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Anna L Samothraki , Konstantinos I Evangelinos , [Ioannis E Nikolaou](#) \*

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*Article*

# The Role of Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Sustainability in alleviating the European Refugee Crisis

Anna L Samothraki <sup>1</sup>, Konstantinos I Evangelinos <sup>1</sup> and Ioannis E. Nikolaou <sup>2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Environment, University of the Aegean, Xenia Building, University of the Aegean, Mytilini, Greece

<sup>2</sup> Democritus University of Thrace: Demokriteio Panepistemio Thrakes Xanthi, Greece

\* Correspondence: author, e-mail: inikol@env.duth.gr

**Abstract:** The refugee crisis has been one of the most challenging problems in the European in recent years, causing sudden and significant political turmoil in most of its member states. Notwithstanding the international treaties on refugee protection, a crucial issue is the reluctance of many local communities to offer refugees access to the labour market and daily social activities. In addition to the difficulties regarding social acceptance, there are also many other legal, social, ethical and political obstacles for refugees. This discussion is mainly limited to the realm of politics and ethics with very few references to the field of management, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and corporate sustainability (CS) where the issues of marginalized people, minorities and vulnerable people are frequently addressed. To fill this gap, this article aims to discuss the role of CSR and CS in overcoming obstacles for refugees in their effort to integrate into the labor market. Through a narrative literature review and snowballing techniques, a theoretical framework is developed to outline the ways that CSR and CS can assist refugees in overcoming different types of obstacles in host countries. Finally, in the discussion, ways in which CSR and CS literature could play a critical role in this discussion are highlighted and how the private sector could relieve the refugee crisis through CSR strategies.

**Keywords:** diversity management; refugees' employment; sustainable development; business ethics; refugees' integration; refugee entrepreneurship; business ethics; corporate sustainability

## 1. Introduction

A significant problem facing the EU of late is the refugee crisis as thousands of refugees have flooded its regions [1]. They enter from various regions (e.g. transit countries like Greece and Italy) and then continue onto northern Europe, causing population concentration and pressures for economic support [2]. Refugees also seem to have impact on the economic figures of host countries such as on the labor market, consumer prices, and housing rents [3]. Furthermore, there are enormous impacts on the costs of the maintenance, training, security and protection of refugees. Also, there are those that maintain that the presence of refugees is a detrimental factor for cultural identity, social cohesion, religion and economic development as they negatively affect vital economic sectors for some countries (e.g. tourism) [4].

Although the refugee crisis has been researched, the focus has been on exploring the balance between the threats and opportunities of refugees having access to the labor market and the conditions required in order to open new businesses [5]. Specifically, regardless of the scientific field, research seems to focus primarily on identifying and documenting the obstacles that refugees face in integrating into the labor market and in trying to open new businesses [6]. The main problems observed are legislative barriers related to asylum procedures, refugees' educational qualifications, work skills and prejudiced perceptions of demographic parameters (e.g. gender, age, color, religion, language) [7]. The obstacles to a refugee opening a business vary between different countries due to

diverse legal requirements (e.g. some countries require a local partner in order to start a new business), complex bureaucracy which refugees are not familiar with and unquestionably the lack of suitable funding for refugees (e.g. a lack of access to the banking system due to a lack of collateral).

Unsurprisingly, most of the solutions proposed to overcome the refugee crisis are mainly related to state interventions both to simplify procedures and to finance their initial needs and set-up costs in the short-term. More recently, however, there has been some discussion on the potential of the private sector to offer assistance in helping refugees access the labor market and entrepreneurship [8]. However, the problems remaining primarily concern the hostile attitude of citizens, local workers and the unemployed towards the employment prospects of refugees as well as the attitude of host country consumers towards the products sold by refugee businesses.

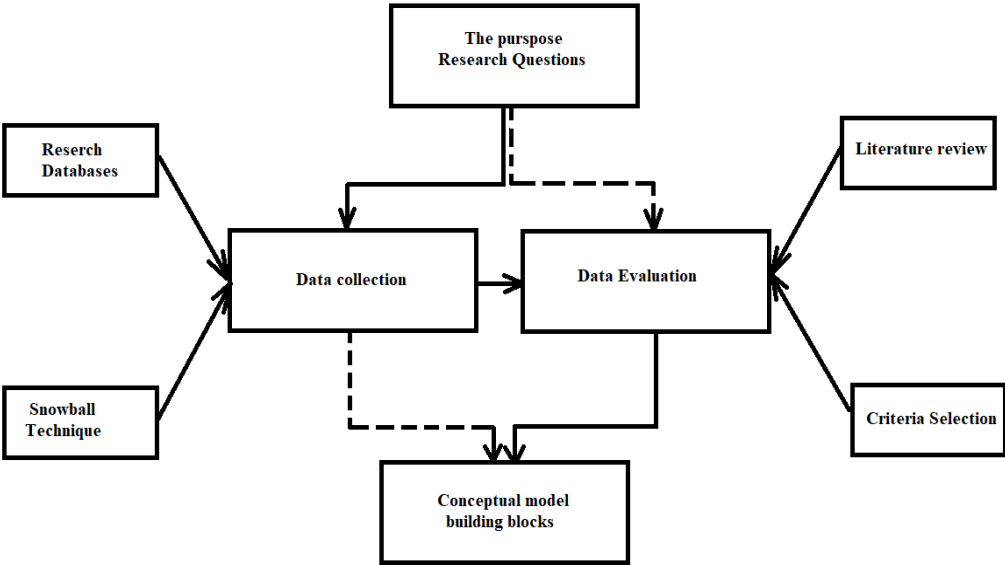
One way of overcoming these hostile and reluctant attitudes among some European citizens could be through CSR strategies focusing on protecting marginalized people, the LGBTI community, refugees and, more generally, for decent working conditions for every diverse worker [9]. So far, the CSR literature has shown little interest in refugees both in the labor market and in the field of entrepreneurship. This paper aims to fill this gap by developing a theoretical framework to discuss the ways that CSR and CS can assist refugees in overcoming different types of obstacles in host countries. Specifically, based on a narrative literature review and snowballing techniques, the main research objective is to highlight the key CSR parameters that will help to address the traditional barriers to refugees' access to the labor market and entrepreneurship. The findings show that CSR could play a critical role in providing assistance in solving various obstacles of refugees and offering win-win solutions for firms, society and refugees.

