

1) The Impact of Corporate Governance on CSR in Chinese Manufacturing Industries*

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<Abstract>

Based on stakeholder theory and the literature on corporate governance, this study empirically investigates how corporate governance influences corporate social responsibility(CSR) in Chinese manufacturing industries. By utilizing survey data from 1,268 firms, we demonstrate that while state ownership, the number of independent directors and the presence of an audit committee are positively related to CSR, CEO duality has a negative impact on CSR. Our findings reflect the significant role of corporate governance on CSR, which, therefore, provides guidance for Chinese enterprises on how to improve the internal governance mechanisms and CSR engagement.

*Key Words: corporate governance, corporate social responsibility(CSR), state ownership, independent director, CEO duality, audit committee

I . Introduction

* This work was supported by the research fund of Hanyang University(HY-2018).

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Nowadays, corporate social responsibility(CSR) becomes a core business function that is vital to firm's success(Carroll and Shabana 2010). Facilitated by the globally growing concerns on social and environmental sustainability, governments in emerging countries are extensively promoting legislation, policies, and incentives on social and environmental issues(Zhao et al. 2014; Chen et al. 2018). Besides, the rights protection awareness of citizens in emerging countries is also growing with rapid economic growth(Zhao et al. 2014). Not only the increasing external pressures from the government and the public but also the benefits of survival and long-term development that CSR could bring require firms in emerging countries to engage in CSR activities.

However, in China, the responses of firms to social and environmental issues vary; some firms only symbolically engage in CSR activities or still ignore CSR(Zhang and Luo 2013; Wang et al. 2015). Scholars argue that the unique institutions in China play an important role in the varying responses to CSR(Luo et al. 2017). Institutional environments within which firms are embedded are external factors that influence firms' structures and strategies(Wang et al. 2015). Although prior studies have argued that different corporate governance mechanisms can affect firms' CSR performance(John and Greening 1999; Aguinis and Glavas 2012; Jain and Jamali 2016), empirical findings are fragmented and inconclusive in explicating how a firm's internal governance mechanisms may influence its CSR activities in China(Walls et al. 2012; Hussain et al. 2018). Past research indicated that China's underdeveloped institutions, weak enforcement of rules, and/or institutional voids lead to firms' CSR reporting in low quality and CSR decoupling(Marquis and Qian 2014). Under such an institutional environment, whether and how corporate governance affects firms' engagement in CSR are an intriguing issue to be examined.

Like firms in many other emerging economies, Chinese firms have adopted the Anglo-Saxon model of corporate governance mechanisms(Lau et al. 2016; Liao et al. 2018). But whether the governance mechanisms have the substance in the context of emerging countries has been questioned(Khan et al. 2013).

While the effectiveness of Chinese firms' corporate governance on financial performance is widely examined, the effects of specific types of governance mechanisms on CSR still need to be investigated. A major heterogeneity in corporate governance between Chinese firms and their counterparts in other economies is the prevalent state ownership, especially in large firms and/or public listed firms(Li and Zhang 2010), leading to research topics as to how such ownership type influences CSR and as to whether factors that drive CSR in developed countries previously investigated by scholars also determine CSR in the context of China. From the perspective of corporate governance, the fact that a large portion of major firms in China can have a dual position that can belong to both the government and the private sector is a representative institutional peculiarity in China(Li et al. 2006). Chinese firms' corporate governance such as state ownership and/or CEO duality and its impact on CSR have deserved scholarly attention(Kolk and Pinkse 2010).

Therefore, this research aims to identify potential factors of corporate governance that may affect CSR activities and conduct an empirical analysis in the context of China. We investigate how CSR activities of Chinese firms in manufacturing industries are influenced by (i) an ownership type, i.e., state ownership; (ii) board characteristics, i.e., independent director and CEO role duality; (iii) the quality of a firm's financial mechanisms, i.e. the establishment of audit committee.

By using survey data collected from 1,268 firms, our test shows that state ownership, the number of independent directors, and the presence of an audit committee are positively related to CSR, but CEO duality has a negative impact on CSR. The results suggest that sound corporate governance could lead to more engagements in CSR activities.

Our study contributes to the CSR literature by providing evidence on how corporate governance, including state ownership, independent directors, and audit committee, shapes the firm's CSR engagement in the context of China. Recent research on CSR in China has largely focused on the effects of institutions, which investigate the antecedents of CSR from external environments(Zhang and Luo 2013; Luo et al. 2017). The internal governance

mechanisms' impact on CSR has been understudied and lacked empirical research. This study contributes to a better understanding of the effects of corporate governance on the CSR engagement of Chinese firms.

