Natural log of total assets
Leverage	Leverage	Total liabilities/total assets
Listed Years	ListYears	Current year-IPO year
Industry No.	IndustryID	Industry No.

Data source: Author's statistics.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics by year

Year	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cum. (%)
2010	1491	6.54	6.54
2011	1697	7.44	13.99
2012	1838	8.06	22.05
2013	1900	8.34	30.38
2014	1901	8.34	38.72
2015	1966	8.62	47.35
2016	2089	9.16	56.51
2017	2220	9.74	66.25
2018	2506	10.99	77.25
2019	2564	11.25	88.49
2020	2623	11.51	100.00
Total:	22795	100	

disconnect value indicates a smaller gap between a company's disclosed social responsibility commitments and its actual CSR practices.

Table 4 shows that the mean value of CSR disconnection is 0.003, while the median is 0.14, suggesting that the phenomenon of disconnection is widespread. The fact that the median is considerably higher than the mean indicates a negative (left) skew in the data distribution.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of CSR disconnection data. The data does not follow a normal distribution but instead exhibits a bimodal shape, indicating a clear polarization among companies in terms of CSR disconnection.

4. Results

Table 5 presents the correlation matrix among the variables. The strongest absolute correlation is observed between board size and the proportion of independent directors, with a correlation coefficient of -0.442, indicating a significant negative relationship at the 1% level. This is followed by a significant positive correlation between board size and supervisory board size, with a coefficient of 0.356 at the 1% level. The third strongest correlation is between enterprise size and the average age of management, showing a significant positive relationship with a correlation coefficient of 0.355 at the 1% level.

Result (1) represents the regression analysis outcomes, incorporating characteristics of the board of directors, the supervisory board, and control variables. Result (2) includes the personal characteristics of management along with control variables, while Result (3) reflects regression analysis with the inclusion of professional committee settings and control variables. Result (4) is the outcome of regression analysis that

Table 3 Number and Proportion of Firms by Industry Classification

IndustryID	Industry Name	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cum. (%)
A	Agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery	313	1.37	1.37
B	Mining industry	635	2.79	4.16
C	Manufacturing	14360	63.00	67.16
D	Electricity, heat, gas and water production and supply	947	4.15	71.31
E	Construction industry	690	3.03	74.34
F	Wholesale and retail	1393	6.11	80.45
G	Transportation, storage and postal industry	893	3.92	84.36
H	Accommodation and Catering Industry	92	0.40	84.77
I	Information transmission, software and information technology service industry	898	3.94	88.71
K	Real estate	1278	5.61	94.31
L	Leasing and business services	290	1.27	95.59
M	Scientific research and technical service industry	146	0.64	96.23
N	Water conservancy, environment and public facilities management industry	239	1.05	97.28
O	Resident services, repairs and other services	15	0.07	97.34
P	Education	26	0.11	97.46
Q	Health and social work	31	0.14	97.59
R	Culture, sports and entertainment industry	274	1.20	98.79
S	Comprehensive	275	1.21	100.00
Total:		22795	100	

Data source: Author's statistics.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics

VarName	Obs	Min	Max	Mean	Median	SD
CSR_Decoupling	22493	-4.538	3.602	0.003	0.140	1.201
BoardIndependence	22750	0.125	0.600	0.373	0.333	0.055
FemaleBoardRatio	21645	0.000	0.571	0.147	0.111	0.126
Boardsize	22750	0.000	18.000	8.753	9.000	1.757
SupBoardSize	22778	0.000	15.000	3.684	3.000	1.173
AverageAge	22778	35.600	62.860	49.522	49.590	3.095
CEODuality	22418	0.000	1.000	0.227	0.000	0.419
CommitteeNum	22774	0.000	8.000	3.961	4.000	0.462
ExecutivesNumber	22750	0.000	40.000	6.458	6.000	2.471
LnSize	22794	13.076	28.636	22.361	22.203	1.386
Leverage	22794	0.040	1.994	0.465	0.457	0.222
ListedYears	22795	1.000	30.000	11.962	12.000	7.128

