

# **LEVERAGING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) TO ADDRESS ECO-ANXIETY**

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## ABSTRACT

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<p>The purpose of this study is to explore the potential intersection of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and eco-anxiety and how the CSR as a concept can be leveraged if ecopsychological dimensions are considered and incorporated into its framework. During the research, an exploratory and a casual question are guiding the research process which are: RQ1: What could be the strategies and practices employed by companies to address eco-anxiety for internal stakeholders? RQ2: To what extent are Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Patagonia trying to address eco-anxiety. The literature review offers a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, introducing various perspectives and definitions related to eco-anxiety and CSR. This thesis employs a theory-driven content analysis approach to investigate the relationship between eco-anxiety and CSR practices. Furthermore, it provides an analysis on how CSR initiatives by Patagonia are aligning with addressing eco-anxiety among different stakeholders. In addition, the research provides a list of practices to alleviate eco-anxiety introduced in an individual approach which consist of 16 initiatives classified into 4 groups, namely "Physical and emotional", "Proactive, sustainable", "Educational and professional" and "Community based" practices. During the research, this list is translated into an organizational approach, entailing 16 initiatives and 4 new groups namely: "well-being and supportive", "policies and organizational", "awareness and educational", "community engagement and collaborative" practices in the context of internal stakeholders to establish a guideline for different business entities. By examining individual and organizational practices to mitigate eco-anxiety and linking them to CSR strategies, the study contributes to advancing theoretical understanding in the fields of ecopsychology, CSR, and employee well-being. The conclusion sections aim to answer the research questions and draw key findings. The findings highlight the strengths and challenges of current CSR initiatives, eco-anxiety and dovetailing the two terms, emphasizing the need for integrated approaches that prioritize stakeholder well-being alongside environmental sustainability. The recommendations for future research and the limitations of the study are mentioned.</p>	
Key words Eco-anxiety, CSR, CSR initiatives, ecopsychology, Patagonia,	
Place of storage	

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays sustainability is becoming undoubtedly one of the most important guidelines and topics hence the occurring environmental, societal and economic problems that we are facing. Because of the greenhouse gas emissions created by different human and non-human activities, climate change is already with us, which is recognized as one of the most significant risks to global health in the 21st century (Watts et al., 2018). Nonetheless, climate change not only impacts our planet but also exerts an adverse influence on our mental well-being, potentially leading to distress and negative effects on people's minds. People, especially the younger generation, increasingly acknowledge human contributions to climate change, leading to heightened concern and negative emotions. This anxiety drives various pro-environmental actions, including reducing carbon footprints, supporting sustainable products, and engaging in environmental activism. However, it can also have adverse effects on mental health and behavior. This phenomenon is widely called climate-, or eco-anxiety (Pihkala, 2020a). Although the term eco-anxiety is getting its attention and there is a growing number of researchers who are focusing on the effects of climate change on mental health it should be noted that there are more negative emotions occurring related to it, such as eco-anger or eco-depression. (Stanley et al., 2021).

As the recognition of eco-anxiety emerges and the engagement towards sustainability increases, the question arises if these should be more heavily intertwined together. Business sectors and companies eager to adopt environmentally friendly solutions and carbon-neutral alternatives must be scrutinized to determine if they are adequately addressing this phenomenon. The concept of CSR along with the practices would provide a good basis to address this psychological phenomenon since CSR serves as a bridge between businesses and environmental and societal concerns, making it highly relevant in the context of climate change and sustainability. Certainly, since this is a psychological phenomenon, alleviating may differ individually but there are practices that may help alleviate eco-anxiety.

Consequently, the need to address these intertwined issues of climate change and mental health led to the choice to concentrate on the interaction

between CSR, eco-anxiety and if corporate social responsibility can alleviate this phenomenon at all. It is not only necessary, but also essential, for expanding the knowledge and literature of the critical roles that businesses can play in resolving psychological issues related to the climate and promoting a more sustainable mindset and ensuring environmentally friendly practices. As the tangible impacts of climate change can manifest in eco-anxiety, researchers are increasingly exploring the different emotions tied to this phenomenon (Kurth & Pihkala, 2022). Therefore, the topic of this thesis is up-to-date and may shed light to some new viewpoints as well on the connection of these two broad topics. In addition, the opportunity and the room for leveraging CSR to address eco-anxiety can pave the way for further studies. This is one of the key reasons why this topic was chosen and will be analyzed.

## **1.1 Context of the study: Climate change**

Climate change particularly refers to the long-term changes in terms of temperature, precipitation, and patterns of the weather across the whole world (NOAA, 2021). These changes implicitly and explicitly impact ecosystems like the rising of sea levels and the increase in average temperature, leading to consequences such as radical changes in weather like heat waves along with potential wildfires, coastal erosion, and flooding of inhabited parts of the world. Hence this trend, which is called global warming, frozen ground in polar regions is thawing which releases enormous amounts of carbon dioxide and methane which further contributes to global warming leading to not foreseeable catastrophe. Furthermore, it also damages biodiversity hence the acidification of the ocean and the migration of different species which means shifts in the ecosystem. Generally, climate change poses threats to agriculture, food security, and public health, contributing to the spread of diseases and large parts of the world are becoming uninhabitable causing global problems that humanity must face. The reason behind climate change is caused by human activities, notably the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas, which releases so-called greenhouse gasses that trap heat in the atmosphere that led to global warming. Addressing climate change remains a critical challenge worldwide, with efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions becoming increasingly urgent for the planet's long-term sustainability (European Commission, 2024).