The rest of the article is divided into three sections. The second describes the methodology of this paper. The third section develops the context analysis to highlight the key points where CSR can play a mediating role in solving the obstacles refugees face in accessing the market. Finally, the conclusions, CSR and CS (CSR & CS) management implications as well as an agenda for future research in CSR- refugee literature will be presented.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The methodology of this study is focused on the literature review, the snowballing technique and conceptual model approach. There are several academics who suggest conceptual models through literature review in the case where very little work has been made in a specific scientific field or in an explicit scientific topic [10]. Today, very few studies have been conducted in the field of CSR-refugees. In general, the refugee crisis has been examined by a variety of scientific fields due to its complexity and the necessity for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches [11]. The lack of conceptual models to describe the relationship between CSR and refugees offers a good basis to build a descriptive conceptual framework.

The suggested methodology includes three steps (Figure 1). The first step focuses on determining the purpose of the conceptual model. In this step, research questions are developed. The second step includes data collection and evaluation techniques. Through classical databases and the snowball technique, the most relevant articles are collected. The snowball technique is utilized to identify further articles through reference lists of the first group of articles selected by searching with keywords [5]. The final articles are selected through some criteria determined according to the scope of the conceptual model. Finally, the most significant building blocks are selected through critical issues which arise from literature analysis.



**Figure 1.** Structure of methodology.

2.1. *The purpose of the conceptual model – research questions*

The purpose of the suggested conceptual model is to highlight the most critical factors/obstacles hindering the integration of refugees into both the labor market and entrepreneurship as well as the successful lessons of the CSR literature which could play a critical role in overcoming existing obstacles. As previously mentioned, a hostile environment exists in the host countries causing significant problems for the refugees in their efforts and willingness to identify a decent job and start a new business. Some efforts have been made from public organizations themselves or through NGOs to overcome some such problems; nevertheless the literature shows that very little effort has been made by the private sector and socially responsible businesses to overcome these difficulties [5].

The CSR literature focuses on discussing issues of marginalized people and how it can provide assistance either by their employment in a business or by funding employment programs from the firms. However, this discussion has paid little attention to refugees since very little is mentioned regarding the role of CSR in their integration into the labor market and entrepreneurship. However, the problems faced by refugees are complex and not only economic in nature, so the key absence in this discussion is to identify how existing knowledge of CSR literature can contribute to refugee integration into the labor market and entrepreneurship. To this end, the purpose of the suggested conceptual model focuses on responding to the following scientific questions:

**RQ1:** How could CSR overcome barriers of refugees in their effort to integrate into the labor market?

**RQ2:** How could CSR overcome the barriers refugees face in starting a new business?

2.2. *Data collection – Snowball technique*

For the collection of suitable literature, the classical scientific search engines were used along with scientific databases and publishers including Scopus, Elsevier, Springer, Willey, Taylor and Francis, SAGE and Emerald. The first step is choosing suitable keywords to be used in the search to find the most relevant articles. Table 1 shows the keywords used to collect the relevant articles.

**Table 1.** the reference lists of the articles then collected were analyzed in order to highlight relevant articles to answer the research questions of this article.

a.a	Keywords	Description
K_1	Refugees and labor market	The rationale for choosing these keywords was to highlight the main points of the general literature on barriers to refugee access to the labor market and entrepreneurship. In particular, the aim was to draw on the literature on critical variables that will help build the conceptual model.
K_2	Refugees and entrepreneurship	
K_3	Refugees’ employment	
K_4	Refugee workforce	
K_5	Barriers for refugees’ employment	
K_6	CSR and refugees	These keywords are intended to identify information regarding CSR and refugee issues.
K_7	CSR and refugees’ employment	
K_8	CSR and refugees’ entrepreneurship	

2.3. Data evaluation

From the initial screening carried out, a great number of articles were found. The search was focused mainly on financial, business, economics and management journals; it covered aspects such as the title, the summary and the keywords. The results from the first search are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The total number of articles per keyword and database.