Data source: Author's statistics

Table 5 Correlation matrix

	CSR_Decoupling	Board Independence	FemaleBoardRatio	Boardsize	SupBoardSize	AverageAge	CEODuality	CommitteeNum	Executives Number	LnSize	Leverage	Listed Years
CSR_Decoupling	1											
BoardIndependence	0.020***	1										
FemaleBoardRatio	0.011*	0.020***	1									
Boardsize	-0.078***	-0.442***	-0.104***	1								
SupBoardSize	-0.062***	-0.090***	-0.101***	0.356***	1							
AverageAge	0.065***	-0.001	-0.151***	0.195***	0.151***	1						
CEODuality	0.066***	0.110***	0.091***	-0.176***	-0.159***	-0.147***	1					
Committee Num	0.043***	0.032***	-0.002	0.021***	0.034***	-0.009	-0.012*	1				
Executives Number	-0.032***	-0.032***	-0.081***	0.236***	0.152***	0.104***	-0.042***	0.040***	1			
LnSize	0.002	0.043***	-0.150***	0.256***	0.255***	0.355***	-0.137***	0.055***	0.315***	1		
Leverage	0.005	0.008	-0.080***	0.126***	0.159***	0.053***	-0.107***	0.046***	0.108***	0.339***	1	
ListedYears	0.020***	-0.008	-0.075***	0.091***	0.191***	0.220***	-0.195***	-0.019***	-0.019***	0.267***	0.266***	1

Notes: This table gives Pearson's coefficients between each pair of variables. All variables are defined as in Table 1. The p-values are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate significance at 0.1, 0.05 and 0.01, respectively.

Source: Author's calculations.