## **1.2 Context of the study: Ecopsychology and eco-anxiety and CSR**

Climate change presents serious challenges to individuals and societies, which ultimately lead also to mental health challenges as well. The science that deals with these provoked mental states today is called ecopsychology. The history of ecopsychology emerged from the intersection of deep ecology and

psychology in the early 1990s (Rhodes & Dunk, 2023). The main idea was that the environmental crisis was not only an environmental issue, but it affects human psychology, and its aim was to bring the emotional perception into the conception of climate change, acknowledging a connection between human well-being and the health of ecosystems. Today, ecopsychology remains a critical and evolving field that challenges the focus of mainstream psychology and calls for a deeper integration of ecological perspectives into psychological theory and practice. Therefore, new terms are emerging in the literature that describe distress related to environmental issues like eco-grief, eco-anxiety, and eco-angst, eco-anger, like in the study conducted by Albrecht (2011). These definitions and the nexus of these emotions will be later introduced, although the focus will be on eco-anxiety and general anxiety as the most popular definition among all of them. Integrating and addressing these concepts into CSR strategies could enhance environmental initiatives of responsible business entities by acknowledging the psychological burden of ecological challenges, fostering a psychological approach that prioritizes the mental well-being of internal stakeholders. As indicated by the thesis title and future research questions, CSR initiatives should consider incorporating ecopsychological concepts such as eco-anxiety into their practices to harness the concept effectively in the future.

### **1.3 Conceptual framework**

According to Varpio et al. (2019), a conceptual framework should entail the reasoning why a given study should be conducted. The conceptual framework describes the state of current knowledge and identifies gaps in our understanding of a given phenomenon or problem which will be analyzed in the literature review. The analysis of the methodological part of the thesis is to be found under the Methodology section. Generally, the conceptual framework should answer 2 questions: “Why is this research important?” and “What contributions might these findings make to what is already known?”. This research is important because it addresses a critical intersection between eco-anxiety and (CSR). With a growing awareness of environmental issues and mental health concerns related to climate change, exploring how companies could effectively address the possible eco-anxiety of the internal stakeholder network through CSR initiatives is essential. By exploring this correlation, the research aims to contribute practical insights that can inform businesses, policymakers, and scholars on sustainable practices that benefit both individuals and organizations. The findings of this research have the potential to contribute significantly to existing knowledge in two main areas. First, it can enhance understanding of how CSR practices can be leveraged to address eco-anxiety, offering new insights into the psychological impacts of sustainable initiatives within organizational settings. Second, by analyzing specific CSR practices through a case study approach (such as those implemented by Patagonia), the research can identify effective strategies that companies can adopt to mitigate



eco-anxiety among stakeholders. These contributions can advance the dialogue on the connection between CSR and the mental well-being of employees, providing real recommendations for future research and to business entities.

## **1.4 Rationale for Research questions and Scope**

One of the research objectives of this qualitative study was to analyze the literature of eco-anxiety and CSR in depth and dovetail the two terms together. One of its central ideas is whether the primary objective of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as being socially responsible, should also encompass the mental well-being of employees. The aim of the thesis is to shed light on possible ways of alleviating eco-anxiety and establish a list of practices originated from different secondary sources which were heavily focusing on dealing with or alleviating eco-anxiety. Furthermore, with the help of the established list of practices, it aims to find patterns or any kind of initiatives which correspond with the idea of addressing eco-anxiety by looking at the case and practices done by Patagonia. The reason behind is that Patagonia's reputation as pioneers in employee well-being and comprehensive CSR allows for a rich exploration of specific practices and strategies that may positively impact employees' psychological responses to environmental concerns. By analyzing Patagonia, the paper aims to identify actionable insights that can guide other companies in developing effective internal CSR approaches to address eco-anxiety and foster a supportive workplace environment as it impacts organizational culture, productivity, and overall stakeholder relations as well.

In summary, this paper aims to analyze practices regarding alleviating eco-anxiety within the context of organization and explore the different nature of possible practices and open a discussion about the relevance of eco-anxiety in the CSR framework. In order to answer these questions, an exploratory, then a casual question was posed:

**RQ1: What could be the strategies and practices employed by companies to address eco-anxiety for internal stakeholders?**

**RQ2: To what extent are Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Patagonia trying to address eco-anxiety ?**

The reason behind why RQ1 is formed with "could" instead of "should" is because the aim of the paper is to explore various potential approaches without necessarily prescribing a definitive course of action, recommendations. This comes from the nature of eco-anxiety and psychology, since the levels of this phenomena are different by every individual and the psychological diversity is important to consider in understanding human behavior.

The scope of the thesis is narrowed down mainly on internal CSR and the stakeholders of employees and there are numerous reasons why this decision

was made. First of all, the breadth of CSR as a concept is too wide as it encompasses a wide range of activities, responsibilities that companies can undertake. While the recommended practices for the internal CSR framework do entail other dimensions of CSR such as community engagement, sustainability, the list of practices primarily focus on what a business entity could do in terms of eco-anxiety and employee well-being. The multidimensional nature of CSR makes it challenging to comprehensively address and mention all aspects within a single study because different stakeholder groups requiring different practices and strategies should be mentioned as well that need more in-depth examination (Sheehy, 2014).

However, employee well-being is a fundamental component of CSR, as it fosters increased productivity, commitment and positive attitudes, behaviors (like PEB) within the organization (Yassin & Beckmann, 2024). Overall, it bears a practical application as enhancing employee engagement ultimately contributing to broader CSR goals. For this thesis, only secondary sources have been used. The data collection method consists of qualitative coding of different eco-anxiety practices and different Patagonia practices, found in academic literature, relevant publications and on their website.

## **1.5 Structure of the work**

The research opens with the introduction of the thesis and brief context of the chosen topic and motivation behind the study. After that, the methodology section of the thesis presents the systematic approach, which was used to conduct the research, providing a reasoning for the selection of research questions, along with defining the scope of the study, and explaining the data collection methods. The decision to employ qualitative research methods, including a case study design and coding techniques is justified in this section. The study commences with a comprehensive examination of existing literature, presenting the different nexuses and definitions of the given topic related to the research questions which ultimately leads to the theoretical framework to guide the research. In the upcoming section, the research question RQ1 will be addressed by presenting the outcomes of coding and the sources used, accompanied by detailed descriptions of each practice. To answer RQ1 comprehensively, the individual approach will be discussed first, followed by an exploration of the established organizational approach featuring various practices based on the individual approach. This sequential presentation will provide a thorough analysis of strategies and practices employed by companies to address eco-anxiety, highlighting both individual-level and organizational-level perspectives. In the subsequent chapter, RQ2 will be addressed by presenting the different CSR practices implemented by Patagonia. These practices will be analyzed in correlation with the established practices identified in response to RQ1, highlighting similarities and identifying any new practices that have emerged from the case study. Finally, the conclusion