Keywords	Publishers and Databases						
	Scopus	T &F	Elsevier	Springer	Wiley	Emerald	SAGE
K-1	638	1650	1295	630	4992	1274	126
K_2	164	385	153	276	816	505	25
K_3	1370	2458	1177	1011	6212	1612	107
K_4	169	461	482	112	1515	591	27
K_5	139	845	772	176	2121	832	35
K_6	15	51	77	21	119	155	9
K_7	1	48	38	13	101	80	7
K_8	0	375	21	8	22	55	2

These articles addressed a number of refugee issues beyond the scope of this study. A number of issues that were ruled out concerned refugees after World War II. Another series of issues concerned refugees mainly in non-EU countries (e.g. USA, Canada, Lebanon, and Middle East) and many articles were very old. The final selection from the first screening was 850 articles. It should be noted that the selection of articles was done with keywords with various properties provided by the sources of information. The analysis of the articles shows that some were not related to the scientific questions of this article. Furthermore, the quality of the articles was not always at a suitable scientific level and appropriate for the exact purpose of the article. For these reasons, some additional criteria were set such as the year of publication, the title and the content of the article. Based on the new criteria and the use of the snowball technique, the final number of articles from which the conclusive selection was made was 150.

3. Results

3.1. Conceptual model - building blocks

This section attempts to determine the critical factors influencing the integration of refugees into the labor market and entrepreneurship, and describes the way in which CSR practices can help today to overcome the existing barriers to refugee employment or starting new business. The suggested conceptual model consisted of seven building blocks (Figure 2).

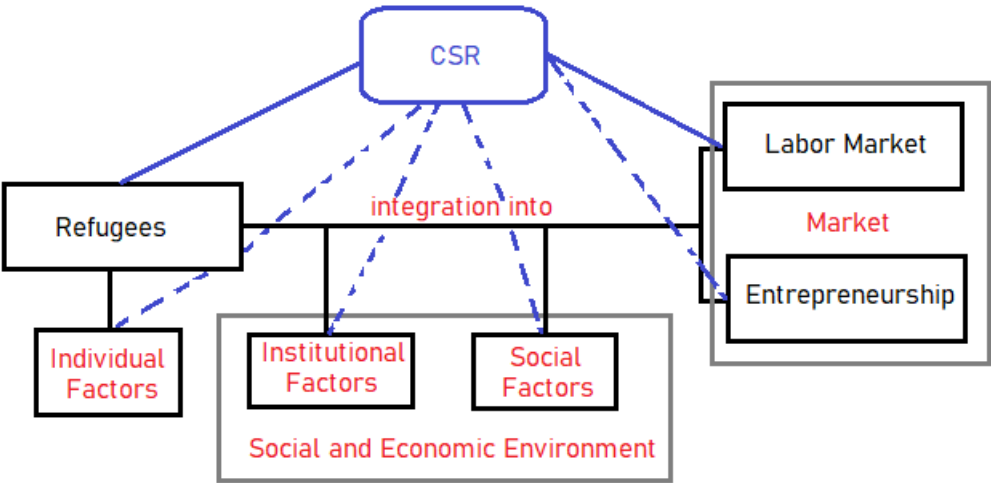


Figure 2. Theoretical Framework.

The core idea of the model consists of three basic building blocks: the refugees and the market where the refugees can potentially work (BB\_2: labor market) and the businesses the refugees may establish (BB\_3: entrepreneurship) (Table 3). This is the main issue today because after the refugee crisis, a large number of displaced people have moved in Europe with impacts on the state and social cohesion. A number of policy initiatives to alleviate the problems of refugees and host countries has focused on constantly integrating of refugees to the market (e.g. labor or entrepreneurship) in order to strengthen their financial and social autonomy.

Table 3. Refugee integration into the labor market and entrepreneurship.

BB*	Title	Indicative Literature	
		BB_2 Labor market	BB_3 Entrepreneurship
BB_1	Refugees' integration	[15]; [16]; [17]	[12]; [13]; [14]

\* BB: Building Block.

As can be seen from the analysis, refugees face many barriers. These obstacles can be divided into three categories according to their social, institutional and individual origin. The first category of obstacles are related to individual features such as lack of sufficient language skills or educational and professional skills as well as mental health problems and lack of capital. These are personal



factors which hinder integration into the labor market and entrepreneurship (Table 4). The second category includes institutional barriers related to regulatory restrictions (e.g. asylum processes, residency permits), bureaucracy, corruption and lack of financial tools (Table 4). The final category implies social barriers or factors regarding the social acceptance of refugees, local consumers’ demand and social networks (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Barriers/factors affecting refugees’ integration into the labor market and entrepreneurship.

BB*	Title	Barriers	BB_2	BB_3	Indicative
		description	Labor Market	Entrepreneurship	Literature
BB_4	Individual factors	Language	x	x	[18]; [19]
		adequacy			
		Professional	x	x	[18]
		skills			
		Educational	x	x	[20]; [19];
		skills			[21]
		Emotional	x	x	[16]
		distress			
		Mental health	x	x	[16]
		problems			
BB_5	Social factors	Financial		x	
		capital			
		limitations			
		Public	x	x	[22];
		acceptance			
		Local		x	[23]
		consumer			
		acceptance			
		Social		x	[24]
		Networks			
		Cultural habits	x	x	[25]

BB_6	Asylum	x	x	[18]; [26];
	processes			[16];
	Residency	x	x	[18]; [26]
	Institutional permits			
	factors	Discrimination	x	[26]
		Criteria for job selection		
		Lack of financial tools	x	[27]; [28]
		Bureaucracy	x	[29]; [30];
		Public corruption	x	[29]; [31]

\* BB: Building Block.