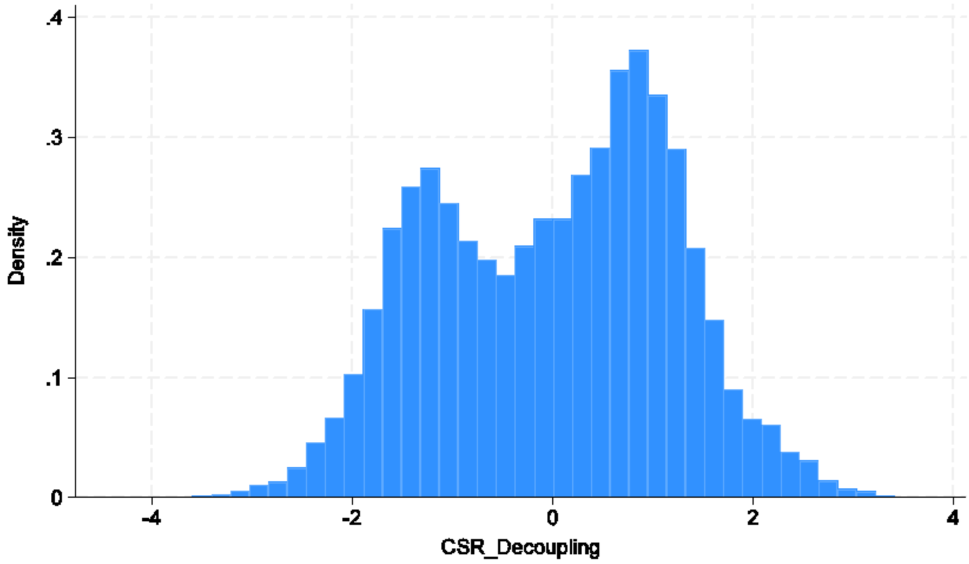

Figure 2 Distribution of CSR disconnected data

Table 6 Regression Results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	CSR_Decoupling	CSR_Decoupling	CSR_Decoupling	CSR_Decoupling
BoardIndependence	-0.638***			-0.930***
	(-3.23)			(-4.65)
FemaleBoardRatio	0.308***			0.353***
	(4.14)			(4.72)
Boardsize	-0.079***			-0.080***
	(-10.76)			(-10.75)
SupBoardSize	-0.096***			-0.093***
	(-8.66)			(-8.36)
AverageAge		0.053***		0.051***
		(14.80)		(14.05)
CEODuality		0.209***		0.155***
		(9.67)		(7.04)
CommitteeNum			0.132***	0.127***
			(5.78)	(5.40)
ExecutivesNumber			-0.024***	-0.012***
			(-5.82)	(-2.82)
LnSize	0.090***	0.038***	0.079***	0.064***
	(9.26)	(4.03)	(8.34)	(6.27)
Leverage	0.146***	0.090*	0.032	0.207***
	(3.03)	(1.94)	(0.70)	(4.26)
ListedYears	0.063***	0.066***	0.069***	0.057***
	(35.29)	(36.71)	(39.57)	(31.29)
IndustryID	-0.048***	-0.043***	-0.047***	-0.044***
	(-14.07)	(-13.11)	(-14.52)	(-12.80)
_cons	-1.213***	-4.012***	-2.621***	-3.523***
	(-5.50)	(-17.28)	(-12.40)	(-13.15)
N	21359	22120	22443	21020

Notes: All variables are defined as in Table 1. The p-values are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate significance at 0.1, 0.05 and 0.01, respectively.

Source: Author's calculations

integrates all independent variables alongside control variables. Across these results, only the coefficients have shifted, while consistency and statistical significance remain unchanged.

There is a significant negative correlation between board independence and CSR disengagement (-0.930, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that independent directors typically offer objective and unbiased oversight, reducing the risk of insider control. The presence of independent directors helps ensure that management actions align with the interests of shareholders and other stakeholders, including CSR commitments, thus reinforcing a checks-and-balances system that effectively reduces CSR disconnect.

Board diversity, as measured by the proportion of female directors, is significantly and positively associated with CSR disconnect (0.353, $p < 0.01$). This result suggests that the increase in female directors among Chinese listed companies may reflect formal diversity requirements rather than substantive improvements in board decision-making quality or CSR performance. Consequently, this "symbolic addition" may limit female directors' influence in decision-making, preventing them from effectively promoting CSR improvements.

Board size shows a significant negative correlation with CSR disconnect (-0.080, $p < 0.01$), indicating that larger boards generally bring more expertise and diverse viewpoints, which enhance decision-making quality. With more members, boards can address a wider range of stakeholder needs and consider long-term impacts in CSR decisions, thereby reducing CSR disconnect.

The size of the supervisory board also exhibits a significant negative correlation with CSR disconnect (-0.093, $p < 0.01$), indicating that companies with larger supervisory boards experience less CSR disconnection. This effect parallels that of board size, as larger supervisory boards tend to positively correlate with larger boards of directors, as reflected in the correlation matrix.

Management experience, measured by the average age of executives, has a significant positive correlation with CSR disconnect (0.051, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that older managers may be more conservative and inclined toward traditional methods, often lacking the sensitivity or motivation to address emerging social responsibility issues and innovative CSR practices. Such conservatism can lead to a gap between declared CSR commitments and actual performance.

CEO duality– where the chairman concurrently serves as CEO – has a significant positive correlation with CSR disconnect (0.155, $p < 0.01$). This concentration of decision-making power may reduce diversity in perspectives and weaken the checks and balances needed in the decision-making process, leading to inadequate oversight and a potential disconnect between CSR practices and commitments.

There is also a significant positive correlation between the number of special committees and CSR disconnect (0.127, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that the increase in special committees may serve to fulfill regulatory requirements or showcase corporate governance rather than genuinely enhance CSR practices. These committees may lack substantial operational influence, resulting in a disconnect between CSR commitments and actual implementation.