This study also has some practical implications for firms. It provides empirical evidence and guidance for Chinese firms on how to improve social responsibility through the improvement of internal governance mechanisms. Although only manufacturing industries are included in our sample, it provides firms in other industries with references and implications. In particular, the recent emphasis on the corporate governance and social responsibility activities of foreign-invested companies in China will be of great significance to companies that are entering or planning to enter China.

II. Literature and Hypotheses

Recently, scholars in the management and strategy field argue that "governance should be understood using a stakeholder lens", and some indicate that "corporations should juggle multiple goals"(Sundaram and Inkpen 2004).

According to stakeholder theory, developing relationships with stakeholders and promoting stakeholders' interests over time are critical for realizing business success(Freeman et al. 2004). Past evidence demonstrates that stakeholders tend to show positive responses to businesses that directly or indirectly contribute to their well-being(Bhattacharya and Sen 2009; Puncteva-Michelotti et al. 2018). Conversely, irresponsive to stakeholder concerns may cause financial and reputational damage to firms(Zhao et al. 2014).

Thus, the stakeholder approach suggests that corporations should make their governance more responsive to the needs of both shareholders and other stakeholders, and "encourage the participation of stakeholders in the governance process" to balance and integrate multiple relationships and

objectives(Freeman and Reed 1983; Sundaram and Inkpen 2004). In order to effectively address stakeholder concerns, firms should be deeply connected, collaborating with relevant stakeholders and monitoring their points of views(Crilly and Sloan 2012).

Engagement of CSR activities is one of the primary mechanisms for firms to foster and maintain trustful relationships with stakeholders(Barnett and Salomon 2012). Literature indicates that firms can benefit financially from advancing stakeholders' interests or contributing to the local community, and firms building stakeholder influence capacity through continuously engaging in CSR activities achieve better financial performance(Porter and Kramer 2011; Barnett and Salomon 2012; Zhao et al. 2014).

The literature on corporate governance suggests that ownership dispersion across many investors contributes to increased pressure for voluntary disclosures(Ullmann 1985; Chau and Gray 2002; Cullen and Christopher 2002). As one of the primary investors, state ownership not only confers government endorsement, benefits firms with enhanced legitimacy(Baum and Oliver 1991; Aguilera et al. 2007) but also enhances firm's efficiency by facilitating access to extra resources, such as subsidies/tax holidays, which can help to enhance firm performance(Pfeffer and Salancik 1987). At the same time, state ownership makes the government plays an influential role of stakeholder in the corporate governance process, which means that firms should respond to government expectations.

Since 2000s, the Chinese government has strengthened legislations and regulations and undertaken numerous initiatives on social and environmental issues to encourage companies to participate in CSR activities(Zhao et al. 2014). When an initiative is necessary or mandatory, executives are more likely motivated to increase their investment in CSR strategies. Marquis and Qian(2014) argued from an institutional perspective that firms in China respond strategically to government signals and actions regarding CSR issues.

Government expectations of stated-owned firms to address government concerns are higher(Luo et al. 2017). The Chinese government plays a

considerable role in regulating national economic activities, regulations, and laws. Thus, firms with state ownership can be particularly motivated to comply with the government's policies to win government approval and obtain resource benefits(Oliver and Holzinger 2008; Luo et al. 2017). In contrast, ignoring or non-responsiveness to government concerns can cause a threat to the firm's legitimacy.

As noted above, we expect state ownership to be positively related to CSR, and the hypothesis states as follows:

H1: There is a positive relationship between state ownership and CSR activities.

Board is a company's highest decision-making organization and also is the core of the company's internal governance. An independent director(also known as an outside director) is a member of the board of directors who does not have a material or pecuniary relationship with the company and related persons, except sitting fees. Independent directors can function as a reliable mechanism to diffuse agency conflicts between owners and managers(Fama and Jensen 1983). They can provide the necessary checks and balances needed to enhance board effectiveness(Franks et al. 2001).