The last part of the conceptual model contains the CSR and refugee issues. To date, authors have mainly focused on the integration of refugees as employees in businesses that have adopted CSR or through funding in employment programs under the auspices of various NGOs (Figure 2: blue lines). The aim of the conceptual model is to clarify how the current experience of CSR and good examples could assist in overcoming existing obstacles and create necessary conditions in order for refugees to gain access to both the labor market and entrepreneurship. Due to the restricted discussion regarding such topics as well as the theoretical contribution of existing literature, dotted blue lines are used to show the relationships between CSR and the obstacles of refugees (Table 5).

Table 5. The CSR contribution to overcome refugees obstacles.

BB*	Title	Contribution		Indicative literature
		BB_2 Labor	BB_3 Entrepreneurship	
BB_7		Market		
	CSR, HRM and refugees	x		[32]; [33]; [34]
	CSR and decent work	x		[35]
	CSR and NGOs cooperation for	x		[36]



employee						
programs						
CSR	and	x		x		[37]; [38]
refugees						

\*BB: Building Blocks.

**CSR and individual barriers/factors**

Given the focus of CSR literature on marginalized people, the limited discussion on the issue of refugees is extremely surprising [39]. This situation could be justified in some ways by analyzing the theoretical background and trends regarding the concept of CSR. As is well known, CSR does not include commonly accepted terms, definitions or theoretical approaches [40]. By reviewing a number of articles, [41] identifies five different approaches of CSR in relation to various theoretical frameworks: stakeholders, sociology, economy, voluntarism and environmental science. Theoretical approaches can be divided into two categories in relation to those that focus on the economy-driven benefits for firms and those that stem from ethics-driven incentives. There are many conceptual constructs that focus on increasing corporate economic performance and those that promote strategies to meet the needs of external stakeholders.

Starting from the economy-driven approaches of CSR, known as the business case, the fundamental objective of firms is to adopt CSR projects with the intention of drawing substantial earnings [42]. The attention of this concept is more on corporate financial performance and not on addressing ethical issues in society [43]. This is a valuable approach to justify the concept of CSR from the mainstream economic theory where many of its representatives consider CSR as an illegitimate strategy against the actual mission of creating and operating a firm (e.g. meeting consumer needs and increasing shareholders financial benefits) and ultimately high risk for a firm’s viability [44]. Similarly, the managerial theories that attempt to justify the adoption of CSR result in increasing financial returns or decreasing costs of firms [45]. The natural resource-based theory [46] and CSR knowledge-based theory [47] highlight that CSR creates explicit and implicit resources and capabilities in the firm that help to create new innovations[48], competitive advantage [49], intellectual capital [50], improved reputation [51] and obviously offer suitable conditions for increasing profits [52].

Although the economic, managerial and instrumental orientation of the concept of CSR provide a convincing explanation why CSR literature today has barely examined issues pertaining to refugees, a thorough analysis of refugees by the managerial theories of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Diversity Management (DM) could make progress in the refugee discussion and provide an explanation about the necessity of examining these issues in CSR literature. Many academics have discussed the connectivity of DM and HRM with CSR in order to increase creativeness, innovations, employee effectiveness and the efficiency of the workforce [38]. Some of the critical points of the CSR discussion seem to highlight issues related to the DM, either as the choice of the business case to draw benefits or as a management strategy of firms mainly to legitimize its operational procedures [53]. Certainly, the agendas related to DM and CSR seem to have common roots since both discuss the way in which different employees could contribute to create new knowledge and an organizational culture that will legitimize the operation of the firm and provide a competitive advantage.

The CSR theories with an ethical orientation (e.g. business ethics) seem quite familiar with topics regarding marginalized people like refugees. However, there is no significant progress in the discussion of refugee issues in the CSR literature either on a theoretical or practical level. The coupling of business ethics and DM implies the recruitment of diverse employees mainly from an ethical point of view rather than from a strategic management point of view [54]. It is worth noting that the theoretical foundation of CSR, as shown by Carroll’s pyramid, also leaves ample room for

ethical activities by firms that go beyond the requirements of the law. Regardless of the theoretical basis orientation, CSR has, or should have, an important role in solving problems arising from the refugee crisis. To date, the limited discussion has focused on a practical level examining the way CSR supports employment programs for refugees carried out by NGOs. On a theoretical level, the limited analysis focuses on examining ways to incorporate necessary criteria in the processes of hiring refugees through the CSR-HRM strategy.