will summarize key findings and provide future recommendations for business entities and scholars.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Conducting a literature review is an important part of scientific articles since it shows the current development and literature regarding the topic. In the next chapter, the current understanding and review of the scale of emotions connected to climate change will be introduced. Building upon this, the definition of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and what social dimension entails will be introduced. Following this, different CSR initiatives and reporting practices will be provided, highlighting the importance of transparency and accountability of different business entities. Finally, the psychological dimension of CSR initiatives on internal stakeholders will be introduced, aiming to uncover their potential role in mitigating general anxiety. The main aim of this part is to explain the different dimensions and definitions revolving around the term eco-anxiety and CSR to ultimately dovetail the two terms to lay the foundation of the theoretical framework.

### **2.1 Eco-anxiety and its psychological realm**

The effects of climate change on human health are classed as direct impact which is a result of extreme acute weather events and indirect effects which are the consequences of chronic climate change on social, economic, and natural ecosystems (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). Heat waves, floods, storms, droughts, and hurricanes have a direct impact on premature death from respiratory and cardiovascular disease, food and water-borne infections, and starvation. Changes in the geographical distribution of infectious illnesses, a lack of food and water quality, food and economic distress, involuntary migration, and dangers to mental health among others (NOAA, 2021). The study area that focuses on psychological effects or the change of mental health provoked by climate change is called ecopsychology, includes eco-anxiety and is viewed as an indirect impact of climate change.

Eco-anxiety and climate anxiety as terms are widely discussed from different viewpoints and given the tangible climate change and ecological disasters this phenomenon has a growing trend. Emotions provoked by climate change were discussed in the scientific world even earlier, but they became more famous when Greta Thunberg, a young climate activist who has openly discussed her fear about climate (Ernman et al., 2020). As more people become aware of climate change and its effects on the planet, occurrence of eco-anxiety, a relatively recent phenomena, has grown. It is crucial to research further the negative emotions associated with climate change, their effects on human behavior, and how they are connected to changes in day-to-day decision-making in order to comprehend eco-anxiety. Anybody, regardless of age, gender, or background, can experience it. Nevertheless, Coffey et al. (2021) have shed light

on a significant aspect in their publication, indicating that eco-anxiety affects different populations to varying degrees. Their research underscores that certain groups are particularly vulnerable to negative emotions in the ecopsychology. These groups encompass children, indigenous communities, and individuals who maintain a deep connection with nature for a multitude of reasons. This insight suggests that understanding the diverse ways in which eco-anxiety impacts distinct populations is crucial for developing targeted strategies to address this issue effectively.

The main reasons for eco-anxiety might vary since it can be brought on directly by experiencing natural catastrophes close to oneself or indirectly by just hearing about them in the news and these disasters have a growing trend too (Cooks-Campbell, 2022). Learning more about sustainability, public health, and global warming may sometimes be unsettling too as it can be a fantastic method to increase consciousness, but it can also give one a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. Another fact is that most of climate change is due to human activities and technological advancements so the influence of these actions and carbon footprint on the environment may make oneself feel personal guilt or regret Albrecht (2011). Even though "eco-anxiety" has become more popular, it continues to be a poorly understood concept in the media and among specialists since it is used for different terms in different scientific inquiries and even between scientists there are different opinions on what terms should be used and how.

Albrecht (2011) first used the phrase "eco-anxiety" to characterize a persistent worry of environmental doom which is a widely cited definition along with psychoterratic syndromes which refers to mental conditions arising from our relationship with the natural world. Lately, the term has now come to mean anxiety brought on by the ecological crisis or environmental circumstances (Usher et al., 2019). Furthermore, there are other terms that define emotions that were induced by the environment. Solastalgia, a term coined by Albrecht as well, describes the distress brought on by a person's direct connection to their home environment when the environment is changing (Askland & Bunn, 2018). Eco-angst is a sentiment of helplessness over the planet's fragile state (Goleman, 2009). Eco-anxiety usually encompasses and can mean more emotions than just regular anxiety.

Dodds (2021) in his research analyzes climate-anxiety where he categorizes its type and defense mechanisms into two main groups. At first, he elaborates that in general there are two types of anxieties, namely paranoid schizoid which is characterized by feelings of persecution, and it defends against by the denial of the whole or partial reality and depressive, related to loss and guilt, managed by through neurotic defenses where he explains that anxieties trigger responses in the brain's fear and panic systems. Based on this, the two types of climate-anxiety are the apocalyptic fears of extinction to mention, while the second are characterized by complex feelings around loss, grief and guilt for losses that happened or about to come. In response to anxiety provoked by climate change, individuals employ various defense mechanisms, including conscious and

unconscious defenses. Denial and minimizing the threat are common responses, along with projection, intellectualization, and idealizing leaders who support denial. Hopelessness, apocalypticism, and manic defense behaviors also occur, sometimes leading to disbelief in climate activism.

Another classification in the ecopsychological realm, negative emotions connected to climate can be divided into two categories. Short-term emotions such as hopelessness, disgust, despair, long-term emotions like fear, sadness, rage, guilt, grief and anxiety (Clayton, 2020). These definitions support the extensive body of research on anxiety by showing how closely fear and worry are related to anxiety while also maintaining its uniqueness. According to accepted definitions, anxiety arises from a worrisome circumstance that contains more ambiguity than fear is from a more immediate threat. Though there are several levels of worry and some of them can be very strong, worry is typically seen as a less intense emotion when compared to fear and anxiety. Furthermore, there is a clear connection between eco-grief and eco-anxiety within ecopsychology and they should be collectively addressed to prevent it from escalating into anxiety and depression. Various types of eco-grief, such as "environmental melancholia," highlight the need for constructive approaches to cope with eco-anxiety on both personal and societal levels (Pihkala, 2020a). Generally, all these feelings are frequently categorized as "negative," mainly because they are unpleasant to experience, but it is important to carefully examine classifications of "positive" and "negative" categories. Although sadness, anger, and grief are all mentioned as negative emotions connected to climate change, anxiety seems to be a particularly important one in conveying the feeling of worry and concern (Clayton, 2020).