The core of the agency problem is a lack of trust between managers and shareholders, which translates into a threat to, or concern about, the legitimacy of management's decisions supposedly taken in the best interests of shareholders. Generally, it is believed that independent directors strengthen the board by monitoring activities of management and ensure that investors' interests are protected(Petra 2005). The independence of director representation plays an important role on both improving governance and seeking external legitimacy(Johnson and Greening 1999; Ahmed and Duellman 2007). Additionally, independent directors are perceived to be better at fulfilling the firm's obligations, including CSR, as doing so could enhance their current and future reputation(Ntim and Soobaroyen 2013). Independent directors thus may be more motivated to put pressure on managers to engage in CSR practices. Hence, the hypothesis states as follows:

H2: There is a positive relationship between independent directors and CSR

activities.

CEO duality, i.e., the role of CEO and chairperson held simultaneously by one person, is quite common in Chinese firms. According to the previous research, the combination of CEO and chairman positions tends to result in leadership and governance issues. Critics of CEO duality argue that duality compromises board effectiveness in monitoring the CEO. They assert that CEOs with the dual role of the chairman are more likely to pursue selfish interests that are inconsistent with shareholders' values (Kesner and Johnson 1990). Gul and Leung (2004) found that CEO duality is associated with a lower level of voluntary corporate disclosure.

In contrast, the separation of the roles of chairman and CEO could enhance monitoring quality in critical decisions about stakeholder responsiveness (Li et al. 2008). Haniffa and Cooke (2005) offer a view that the separation of the two roles provides checks and balances for the performance of management. The separation of the role of CEO and chairman could promote greater corporate transparency and responsibility.

As noted above, CEO duality is more likely to be associated with lower levels of CSR activities since it provides a greater degree of discretion and thus may enable the CEO less accountable for the greater interest of stakeholders (Haniffa and Cooke 2002; Gul and Leung 2004). Therefore, the hypothesis states as follows:

H3: There is a negative relationship between CEO duality and CSR activities.

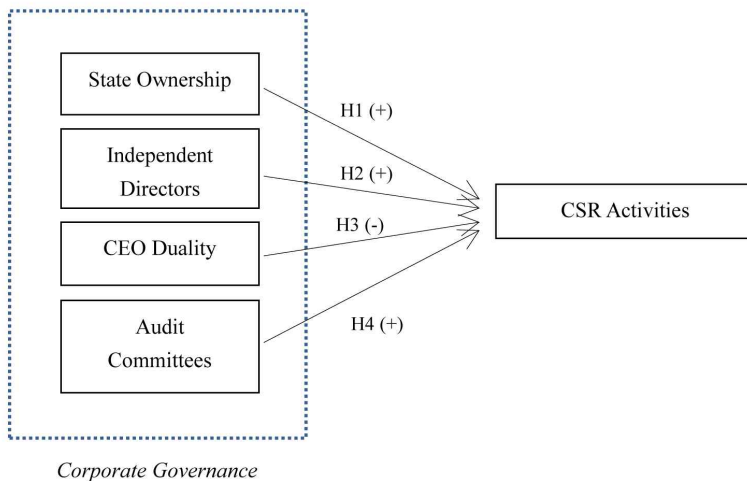
The audit committee is a specialized governing body within a company. The audit committee has four main functions: selecting the audit firm, providing guidance to auditors, reviewing the audit report, and informing the company board of directors of the results of the audit. The committee is separate from the regular governing boards to ensure a fair and unbiased audit review.

Audit committees comment on and approve choices of accounting policies, and therefore influence a company's approach towards financial reporting and disclosure (Khan et al. 2013). Audit committee has a responsibility to ensure

that a company's financial reporting is void of any misrepresentation or misleading information. The committee may also play a significant role in the oversight of a company's risk management policies and programs where there is no board risk management committee charged with this function. Studies have reported that the audit committee can reduce misrepresentation or misleading information on the company's financial statements. Pomeroy and Thornton(2008) conducted a meta-analysis of the audit committee's effect on financial reporting quality and found a positive relationship between audit committee existence and financial reporting quality in emerging economies. Effective monitoring can help to protect the interests of shareholders and the company property. And audit committees may have a significant influence on the corporate social disclosure. Hence, the hypothesis states as follows:

H4: There is a positive relationship between the presence of audit committee and CSR activities.