Despite the efforts to facilitate the integration of refugees into the market, CSR can and should play a more critical role in overcoming the remaining obstacles that refugees face in order to access the labor market and entrepreneurship. As previously mentioned, the first set of obstacles and barriers refer to inadequate language skills, low educational and professional levels, and mental health problems. These issues are examined in the CSR literature mostly for countries such as the USA and the Middle East that have more experience in immigrant and refugee issues as they are a favorable destination for decades. In particular for the USA, CSR examined the educational problems under the term of worker illiteracy referring to the lack of sufficient skills and qualifications for a job [55].

Additionally, the efforts made in this area are mainly both inside and outside of the firm. Particularly, through CSR, firms contribute by training employees or potential employees to various organizational topics. This is achieved through funding training programs to upgrade the qualifications of employees or through the funding of NGO training programs to educate citizens as is done in African countries [56]. A similar role is played by firms through CSR to eradicate poverty and promote equality of citizens, especially in developing countries ([57]; [58]). The majority of such examples refers to developing countries where public policy is not able to solve the problems of its marginalized people. The weakness of public policy has prompted the private sector and international organizations to prepare a series of standards to which large firms must comply, such as SA 8000, ILO guidelines for human rights and the OECD guidelines for multinationals [59].

The mainstream view in the European Commission is that for social welfare and the rule of law, the state not the private sector is responsible. Nevertheless, the new environment created by the existing number of refugees and the new arrivals expected in Europe (after recent events in Afghanistan) as well as the public finance constraints (after the debt crisis of EU members states) pave the way for the private sector to help in the refugee crisis. Specifically, through CSR strategies the private sector is able to emulate good practices and develop new ones to finance permanent education programs to educate refugees with basic knowledge and skills (e.g. reading, speaking), European culture and modern social values.

Additionally, the educational and professional obstacles of refugees are good ground for CSR literature to provide certain strategies to create education, training and professional programs. One indicative good example in the CSR literature which could inform the literature of CSR-refugees comes from the car manufacturer, Mazda in Japan where significant donations to education programs for HIV/AIDS were made [60]. Similarly, [61] describes the CSR strategy of Bablos Bank which focuses on financing universities, public schools, and student scholarships. Additionally, a good example is given by Microsoft's program to develop a Lebanese training center in computer handling and programming for citizens and refugees.

The other substantial issue which should be discussed in the relevant literature is the adequate skills that refugees need in order to start their own business. In terms of individual characteristics, the main obstacles focus on language, education and professional competence. It is worth noting a wide range of relevant literature does not exist in the field of CSR. However, considering the relevant discussions that have taken place on SMEs and family businesses, it seems that the good practices implemented for immigrants and marginalized groups can contribute to the development of the debate on CSR and the entrepreneurship of refugees.

Nowadays, some practices carried out by socially responsible businesses are the financing of social enterprises or firms in the third sector and the integration of social criteria in procurement, thus leading SMEs to adopt socially responsible strategies [62]. There is no extensive literature regarding responsible firms and refugees or immigrants. CSR and immigrants' literature focuses on examining

the perception of immigrants regarding CSR and the effect of the institutional environment of the host country on CSR perceptions of immigrants ([63]; [64]). However, CSR is a tool focusing on dealing with the problems of marginalized people either for charitable reasons or less as a source of employees [65]. In the field of entrepreneurship, its role could be multifaceted and crucial as it could contribute to financing basic education for refugees (e.g. language) or vocational training through entrepreneurship programs.

These programs will firstly help refugees to develop their skills to get the necessary education and training for the labor market of the host country. Additionally, CSR programs with some stable planning and funding, may create permanent and stable structures for the general and vocational education of refugees and contribute to the assimilation of the values, beliefs and principles of the host country. Moreover, this will overcome the lack of capital refugees face when entering the host country to train and enter the labor market.

#### **CSR and social barriers/factors**

One of the most significant obstacles for refugees is their acceptance in local communities and host countries. The local people are usually hesitant regarding the presence of refugees in their country seeing them as negatively influencing their social and religious identity and representing low-cost employees that seemingly threaten job stability and security. Social acceptance is necessary for refugees in order to have access to the labor market as the objections of local communities create a negative environment which also makes the business community reluctant to develop employment programs for refugees.

Likewise, the acceptance of consumers is also a significant obstacle for refugee entrepreneurship. There are cases where consumers seem to avoid buying products of refugees' enterprises, which is a necessary condition for the viability of any type of entrepreneurship. Stereotypes, racism and xenophobia are features reflected in the consumer preferences of host countries [66]. In Belgium, [67] identified that some local people who visit refugee businesses have exhibited unfriendly behavior towards refugee employees and entrepreneurs.

Another vital element in finding employment and starting a business is significant and wide social networks. The concept of social networks includes, inter alia, extended and close relationships with people in the host country who could assist in promoting and consuming the product, raising adequate financial capital and creating trust with suppliers [68]. Starting a firm requires trust between entrepreneurs and stakeholders which in the case of refugees seems to be extremely weak.