Although, it should be noted that all these emotions can co-occur at the same time. Along with these emotions, people also express feeling hopeless, depressed, frustrated, angry, and horrified by the unfairness of environmental degradation. Naturally, when confronted with such intense and conflicting emotions, defenses can easily be set off, leaving people to feel numb or dissociated (Weintrobe, 2013). Denial, disavowal, and disbelief episodes can happen, then repeat and individuals can find themselves switching quickly between various and opposing emotions, such as shock, rage, and despair. It should be noted that climate anxiety and climate-related anxiety covers only one dimension of ecopsychology which is feeling anxious about environmental issues. In the meantime, eco-anxiety encompasses every other climate-related emotion in the scholarly literature namely fear, anxiety, guilt, depression and even anger. Considering this complicated emotional picture, eco-angst, eco-distress or even eco-empathy, eco-compassion as more positive terms have been offered as alternatives to eco-anxiety (Hickman, 2020).

However, Clayton & Karazsia (2020) raise awareness regarding eco-anxiety that it should not be heavily pathologized, since anxiety itself can even function as an adaptive function and motivator as well and it can even be a sign of interest, so it is essential to differentiate between pathological and adaptive forms of eco-anxiety. Maria Ojala (2007), a psychologist and expert in environmental

education, has underlined that there are constructive ways to worry, fear, and feel anxious about ecological challenges, called as “critical emotional awareness”. She emphasizes that individuals should explore factors that can help people to transform micro and macro emotions to act as defined Pro-Environmental Behavior (PEB). describes the deeds, mannerisms, or decisions carried out by people or groups that are considerate of the environment and help to save and preserve it. Recycling, using less energy, saving water, traveling by public transportation, buying sustainable goods, and taking part in environmental activism are just a few examples of pro-environmental habits. These actions are meant to lessen the harm that human activity does to the environment and to encourage sustainability. Nevertheless, Pihkala (2020a) in his research argues that eco-anxiety can manifest in different forms by every person and any person may suffer both linear and cyclical variations in the types of this state of mind they encounter over time. He further adds that these have a negative effect on mental well-being but adding eco-anxiety to the nexus of environmental education is crucial, since it helps people to perceive their feelings and tackle it accordingly and can transform into PEB activities. Pihkala (2020a) hints further that there may be a connection between living in a country that has a higher carbon footprint per capita and occurrence of climate related anxiety. Rising number of people admitted that eco-anxiety is a significant factor in their decision not to have children.

With the highest number of respondents so far in the context of eco-anxiety, conducted by recruitment platform Kantar shed light on some perspectives (Hickman et al., 2021). Data were collected from 10,000 young people from different countries, aged between 16 and 25. The results have shown that close to 60% felt “very” or “extremely” worried about climate change, where respondents were more concerned coming from the Global South where are more directly impacted by climate change and from Portugal, where dramatic wildfires are occasional. Over 50% of respondents stated they had experienced various unpleasant feelings, including fear, sadness, anxiety, anger, helplessness, powerlessness, and/or guilt. Optimism and apathy were the feelings that were reported the least frequently. Respondents expressed a variety of unfavorable opinions, with 77% of them agreeing that the future is terrifying. It was further revealed that the correspondents feel betrayed by their government, but it should be noted that there were significant differences among countries.

The “Climate emotions report”, conducted by Sitra (2019) revealed other interesting facts regarding eco-anxiety. Out of 2070 respondents of Finland, younger people were the most concerned, where women and those with an academic degree were more worried than the others. The news and politics and instances of other people's behavior in relation to climate change, documentary films and series and the weather were the causes that frequently triggered uncomfortable climate feelings. It was further revealed that practicing environmentally friendly lifestyle, being out of nature and learning, talking more about the topic helps people in general to cope with these evoked negative feelings.

A qualitative study, conducted by ELTE University, tried to identify the different types within eco-anxiety, eco-guilt, eco-grief and eco-coping in a climate-sensitive environment (Ágoston et al., 2022). Future large-scale quantitative studies should consider any potential subtypes since they may have distinct effects on eco-friendly behavior. The findings imply that some common symptoms of anxiety disorders, which may temporarily impede functioning ability, also apply to eco-anxiety. The findings also revealed that some of the participants reported feeling guilty just for existing, which shows that eco-guilt and eco-anxiety may be viewed as existential phenomena that comes from our "ecological unconscious" in response to damaging our environment. However, they were able to successfully employ a variety of coping mechanisms to lessen their anxiety, and some of these mechanisms proved to be adaptive, including from an ecological standpoint, in addition to reducing the symptoms of eco-anxiety. Furthermore, it appears that people with a more localized mindset were better able to accept their personal limitations and felt less unhappy than those with a more global outlook.

As mentioned earlier, this phenomenon just started to get larger recognition and different aspects are researched constantly hence its literature grows bigger every day. The most significant conclusions reached by researchers, namely by Albrecht (2011) and Pihkala (2020a,b) were that most people acknowledged that human activity contributes to climate change and most people feel concern and negative emotions about it, especially the younger generation. Eco-anxiety in general can have a broad impact on people's choices and behaviors. As previously said, it can encourage people to undertake PEB activities including lowering their carbon footprint, conserving resources, and supporting sustainable products. Additionally, it encourages participation in environmental causes through demonstrations, advocacy, and lobbying for legislative amendments. The decision of consumers is also impacted by eco-anxiety as people are more demanding in terms of environmentally friendly products and avoiding those that have negative impact to the environment. Therefore, some individuals even do lifestyle changes, such as switching to a vegetarian diet or travelling less to minimize their impact on the environment. On the other hand, eco-anxiety may have a negative impact on mental health, impairing judgment and generating avoiding behaviors. Additionally, it can direct voters toward candidates and policies that place a higher priority on environmental protection. Additionally, eco-anxiety can influence financial decisions, leading to investments in environmentally friendly funds and a divestment from companies that harm the environment. Comparable statistics have been recorded in multiple countries, and it is noteworthy to mention that in the German-speaking region of Switzerland in 2019, the designation "Word of the Year" was awarded to "Klimajugend" (translated as climate youth), while "Flugscham" (signifying shame associated with air travel) claimed the third position (Rüfli, 2019).