<Figure 1>



III. Methods

1. Sample and Data Collection

The main survey carried out by the Republic of China National Security Bureau and was conducted by an online survey platform and telephone interviews to firms located in 12 cities¹⁾ which represent China, including provincial-level cities, county-level cities, and central region. The survey included only firms with annual sales of more than 5 million yuan in manufacturing industries, because the size of firms with sales of less than 5 million yuan is too small, and their behavior would not show much variation in CSR. Respondents of the survey are managers, and they were asked to provide information about the firm's CSR activities. At first, it was planned to survey 100 firms in each city, but during the implementation phase, firms that were surveyed in some cities are more than 100. As a result, the total sample includes 1,268 firms. The average size of the sample firms is 743 workers. The average annual sales of the sample firms reached 364 million yuan. Half of the firms' annual sales are less than 50 million yuan, and two-thirds of firms' annual sales are less than 100 million yuan.

The individual survey was supplemented to get information from the employees' perspectives and compare them with the results obtained from the main survey to ensure reliability. In addition to the firm survey, a simple questionnaire was conducted in each sample city to extract the basic city-level information such as population, economic growth, unemployment, and pension and healthcare insurance coverage. This questionnaire was filled out by the local statistical bureau staff in each city.

2. Dependent variable

The dependent variable is CSR activities(CSRA) which is divided in four dimensions: environment, product, charity and ethics, and measured by 7 items in total(Zahra & Stanton 1988; Fama and Jensen 1983; Franks et al.

1) 12 cities from north to south are Changchun, Dandong, Chifeng, Beijing, Shijiazhuang, Xi'an, Zibo, Chongqing, Shiyao, Wujiang, Hangzhou, and Shunde. These cities constitute a reasonable representation of China in terms of geographic locations and economic, social, and legal indicators.

2001; Haniffa and Cook 2005; Erhand et al. 2003; Li et al. 2008; Ntim and Teerooven 2013). Three items assessed CSR toward environment, including if the firm has a special department of environmental protection or management(Yes=1 and No=0), if the firm has obtained ISO14000(Yes=1 and No=0), if the firm has made environmental or eco-labels(Yes=1 and No=0). CSR toward product assessed by comparing product quality with firms in the same industry, and the firm in which product quality is more than the average level of the industry(2.693) was coded as 1, and as 0 otherwise. Two items assessed CSR toward charity, including if the firm has donated to charities, social welfare activities or charitable organizations in the past three years(Yes=1 and No=0), if the firm has organized or co-organized society, public or charitable activities in the past three years(Yes=1 and No=0). CSR toward ethics assessed by checking whether the firm signs contracts, sales and advertising in a transparent manner, and the firm which score is higher than the average level in the same industry(2.554) was coded as 1, and as 0 otherwise. And then we averaged the total score of the 7 items. At last, we code CSRA into dummy in the way that if the score is more than the average score(0.425), coded as 1 and as 0 otherwise.

3. Independent variables

State ownership was measured by two items, including if the corporate is state-owned(Yes=1 and No=0), and if the largest shareholder of the firm is worked in government departments(Yes=1 and No=0)(Khan et al. 2013; Ntim and Soobaroyen 2013; Jia et al. 2009). And the firm which score is more than the average score(0.189) were coded as 1, and as 0 otherwise.

We included the number of independent directors as an independent variable to examine whether it is positively related to CSR activities(Fama and Jensen 1983; Zahra and Stanton 1988; Franks et al. 2001). Following Chhaochharia and Grinstein(2007), we defined independent directors as those directors who were neither employed by nor affiliated in any other way with the firm.

CEO duality refers to both CEO and chairman of the board held by one person. So CEO duality was coded as 1 if one person holds the position of CEO and chairman simultaneously in a firm, and 0 otherwise (Li et al. 2008; Haniffa and Cook 2005; Gul and Leung 2004; Lattemann et al. 2009).

Audit committees was measured by two items, including if the firm has an audit committee (Yes=1 and No=0), if the firm provides audited financial report to its stakeholders (Yes=1 and No=0) (Pomeroy and Thornton 2008). And the firm which score is more than the average score (0.716) were coded as 1, and as 0 otherwise.

4. Control variables²⁾

We controlled for market and social environments and included industry dummies (Fama and Jensen 1983; Zahra and Stanton 1988; Khan et al. 2013). Measurement of market environments included two items: 1) the degree of competition in major product markets was coded as 1 if the score is more than the average level (2.208), and as 0 otherwise; 2) changes in market prices of major products was coded as 1 if the score is more than the average level (2.300), and as 0 otherwise. Social environments was measured by 2 items, including trust with people (Yes=1 and No=0), if people line up in public places (coded as 1 if the score more than the average 2.010, and 0 otherwise). Industry dummies included 4 categories: machinery, electronics, chemicals, food and other manufacturing.