In this field, the CSR & CS discussion is very weak. To overcome social obstacles for assisting refugees to have easier and unhindered access to the market, the general discussion of CSR & CS literature can be useful. One valuable body of CSR & CS literature refers to the influence of CSR on consumer preference regarding socially responsible products produced by marginalized people [69]. Many socially responsible businesses have certified their CSR processes (such as Fair-Trade labelling) in order to offer a clear signal to consumers about their responsible behavior [70]. These types of labels indicate that certified firms and products have established work conditions respecting the rights of local people in developing countries. Similar types of labels could be extended to developed countries to incorporate criteria regarding refugees having safe, decent and secure access to the market either as employees or entrepreneurs. This could also enhance the trust of consumers regarding the products of refugees. Similarly, some corporate sustainability reporting provides guidance (e.g. GRI) for firms to record and disclose information regarding marginalized people [9].

Another significant body of CSR & CS literature, useful for CSR-refugee solutions, focuses on the effect of national culture on CSR and vice versa [71]. National cultural features are examined which, directly and indirectly, are linked to CSR (e.g. CSR strategies, CSR reporting). By drawing information upon the National Business System Theory, [36] examine the ways in which institutional factors of different countries affect the communication strategy of large firms regarding refugee issues. Similarly, a body of CSR & CS literature shows the opposite direction which implies the way in which the operations of mainly large firms affect national culture [72]. In this sense, CSR creates new norms, beliefs, ethical principles, trust and social capital for firms' stakeholders [73].

In the field of immigrant entrepreneurship, it is seemed that there is shown a positive relationship between the socially responsible culture of society and CSR. [63] identified that national culture influences the perception of immigrant entrepreneurs regarding CSR. In the opposite direction, it would be useful to argue that firms may incorporate refugee-related issues into their CSR strategy with the intention of diffusing the issues to the people of the host country and reinforcing their perceptions and beliefs about the acceptance of refugees. This is useful for the access of refugees to employment and entrepreneurship.

The role of CSR could be also a crucial element in the effort of creating or strengthening existing social networks for refugees. Large socially responsible businesses could assist in ensuring trust between refugee entrepreneurs and suppliers as well as assisting in the field of product promotion and identification of consumers. The CSR & CS literature highlights that CSR strategies strengthen social capital and social networks which play a critical role in increasing the firm's performance by increasing the trust of society towards the business community [74]; [75]). These practices would contribute to strengthening the social capital of local communities which some consider that it is threatened from the presence of refugees in their society and entrepreneurship.

#### **CSR and institutional barriers/factors**

One crucial factor which influences the easy access of refugees to the market is the rigid institutional regime of the host countries. Regulatory requirements play a critical role for everyone trying to access the business and labor market. As is known, various country-level institutional regimes are existing which delineate certain rules within which each agent of the market should operate. The existing regulatory requirements have created a hostile and unfavorable environment for refugees wishing to work and create businesses in the host counties.

The obstacles for refugees are significant and often challenging as they relate to obtaining residency permits and asylum. These are extremely difficult to overcome through the private sector alone (via CSR); the assistance of the public sector is also needed to speed up asylum processes or provide interim residency permits to facilitate the access of refugees to employment. For starting a new business, the existing uncertainty and complexity of the market environment have generated a lot of weaknesses and disincentives for potential refugee entrepreneurs.

It is worth noting that the institutional environment is examined by the management literature either as incentives for firms to make social and environmental innovations or as disincentives requiring additional financial capital to comply with regulatory requirements. Following this rationale, two categories of CSR & CS literature have been identified. The first category is related to CSR strategies driven from regulatory requirements which can be classified into two further categories according to the reactive and innovative effect ([76]; [77]). Reactive refers to the case where firms adopt CSR practices as the outcome of regulatory requirements without gaining additional benefits [78], while the innovative approach are related to the views of [79] where under specific circumstances the regulatory requirements may lead to win-win solutions for firms (e.g. economic and environmental-social benefits). The second body of literature focuses on the voluntary nature of CSR leading to business benefits (the proactive attitude). Similarly, in the literature on entrepreneurship, the institutional framework is sometimes an obstacle (faced as regulatory risks) and at others, an opportunity for new types of entrepreneurship such as green and social entrepreneurship [80].

In this sense, the resolving of the refugee crisis, which is expected to intensify with the recent prevalence of extreme fundamentalist religious groups in Afghanistan, should be done with the assistance of the private sector which could draw humanitarian, reputational, social and economic benefits. The institutional barriers that refugees face in accessing the labor market can offer opportunities for firms to design new CSR strategies to solve the problems of refugees and society, as well as to develop new innovative CSR tools which can also improve the social image and economic position of firms. Some types of jobs involving refugees could have multiple benefits for firms, refugees and society alike.

Drawing on diversity management, resource-based and knowledge-based theories, the strategy of firms in creating jobs for refugees could be justified. The employment of refugees is expected to

bring new approaches and processes to firms helping them in making new innovations and improving their economic performance [81]. These strategies will also strengthen the CSR and CS profile by improving the accountability and legitimacy of firms (through disclosing more CSR information) and their reputation offering a clear social license to operate and especially to promote human rights issues either inside or outside of businesses. [82] identify that sampled German and Swedish firms enact various measures through CSR to contribute to alleviating the refugee crisis are going beyond the maximization of shareholder value to also providing humanitarian benefits to society.

To overcome institutional barriers that may be insurmountable in some countries (e.g. the employment of refugees during the asylum process), firms could, using CSR, finance NGOs to implement employment programs in the camps. This would help to overcome legal barriers as well as the barriers set by local communities to the integration of refugees into the labor market.