Finally, the number of managers exhibits a significant negative correlation with CSR disconnect (-0.012, $p < 0.01$), indicating that a higher number of managers can bring more specialized knowledge and diverse perspectives. This diversity supports improved CSR decision-making, as managers offer varied insights that contribute to more comprehensive and effective CSR practices.

The analysis confirms six of the eight hypotheses, indicating significant correlations that align with expectations for several corporate governance attributes. Specifically, board independence, board size, supervisory board size, management experience, CEO duality, and the number of senior executives all demonstrate statistically significant relationships with CSR decoupling, supporting hypotheses 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8. These findings suggest that aspects such as a larger board and supervisory board, a higher count of senior executives, and independent directors contribute positively to reducing the disconnect between CSR policies and practices. Conversely, hypotheses related to board diversity (hypothesis 2) and the number of board committees (hypothesis 7) are not supported by the data, indicating that increased diversity and additional committees do not necessarily enhance CSR alignment, potentially due to symbolic or formalistic practices that lack substantial impact.

5 Discussions and Conclusions

The findings of this study provide important insights into the relationship between corporate governance attributes and CSR decoupling, shedding light on both supportive and unexpected patterns. Consistent with our expectations, board independence, board size, supervisory board size, management experience, CEO duality, and the number of senior executives demonstrate significant associations with CSR decoupling. These results suggest that governance structures with strong oversight mechanisms – such as independent directors and larger boards – are more likely to bridge the gap between CSR policies and actual practices. The role of experienced management and the presence of numerous senior executives contribute diverse perspectives and a range of expertise, which seem to drive organizations toward genuine CSR engagement, aligning formal commitments with operational outcomes. Additionally, the finding that CEO duality is positively correlated with CSR decoupling underscores the potential risks of concentrated decision-making power, where a lack of checks and balances may limit the board's ability to enforce CSR effectively.

Unexpectedly, the hypotheses concerning board diversity and the number of board committees were not supported. The positive correlation between board diversity, specifically the presence of female directors, and CSR decoupling suggests that formal diversity may not automatically translate into meaningful decision-making influence on CSR matters. This outcome raises questions about the extent to which diversity requirements in corporate governance foster genuine engagement versus symbolic compliance, where diversity's intended impact on CSR practices is not fully realized. Similarly, the finding that a greater number of board committees correlates with CSR decoupling points to the possibility that these committees may exist more for compliance and appearances than for practical influence on CSR practices. This formalistic approach may detract from the committees' potential to provide substantive oversight and enhance CSR alignment.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the significant role that specific corporate governance attributes play in reducing or exacerbating CSR decoupling within organizations. Our findings confirm that attributes such as board independence, board size, supervisory board size, management experience, CEO duality, and the number of senior executives are closely linked to CSR alignment, suggesting that well-structured and balanced governance mechanisms can support a more authentic integration of CSR policies into organizational practices. Independent directors, in particular, appear to enhance oversight and ensure that managerial actions align with stakeholder interests, while larger boards and supervisory boards provide diverse perspectives, helping to address a broader range of stakeholder needs and long-term sustainability considerations. Additionally, we find that CEO duality and extensive management experience may contribute to CSR decoupling, perhaps due to concentrated power dynamics or conservative management tendencies that resist progressive CSR initiatives.

Conversely, board diversity and the number of board committees do not show a direct positive impact on reducing CSR decoupling, raising questions about the potential symbolic nature of diversity initiatives and committee structures within corporate governance frameworks. These findings underscore the importance of not only having governance structures in place but ensuring they are meaningfully engaged in promoting CSR commitments. Future research could further explore the nuances of these relationships, particularly in different cultural and regulatory contexts, to refine our understanding of how corporate governance can more effectively bridge the gap between CSR policies and practices. Ultimately, our study suggests that a thoughtful, strategic approach to governance is essential in achieving genuine CSR alignment and minimizing the risks of superficial compliance.

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