The descriptive statistics and correlations for the variables in the study are shown in Table 1a and 1b. The variance inflation factor (VIF) did not exceed 10, which suggests no multicollinearity problem (Neter et al. 1983). We used logistic regression analysis to test the relationship between the corporate governance and CSR activities. The goodness of fit of the regression model was evaluated by Hosmer-Lemeshow test, and $\text{sig}=0.421$ ($\text{sig}>0.05$).

2) We are grateful for comments of reviewers on the statistical result of the control variables. Their concerns and suggestions are reflected as a research limitation.

<Table 1a> Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	Median	Std.Dev.
CSRA	.4247	.0000	.4945
Society and market environments	.3097	.0000	.4626
State ownership	.0985	.0000	.3918
Independent directors	3.5167	3.5167	1.8733
CEO duality	.6525	1.0000	.4764
Audit Committee	.7155	1.0000	.4513

Note: CSRA=corporate social responsibility activities

<Table 1b> Correlations between variables

Variables	Constant	Market environments	Society environments	Machinery	Electronics	Chemicals	Food and other	GOVOWN	INDDIR	CEODUA	AUDCOM
Constant	1.000										
Market environments	-.199***	1.000									
Society environments	-.354***	.013**	1.000								
Machinery	-.260***	-.088***	.026**	1.000							
Electronics	-.207***	-.034***	-.030***	.336	1.000						
Chemicals	-.254***	-.022***	.015**	.347	.291	1.000					
Food and other	-.334***	-.020**	-.009***	.491	.405	.423	1.000				
GOVOWN	-.089***	-.003***	.029**	-.049***	-.018***	.028**	-.032***	1.000			
INDDIR	-.480***	-.035**	.002***	-.012***	-.003***	-.025***	-.035***	-.006***	1.000		
CEODUA	-.396***	.069*	-.007***	-.042***	.014**	.003**	-.067***	-.107***	-.008***	1.000	
AUDCOM	-.580***	-.023***	-.027***	-.022***	-.066***	-.006***	.025**	.024**	-.007***	.205	1.000

*, **, *** Statistically significant at less than 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 level

Note: CSRDA=corporate social responsibility activities; GOVOWN=state ownership; INDDIR=independent directors; CEODUA=CEO duality; AUDCOM=audit committee

IV. Results

Table 2 presents the models predicting the firm's CSR activities. As reported in Table 2, in model 1 we estimated the baseline model with only

control variables. Then in model 2, we added four independent variables for CSR activities.

Hypothesis 1 posits that CSR activities are positively related to state ownership. In model 2 of Table 2, the coefficient of state ownership is positive ($p < 0.001$). It implies that state-owned firms are more likely to engage in CSR activities. An increase(decrease) of one standard deviation in state ownership is related to an increase(decrease) of 0.589 percent in CSR activities. Thus, H1 is supported.

In line with hypothesis 2, which proposes that there is a positive relationship between independent directors and CSR activities, the effect of the number of independent directors is positive ($p < 0.05$). It supports the argument that independent directors may put pressure on companies to emphasize societal interests(Haniffa and Cooke 2005) and engage in CSR activities.

In support of hypothesis 3, which proposes that CEO duality has a negative impact on CSR activities, we found a negative coefficient of CEO duality ($p < 0.001$) in model 2. Thus, it suggests that the firms with CEOs who hold the chairman position simultaneously are likely to have less engagement in CSR.

Hypotheses 4 posits the existence of an audit committee influence CSR activities positively. The coefficient of the audit committee is positive and significant ($p < 0.001$). An increase(decrease) of one standard deviation in the existence of the audit committee is related to an increase(decrease) of 1.069 percent in CSR activities. It reflects that the presence of an audit committee increases the likelihood of the engagement of CSR activities. Thus, H4 is also supported.