Another essential part of the CSR & CS literature deals with the political role played by firms through CSR & CS strategies. As can be seen today, as globalization progresses, the role of firms, especially large one, is extremely important as they have gained a great deal of power in relation to states which are gradually being weakened. Using their power, large corporate leaders, can offer assistance in global social and environmental problems by participating to international movements such as the Global Climate Coalition and social movements in support of same sex marriage [83]. Political CSR has focused on both the macro and micro-level such as problems of international importance which the global community seek to solve [84]. To this end, the connection of CSR with corporate diplomacy is also a useful body of literature which could contribute to the refugee crisis. Specifically, corporate diplomacy through CSR aims to overcome the weaknesses and the gaps of institutional operations in a country [82].

Despite the considerable criticism that these ideas have received, mainly because of their power and ability to change social and economic environments by by-passing the state, which should be the main decision maker to handle common resources [85], they could play a supporting role in the refugee crisis. A number of initiatives at both the national and international level could help overcome certain institutional obstacles such as asylum procedures and residence permit for refugees.

Finally, one of the biggest obstacles facing entrepreneurs in general and potential refugee entrepreneurs in particular, is adequate financial capital to invest in their business ventures. As previously mentioned, refugees are unable to have easy access to financial instruments. The types of entrepreneurship that refugees have made so far and the lack of borrowing collaterals usually implies microfinance for them. To overcome these restrictions, large firms could organize financial tools to finance refugee business projects either independently or to operate together. Thus, the institutional weakness of financing can be successfully addressed as is done in developing countries through microfinance and then larger financing when businesses are successful and need additional funds to grow (Table 6).

**Table 6.** CSR interventions on overcoming obstacles for refugees.

Obstacles	CSR Interventions
1. Individual	Business training programs for refugees
	Business employment programs for refugees
	Business hiring criteria selection for refugees
	CSR-NGOs educational and training programs
	CSR-NGOs employment programs for refugees



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	CSR-social enterprises educational and training programs
	CSR financing university grants
2. Social	Ethical and socially responsible labels
	PCSR practices to create new norms, ethical principles, trust and social capital
	Strengthen social capital for refugee firms through stakeholders
	Strengthen trust among refugees and suppliers
3. Institutional	CSR-NGOs collaboration
	PCSR to promote institutional changes
	Provide collateral to refugee entrepreneurship
	Promote and support microfinance

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4. Discussion

This paper fills the gap in CSR & CS literature regarding the ways in which it could assist in solving the refugee crisis. The literature has focused mainly on CSR-HRM and CSR-NGOs' collaboration to introduce criteria for refugees in hiring processes or to finance the promotion of refugee employment projects of NGOs. Despite the significant contribution of such research, other relevant literature of CSR & CS could assist in overcoming obstacles to employment integration.

One significant contribution is to connect the CSR & CS literature with refugees (a marginalized group) and mainly with the key obstacles of refugees in accessing the market. These obstacles are classified in three categories: individual, social and institutional factors which might be solved by CSR & CS literature [86]. The suggested classification aims to clarify the key topics of refugee literature for CSR scholars and create common ground for introducing this classification into CSR & CS literature. Essentially, each category emerges CSR & CS literature and new areas for research opened up. New literature streams open from CSR & CS literature which provide sufficient solutions in order to integrate refugees into the market and enrich the CSR literature with new insights for another significant marginalized group.

One body of CSR & CS literature which deals with the refugee problem is CSR-HRM mainly in the stage of hiring refugees. It suggests suitable criteria in order to hire refugees either as a CSR strategy employing marginalized people or as a strategy to improve the CSR profile of firms by employing refugees. The suggested conceptual model offers the tool in order to analyze the individual factors/obstacles and clarify them for the CSR & CS literature to identify appropriate criteria for firms to employ refugees. It also highlights a clear role for the CSR & CS literature in helping refugees gain access to the labor market which is a key priority today in order to face refugees crisis in EU [87].

Another significant contribution is made by the body of CSR-NGOs collaborations [33]. Firstly, the analysis of this paper shows that there is the need for the private sector to develop employment programs together with NGOs in order to avoid social and institutional obstacles which hinder refugees. For example, the low acceptance of refugees by society and legal obstacles thwart their willingness to participate in the labor market. The hostility of local communities to refugees make businesses cautious in regard to refugee issues out of fear of provoking a social back lash (e.g. product boycotts) if they organize employment programs for refugees. The suggested context provides an opportunity for CSR & CS to create alliances with NGOs to support refugee employment projects

providing a clear picture of the obstacles, the necessity of CSR-NGOs alliances, the benefits to the private sector and communities and to the refugees themselves [36]. Furthermore, this analysis also contributes to the CSR-NGOs literature where very little work has been made regarding refugee issues.