Unfortunately, knowledge and awareness of climate change do not equal a shift in mindset and a more sustainable way of living. The issue then becomes,



what can be done? Could CSR and companies provide a solution or react to this multilateral phenomenon like climate anxiety through practices?

## **2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

The recognition of sustainability around the globe increases, therefore finding environmentally friendly solutions and carbon neutral alternatives for different sectors is needed more than ever. Consequently, environmental management has become a significant aspect not only within companies but also for the different stakeholders and because of their expectations towards the organization (Šontaitė-Petkevičienė, 2015). Hence this trend, a business model called Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) emerged to act responsibly and follow the trails of sustainable development. The historical origins of CSR may be found in the 1930s, and it has been suggested that it might aid in the development of a new sense of social responsibility of businesses (Latap Agudelo et al., 2019). The early days of modern CSR started in the 1950s, when Bowen was the first to define the social responsibilities of company executives, saying that businessmen have a duty to "pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are beneficial in terms of the purposes and values of our society."

Since then, many definitions and dimensions were created and attached to CSR and became part of the mindset of the management of most companies, but the main idea remained is that the company is socially, economically and environmentally accountable, so they are operating positively instead of contributing negatively (Dahlsrud, 2008). In short, CSR refers to the commitment of integrating social and environmental concerns into its business operations and interactions with stakeholders of a business entity. CSR initiatives aim to create positive impacts on society and the environment while enhancing corporate reputation. In addition, Dahlsrud (2008) examined 37 definitions of CSR and found that the majority of the terms were based on five 5 parts of describing it, namely economic, social, environmental, voluntary and stakeholder dimension. First of all, the economic dimension stands for the main responsibility of organizations to ensure profitability for shareholders and sustainability parallelly. The social obligation emphasizes the role of businesses in making positive societal contributions, often guided by existing ethical and moral principles. The environmental nexus highlights the significance of protecting and preserving the natural environment in parallel with all business operations, reflecting the stewardship role that organizations play in preserving our nature. Finally, the voluntariness dimension entails all the CSR activities that go beyond legal and industry standards, driven by voluntary standards. Finally, the stakeholder dimension includes that organizations have obligations to a broad spectrum of stakeholders, extending beyond shareholders to include consumers, employees, communities, and the environment. Together, these dimensions form

a comprehensive framework for understanding the multidimensional nature of CSR and the connected actions are CSR initiatives.

In addition, John Elkington called it the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model, which stands for Profit, Planet, People (3P) which helps assess the businesses performance in the terms of CSR and are the three pillars of making a sustainable business. (Alhaddi, 2015). Moreover, the pyramid of corporate social responsibility by Carrol provides the base conception of CSR which includes four components and all four should be considered when determining whether a firm is socially responsible or not. "Economic duties" are at the bottom of the pyramid, followed by "legal responsibilities," "ethical responsibilities," and finally, "philanthropic responsibilities" (Latap Agudelo et al., 2019).

In the 21st century, it has become an emerging trend at major companies in different sectors to form and maintain sustainability departments within their organization to follow the principles of CSR and deliver Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations (UN) to find and present sustainable solutions to lessen the amount of their ecological footprint and fight against social injustice (Hale, 2018). Market leaders nowadays are businesses that have been successful in adapting to this kind of business. Companies have been under growing pressure in recent years to follow regulations governing transparency and environmental preservation. The idea of the environmental component is built around the idea that businesses have a responsibility to preserve and enhance the environment. It is important to note that numerous organizations and institutions tried to interpret the meaning of corporate social responsibility like ISO Institution, United Nations Development Programme and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and European Commission (Youmatter, 2016). Lack of cohesiveness and defined requirements for CSR produces confusion, but the major components are an integrated approach to sustainability concerns, a social development perspective, and cooperation with stakeholders (Sheehy, 2014).

While it is beneficial for the environment and the people, the other incentive is that a sustainable, green portfolio keeps the stakeholders satisfied and builds up a better reputation. Being sustainable in terms of CSR also means that the given organization maintains a healthy and broad stakeholder network where they understand and satisfy the different needs from every actor as well. A better engagement in stakeholder management with a sustainable mindset can improve the efficiency in risk management, sustainability compliance management, market development, innovation or strategies while at the same time bringing environmental or economic value to the organization (AccountAbility, 2015). The definitions demonstrate that, conceptually speaking, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is nothing new; businesses have always had social, environmental, and economic repercussions, been concerned with stakeholders, including the government, clients, and owners, and dealt with legislation and this has been controlled using established patterns created over a long period of time (Dahlsrud, 2008).

Over the last decade, the debate between voluntary and mandatory CSR has been extensively discussed in scholarly work on improving corporate accountability. The question is whether CSR should be adopted by businesses as a voluntary corporate strategy or as legally binding legislation. Currently, governments play no significant role in establishing international labor rights or developing a uniform code for multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Governments require more technical, economic, and practical expertise to address environmental and social issues in specific industries such as the chemical, textile, and petroleum industries, among others. For this reason, advocates of voluntary CSR support the use of self-regulation codes and standards (González & Martínez, 2004). The voluntary management standards ISO 26000, SA 8000 for social accountability, and AccountAbility 1000 all provide guidance for managers who desire to embrace CSR, but these are mostly soft-law elements. The 2010 standard ISO 26000 is presently regarded as the most significant in the corporate sector and almost all organizations are included, regardless of their size, location, or national economy but it is not only limited to CSR. Organizations are defined as socially responsible in this norm, and their actions may have an impact on their capacity to compete, their reputation with investors, how easily they can hire new employees, and how motivated and engaged their employees are (Szczyka, 2015).