<Table 2> Logistic regression results

		Model 1		Model2	
		coefficients	Prob.	coefficients	Prob.
<i>Control variables</i>					
Market environments		.154	.182	.067	.578
Social environments		-.079	.521	-.092	.480
(Industry Dummy)	Machinery	.119	.512	.083	.662
	Electronics	.534	.142	.346	.125
	Chemicals	-.222	.286	-.207	.341
	Food and other	-.006	.968	.055	.724
<i>Independent variables</i>					
State ownership				.589	.000***
Independent directors				.075	.036**
CEO duality				-.505	.000***
Audit committee				1.045	.000***
Constant		-.364	.016	-1.147	.000***
X ² =114.536 ***					

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

V. Discussion and Conclusion

This study is motivated by the question of how corporate governance influences CSR. Based on stakeholder theory and the literature on corporate governance, we examined the relationship between four factors in corporate governance and CSR activities in the Chinese manufacturing industry. Our results highlight the important role of state ownership, independent director, CEO duality, and audit committee on the firm's CSR activities, and suggest that sound corporate governance could lead to more engagement in CSR activities.

State ownership is found positively related to CSR activities of the firms in the manufacturing industry. As stated-owned firms are more likely under governmental pressures to concern social and environmental issues, they tend

to be more accountable, engage in CSR more actively, and disclose more information on CSR. Besides, the number of independent directors and the presence of an audit committee are positively related to CSR, but CEO duality has a negative impact on CSR.

While a large number of studies on CSR in China has largely focused on the effects of institutions, which investigate the antecedents of CSR from external environments (Zhang and Luo 2013; Luo et al. 2017), our study contributes to the CSR literature through providing empirical evidence on how corporate governance, including state ownership, independent directors, and audit committee, shapes the firm's CSR engagement in China context.

This study has some practical implications for firms. It provides empirical evidence and guidance for the Chinese enterprises on how to improve social responsibility through the improvement of internal governance mechanisms. Firms should strengthen In China, the candidates of independent directors in many firms tend to be manipulated by the largest shareholder, and even many firms have no independent directors. To ensure the independence of directors, it is suggested that the nomination of independent directors should be decided by stakeholders without board seats, which means that minority stakeholders are also allowed to nominate the list of independent directors. The firms without independent directors are better to consider establishing an independent director system. Besides, firms should also improve corporate governance by separating the position of CEO and chairman since CEO duality is a lack of monitoring and can even cause corruption issues.

Our findings are subject to some limitations. First, the sample only included firms in manufacturing industries. Social problems in manufacturing industries are more prominent and more representative of research due to high energy consumption and high pollution characteristics. But social issues are likely to be different when industry changes. Even the same stakeholder group in different industries tends to have different interests and expectations (Wood & Jones 1995). Although only the manufacturing industries were examined, this study provides firms in other industries with reference and future work could investigate other industries.

Second, this study examined only the firm's governance mechanisms of

state ownership, independent directors, CEO duality, and audit committees. Other governance variables or various factors can affect CSR activities in China. Hence, a number of other variables than the control variables in the study may affect the relationship between corporate governance mechanisms and CSR activities. Additional variables such as corporate vision and strategic goals as control variables should be include in the future research to rigorously control potential compounding effects from omitted variables.

Third, the content of corporate social responsibility involves a very wide range, but this study only investigates 4 types of CSR activities(environment, product, charity, and ethics). Thus, the exploration in CSR is limited, and future work could examine CSR in a more comprehensive and accurate manner.

Fourth, real exemplary cases of Chinese firms that have successfully leveraged their various corporate governance mechanisms to enhance CSR activities are not presented in this study. The inclusion of the real business world cases may provide meaningful insights on a better understanding of the evolution of CSR activities by Chinese firms.

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국문요약

CSR에 대한 기업 지배 구조의 영향 연구 - 중국 제조업 대상으로

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본 연구는 이해 관계자 이론과 기업 지배 구조에 관한 선행연구를 바탕으로 중국 제조업에서 기업 지배 구조가 기업의 사회적 책임(CSR)에 미치는 영향을 실증적으로 탐구하였다. 1,268개 기업의 설문 조사 데이터를 활용하여 국가 소유, 사외 이사 수 및 감사위원회의 존재는 CSR 활동과 긍정적인 관계가 있는 반면, CEO 듀얼리티는 CSR 활동에 부정적인 영향을 미친다는 것을 보여주었다. 조사 결과는 CSR에 대한 기업 지배 구조의 중요한 역할을 반영하므로 중국 기업에 내부 지배 구조 메커니즘과 CSR 참여를 개선하는 방법에 대한 지침을 제공할 수 있다.

주제어: 기업 지배 구조, 기업의 사회적 책임, 국가 소유권, 사외 이사, CEO 듀얼리티, 감사위원회