The suggested approach also highlights the need for Political CSR (PCSR) and corporate diplomacy, not only to create better public relations with stakeholders but also to fill the institutional gaps which hinder refugees' integration into employment. The necessity of PCSR literature is to transfer experience from good examples to manage refugee issues. It is useful to understand that firms are not only economic agents which affect politics through lobbying, but also contribute to the general institutional environment [87]. This implies that the governance model of firms needs transformation in order to contribute to the formation of global regulations in an effort to protect public goods [87]. Through CSR strategies, the business community should contribute to refugee problems by helping transform global regulations and contribute to public goods (e.g. education, health and safety for all citizens, including refugees). The suggested conceptual model and analysis contribute to this PCSR literature in order to place refugee issues at the center of the CSR & CS agenda [88].

Another useful contribution of this paper is connecting CSR literature with DM literature. The DM highlights the need for broader workforce diversity by hiring employees from different religions, ages, disabilities, nationality, ethnic origins, cultural backgrounds and sexual orientation. Although many scholars of CSR & CS justify the connection between CSR and DM through the institutional theory and ethical theory, a number of studies explain this relationship through financial incentives [89]. The analysis of this paper shows that the literature of CSR-DM provides a good ground for encouraging firms to hire refugees to contribute to the solution of the refugee problem. The CSR-DM management could provide convincing reasons to explain why the private sector should employ refugees.

Another contribution of this paper is to highlight the duty of firms to offer decent work for employees. This discussion is also placed in the corporate SDGs [90]. According to the SDGs, firms should comply with Agenda 200 and the Millennium Goals of Sustainable Development of the United Nations. The eighth goal refers to "Decent Work and Economic Growth" which is translated to the business community as labor relations, health and safety issues, training programs, equality between genders, diversity and equal opportunity [91]. CS and CSR should incorporate issues regarding refugees into the field of diversity and equal opportunity.

This paper urges the revisiting of the basic theoretical frameworks of CSR & CS in order to integrate refugee topics. Several classical theories are based on ethical issues which assist marginalized people to overcome their problems. For example, the classical model of business ethics are based on Western philosophy such as Aristotle, Hume, John Stewart Mill, Kant, John Lock and Rawls [92]. There are approaches of classical teleological (e.g. utilitarianism, ethical egoism, and ethical care) and deontological which might assist in integrating refugee problems. The teleological approach of ethical care of Gilligan (1987) provides the theoretical context in order discuss firms helping marginalized people. In this logic, firms can help refugees mainly to overcome the problems they face in Western countries and assist their families in increasing their wellbeing and protecting their members (e.g. finance the schools of their children). The deontological approach offers a clearer context for firms to protect refugees as a result of their human rights.

Other theoretical approaches of CSR are based on the natural based view of firms and knowledge-based view of firms which imply that CSR strategies assist firms in creating new knowledge resources and gain financial benefits [47]. This approach could discuss refugee issues in order to identify how discrimination in the workforce could offer an internal environment to develop new resources difficult to imitate and complex. Socially responsible firms can integrate refugee issues to achieve new innovations and benefits. Similarly, the business case approach of CSR creates the context to integrate refugees into businesses, mainly to create sufficient organizational culture and learning which provide competitive advantage and a better financial position of firms.



The stakeholder theory of CSR seems to have a low degree of usefulness in the refugee issue as stakeholders often have little power to play a role in the decisions of firms. The stakeholder theory explains the adoption of CSR projects as a result of stakeholder power and practically this means that firms adopt CSR strategies to meet the needs of stakeholder groups with greater power [93]. Refugees have less power to change business behavior in Western countries since they are not treated as consumers.

Finally, this paper contributes to the CSR-entrepreneurship literature which create conditions to facilitate refugee entrepreneurship. Thus far, there is no literature to explain how CSR could play a critical role in refugee entrepreneurship. The literature of entrepreneurship has paid more attention to the obstacles refugees face in creating new businesses. However, CSR could be a good vehicle to overcome most of the barriers in order to make new businesses such as economic support, knowhow, education and professional skills, and strengthening social acceptance. Additionally, a useful body of CSR literature focuses on social entrepreneurship which is a good vehicle to promote refugee entrepreneurship [94]. This indicates that socially responsible firms could promote refugee entrepreneurship through social entrepreneurship.

## 5. Conclusions

This paper develops a conceptual model to explain the role of CSR in the relationship between refugees and their ability to access the labor market. It highlights the key role of CSR in facilitating the easy access of refugees to employment and entrepreneurship. The model is built on three groups of obstacles: individual (e.g. knowledge of language, education and professional skills), social (e.g. social acceptance of refugees) and institutional (e.g. legal restrictions on refugees).

Furthermore, the conceptual model places emphasis on two important issues for refugees in the market: their access to the labor market and entrepreneurship. These issues are critical for the integration of refugees in Western economies and societies. The critical issue of the suggested conceptual model is the emphasis of the role CSR & CS models in the refugee crisis and how well they connect with each other (e.g. CSR-HRM, CSR-NGOs, CSR-DM).

This paper has some limitations which could be good ground for future research. Firstly, this paper offers a limited discussion regarding the theoretical connection between the CSR & CS theoretical frameworks and the refugee crisis. In particular, a very restricted discussion has been made in CS literature on refugees crisis. This is a very interesting area for future research. In-depth studies should examine the connection between CS and the refugee crisis. Another limitation is the lack of empirical data regarding the views of CSR managers, society and refugees themselves regarding the role of the private sector in relation to refugee issues.

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