The distinction of CSR activities on the axis of internal and external activities must be introduced as well. Firms strategically engage in two types of actions to meet institutional pressures and gain CSR credits: internally focused actions aimed at achieving structural change, which involves adopting accepted organizational structures, strategies and externally focused actions, such as those aimed at gaining organizational legitimacy (Hawn & Ioannou, 2016). The distinction between internal and external audiences in the stakeholder theory is conceptually related to the distinction between internal and external stakeholders. External stakeholders are outside of the organization (e.g., society, government, customers, suppliers, creditors, and shareholders), while internals are inside the organization (e.g., employees, managers, and owners). However, both internal and external actions have the potential to create legitimacy and are a sign of taking responsibility. In that context, internal actions show that an organization is following established rules and help it become legitimate. External actions, on the other hand, target specific groups of people and give the organization legitimacy. Although dealing with eco-anxiety does fit in all of the dimensions of CSR, the most fitting would be the social dimension of CSR since it is a psychological phenomenon and social dimension entails the approach to the mental health of different stakeholders. Hence the social dimension of CSR needs more elaboration.

## 2.3 Social dimension of CSR

Originally, the social dimension entails the relationship between business and society (Dahlsrud 2008). According to GRI (Global Reporting Initiative, 2021), the social dimension comprises human rights, society, product responsibility, labor practices, and decent employment. Generally, being socially responsible involves taking responsibility for any indirect social impacts that businesses may have on others. The goal of social dimension is that businesses should try to improve society, include social issues into their daily operations, and consider all of their effects on local communities as well. A corporation should focus on fulfilling the goals of the internal and external human communities since it is considered as a social actor too and is a component of the human community itself. The main ideology behind is that a corporation should be aware of and appropriately react to the needs, expectations, rights, and demands of people (Arsić, Stojanović, & Mihajlović, 2017). Usually, the CSR activities of social dimension include purchasing fair trade goods, committing to paying staff a living wage, the subject of public health, human rights and equal opportunity, job training and education, community concerns, public discussion, social justice, working conditions, and workplace safety. Until the 1990s, CSR was solely used to promote the company to its clients, but from the 2000s, it played an essential role in improving the human rights and labor standards of workers in various work environments too (Compa, 2008).

Regardless of the growing acceptance of CSR in the business community, there is currently a lack of clarity and consensus around the social dimension of CSR. It requires measuring and assessing an organization's impact on the local, national, and international social systems in which it operates. Nonetheless, there remains to be much dispute over how to define, quantify, and report on an organization's social impact (Miller et al., 2007). Understanding the concept of CSR is essential in exploring how CSR initiatives affect internal stakeholders' mindset, especially in the context of climate anxiety.

## 2.4 Overview of CSR Initiatives and Reporting

As explained earlier, the definition of CSR can entail 5 different dimensions namely economic, social, environmental, voluntary and stakeholder. Any action made towards CSR by companies are the CSR initiatives which are categorized as environmental, ethical, philanthropic (voluntary) and financial responsibilities. Strategic CSR means that the integration of different initiatives supports the business activities and the mission of the companies while applying CSR (Chwilkowska-Kubala et al., 2023). To adopt strategic CSR, companies should integrate initiatives into everyday operations, practices and strategic decision making. The nature of the initiatives can be reactive or proactive which means that some companies just comply with regulations while others go further by

adopting voluntary practices. These proactive initiatives can be categorized into 3 parts. The economic part, which stands for how the companies deal with their stakeholders while being economically responsible. Environmental part is about how companies respond to concerns about the environmental challenges while emphasizing protection and eco-friendly practices. Finally, the social part is about how companies interact with their employees and their community which can cover for safety, training, voluntary practices and providing health care (Chwiłkowska-Kubala et al., 2023).

The framework of “Environmental, Social and Governance” (ESG) must be introduced as well. ESG and CSR are often used equally, and these terms can overlap as well, but there are differences. The idea of ESG is to be used by investors to assess corporate behavior and predict future financial performance with quantifiable measurements (Li et al., 2021). The ESG strategy is all about meeting certain performance metrics, setting goals that can be measured, and doing checks to make sure that the metrics and the information that goes with them are correct. ESG factors are important considerations for investors, measuring sustainability, social impact, and attached to responsible business practices. The framework includes specific criteria under each dimension to evaluate a company's overall performance and provide a comprehensive and quantified dataset which scores eventually help investors. As its words imply, ESG covers environmental, social and governmental dimensions. Environmental part evaluates the companies based on their approach to climate policies, energy consumption, waste management, and animal welfare. The social dimension examines how companies do perform in stakeholder management and important elements are how they are fostering social diversity and equity, supporting volunteerism, ensuring ethical practice. Within the governance criteria, companies are evaluated whether they include ethical standards in accounting and financial reporting which encompass elements like board diversity, level of corruption, executive compensation fairness, and support for ethical business practices (Li et al., 2021).

The way companies share information has changed over time. In the past, they only talked about the economy in their reports but recently, as sustainability and CSR are now important parts of management choices, accounting, and corporate reporting for both private and public organizations, the aim of the leadership is to make business strategy and environmental and social issues more connected by putting this information into comprehensive sustainability reports as well to showcase their contribution (Dienes et al., 2016). Hence this trend, more sustainability information is being shared freely by organizations because stakeholders are becoming more interested. Key performance indicators (KPIs), which are suggested by standards like the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), are used to track and report on CSR initiatives that companies are doing. The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), founded in 1997, started in 2000, also follows economic, environmental and social dimensions, similar to Elkington's TBL, in order to help companies show how they are doing in terms of sustainability. GRI itself has played a crucial role in promoting sustainability with their reporting

standards and since its launch, it has evolved to entail new indicators to address unique sustainability issues in different sectors (del Mar Alonso-Almeida et al., 2013). Sustainability reports offer a comprehensive view of a company's practices, and these become a tool in building trust with stakeholders.

The reasons behind reporting can depend on more factors. Despite being voluntary, reports adoption has grown, with the GRI, emerging as a widely used standard in the financial and energy sectors. In general, KPIs are becoming more and more important for making company decisions or showcase the efforts. They are usually summed up in a separate and visual sustainability report that is sent to share on digital platforms or directly sent to particular stakeholders that are involved or interested. According to the systematic review, conducted by Dienes et al. (2016) indicates that the size of the company, media attention and the ownership structure of the organization itself are important factors whether companies engage and create sustainability reports. On the other hand, profitability, capital structure, age of company and the board composition do not necessarily influence the probability of complying with the reporting of sustainable efforts. The reason behind reporting can vary in terms of countries as well where reporting is connected to regulatory or to societal attention (Kolk, 2005). In different countries, sustainability reporting has been influenced by regulations but the extent of severity of the regulation can differ. For example, French legislation increased reporting by making companies more aware of the importance of environmental and social accountability. In the same way, the publication of reporting and accounting guidelines in Japan significantly contributed to the rise of such reports in the country. Voluntary guidelines developed in different countries as well by non-governmental organizations. These include guidelines from national boards (like Raad voor de Jaarverslaggeving and NIVRA in the Netherlands), and standards set by securities and exchange commissions. Stricter requirements are emerging after it occurred that some companies were lying in their reports, and international sustainability standards for reporting like GRI are on the rise.

International sustainability standards give businesses the frameworks, guidelines, and tools they need to be more productive and efficient while also having a good effect on society and the environment (Nisa, 2023). There are two types of sustainability standards: private standards and voluntary agreement standards. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is an example of a standards body that uses a voluntary consensus method to make sure that its work is sustainable. Meanwhile The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) set up several standards too in order to support sustainable farming, fishing and forestry and rules for reporting that different organizations should follow. In general, international sustainability standards share the same goals and certification processes, on the other hand, they are very different in their development of history, audience, location and in terms the problems they focus on regarding sustainability. Other popular standards are the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) the aim of which is to make reporting more common, and standards based like

financial accounting and reporting itself. UNFSS, CDP, B CORP and GRI are also part of this group of standards. By setting different standards, companies and stakeholders can be sure that their operations are more sustainable which provide more credibility (Nisa, 2023). Adopting any standards can be economically positive (del Mar Alonso-Almeida et al., 2013). Sustainability reports do enhance transparency by revealing information that might remain undisclosed and they have the potential to influence internal management. Furthermore, they can contribute to build connections between companies and local communities by sharing their contributions.

Nowadays, the most known and utilized guideline among international sustainability standards is GRI. According to GRI (2023) standards, “The foundation of sustainability reporting is for an organization to identify and prioritize its impacts on the economy, environment, and people - to be transparent about their impacts”. The steps of reporting starts with GRI Standards guide this process, starting with GRI 1 outlining key concepts and principles. After that, organizations assess impacts, using Sector Standards to identify sector-specific characteristics and impacts. GRI 2 (General Disclosures) and GRI 3 (Material Topics) help to identify the organization's context and assess the significance of different impacts. To report, organizations gather data based on their impacts using GRI’s Topic Standards and in accordance with GRI 3 providing a comprehensive overview of impacts. In addition, organizations can use selected GRI Standards if unable to fulfill all requirements. At the end of the reports, they must include a GRI content index, specifying standards they used and a Sector Standards, if applicable, are referenced for unique identification. This approach aims to enhance transparency, credibility, and stakeholder navigation of sustainability reports. There is no specific rule on visuality, although reports must be comprehensive to be understandable for different stakeholders.

Usually, these results can be obtained from the companies’ websites. Companies tend to make reports more colorful, interesting along with information about their sustainable, CSR initiatives and development. Some companies make reports annually, but some do more rarely, in every 2 or 3 years or not at all. The traits of a good sustainability report are when it is comprehensive, clear, consistent, accurate and relevant in the given year. It should also tell a good story about the company and showcase their CSR initiatives but also present trends and punctual data sources so they can remain credible. The main topic of any sustainability report is the commitment of the company to sustainable development, including ESG goals and performance on environmental, social, and economical results while supporting CSR and ESG strategies (Perivan, 2022). Furthermore, the report can include future sustainable vision and identified issues from the present along with current sustainability goals and status, clear strategy, KPI’s, governance or ownership structures, diversity and even a statement from the CEO. It must be mentioned that in these reports, some companies tend to “greenwash” to make themselves look even better. Greenwashing means that organizations communicate misleadingly

regarding environmental performance which can undermine trust and affect corporate accountability while it involves selective disclosure and omission (Moodaley & Telukdarie, 2023). Greenwashing, when identified, can cause reputational damage, financial losses, and declining consumer confidence. It poses a threat to accurate and transparent sustainability reporting, emphasizing the gap between disclosed and actual performance but reporting standards do prohibit greenwashing and constantly try to fight against this practice (Moodaley & Telukdarie, 2023).

## **2.5 Psychological dimension of CSR initiatives on stakeholder network**

While most researchers have explored the effects of CSR based on business outcomes, there is a gap in academic literature concerning the psychological aspects and behavioral effects of CSR initiatives. This section explains how CSR could influence perceptions, emotions, and actions of individuals. CSR can have various effects on the company's stakeholder network, affecting their perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and even ethical considerations.

For instance, individuals in general may feel good after taking part in CSR actions (Snider et al., 2003). When consumers and workers see businesses making socially responsible decisions, they often feel positive emotions towards responsible organizations and in general, it contributes to corporate success, reputation building, and stakeholder relationships. Prospective employees tend to be more attracted to companies with strong CSR reputations (Rupp & Mallory, 2015). Employees in CSR-engaged firms exhibit positive attitudes, including increased commitment, job satisfaction, attachment, loyalty and organizational identification. CSR perceptions among employees also predict positive behaviors and work engagement. Furthermore, individuals categorize organizations based on their behavior and values. CSR can influence how employees perceive a company, categorizing it as socially responsible or not. These perceptions affect their behavior and effort.

A person-centric systematic review on psychological microfoundations of CSR conducted by Gond et al. (2017) shed a light on the personal drivers and why people are engaging in CSR in the first place. They categorize these drivers into four main types. Instrumental drivers that are about self-interest, relational drivers that are about social connections and recognition, moral drivers that come from morals and ethics, and other individual drivers that include personality traits, emotions, demographics, and cultural orientations. The study consists of different effects of CSR on attitudes like organizational commitment and job happiness and actions like organizational citizenship practices. Furthermore, it highlights personal beliefs, moral identity, and ideologies that can undermine the efficiency of CSR initiatives on people.

One of the studies, conducted in this nexus by Servera - Francés and Piqueras - Tomás (2019), revealed that corporate social responsibility (CSR)



actions that focus on customers as the main contributor raise trust and enhance loyalty in businesses and make them seem more valuable. In general, trust makes customers more committed and affects how much they value, are satisfied with, and remain loyal to a brand. This study shows that incorporating consumer-focused CSR actions into business plans gives them a competitive edge by improving consumer behavior and satisfaction. The study backs up what other studies have found about how CSR affects trust, worth, happiness, and loyalty. It shows how important it is to invest in CSR and include steps like these in management plans. Although the sample of this study was from one area which means that larger studies are needed to look at the many aspects of CSR on a bigger scale.

During the research process, many ecopsychological and CSR related research were found, but dovetailing the two terms was missing. The gaps in existing literature are extensive and lack of connecting CSR and possible effects on eco-anxiety and how it could help alleviate this phenomenon or exploit it as a good driver for applying sustainable mindsets. Moreover, despite incorporating CSR, some internal stakeholders can view these practices only as greenwashing attempts by profit-oriented business and these initiatives may be ineffective in (Wut & Ng, 2022). Therefore, the question arises whether CSR initiatives could effectively address eco-anxiety and avoid perceptions of greenwashing while promoting sustainable practices within business entities. The aim of the research questions is to facilitate a discussion about potential solutions and provide answers to the given research inquiries.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Rationale for qualitative study and data collection

This study primarily uses qualitative methods to support finding the answers on the given research questions. The study that results in qualitative data analysis is qualitative research, which is both exploratory and descriptive (Hair Jr. & Page, 2015). Qualitative research uses inductive thinking to come up with ideas and theories from collected data. When an inductive approach is used, patterns are used to draw conclusions and build theories. These theories which are built in this manner are called grounded theories. In contrast, deductive reasoning is when theory and hypothesis building comes first. In the field of research, qualitative research emphasizes the development of theories while quantitative research focuses on testing these theories. In short, the objective of qualitative data analysis is to find, evaluate, compare, and understand patterns and themes within the data. In nature, qualitative analysis is flexible and iterative so that researchers can revisit data as they uncover new insights. They often collect and analyze data at the same time, using analysis to guide further data collection.

Meanwhile Mahoney and Goertz (2008) compared and contrasted the methodological aspects of qualitative and quantitative through 10 areas. Lichtman (2014) explained that the rise of qualitative research is imminent, but more and more researchers started to apply the characteristics of both methods. While both qualitative and quantitative research are means to scrutinize valid descriptive and causal inference, according to the research of Mahoney and Goertz (2008), using one of the methods leads to pursuing different specific research goals in different ways, setting different research questions and approaching the given question in different ways. In addition, Lichtman (2014) argues that while qualitative and quantitative methods have their characteristics and it is case-specific when to use which method, it should not necessarily be separated both methods from each other and as researchers tend nowadays, both schools can be used together to base argumentation in one research. However, it is undeniable that on one hand, using qualitative methods is better to study human/social interaction, the researcher role is more personal in the qualitative research since it carries more critical thinking and terms, phrases can be analyzed better with qualitative means. On the other hand, the quantitative method is favorable in terms of scientific research, at studying larger numbers and identifying the reality in a more objective way.

Field-generated data and "found" data are the two main types of qualitative data (Hair Jr. & Page, 2015). Field-generated data come from talks or focus groups that happen in the field. They can be written down, photographed, or recorded on video. Found data, on the other hand, come from things that already exist, like discussions, writings, ads, social networks, and audio and video records. In the

case of this study, only found data has been used. The process of selecting appropriate found data for collection carries challenges. The need for search strategies is unavoidable hence the fact that on the internet extensive content of digital records are to be found and qualitative researchers are often confronted with a lot of sources. Therefore, determining which sources to scrutinize in their research carries a challenge. In response, researchers engage in the process of developing categories and patterns while analyzing sources and answering research questions.

The data collection of this thesis was made to rely solely on secondary sources. These sources are websites, articles, and academic, non-academic publications which provide diverse perspectives for a better understanding of eco-anxiety practices and CSR initiatives. Additionally, using exclusively secondary sources address the given time constraints that were present during conducting this thesis. However, this approach ensured an efficient and focused approach to data collection. In addition, qualitative coding was employed to find patterns and effective strategies within these sources, providing a deeper understanding of methods proposed for alleviating eco-anxiety both in individual and organizational context.

### **3.2 Data collection - qualitative coding**

For the first research question, the methodology of qualitative coding has been used while for the second the practices of Patagonia as a case have been analyzed. Managing qualitative data can be difficult in different ways, but when conducting qualitative studies, researchers tend to use coding which is a widely employed method in qualitative analysis in order to deal with large amounts of text into manageable parts. Coding helps simplify data and focus on what is important from different sources. In qualitative research, coding involves selecting units like words, phrases, or images from collected materials. These units are linked to topics and themes, making it easier to organize and categorize the data for analysis. While counting words or themes can be done, it should be approached with caution, as qualitative research data may not be as standardized or representative as quantitative data. The reason behind why the qualitative research, and coding as method was chosen for this study is because of the nature of the research and its associated questions. While the academic literature lacks comprehensive analyses on how companies can effectively address eco-anxiety, different non-academic sources and websites offer different practices and approaches to this phenomenon. The chosen coding structure is aligned with the first research question, which is providing a summary and analysis of possible ways and best practices to mitigate eco-anxiety for individuals and for companies. At first, an “individual approach” has been established where the practices can help to alleviate this phenomenon which can be conducted by individuals. The reason behind is that most of the sources lack viewing eco-anxiety in terms of CSR and companies. Therefore, after establishing the list for the possible

individual practices, a transformation of the list to CSR practices will be conducted which will be labeled as “organizational approach”. Furthermore, this list addresses mainly employees, as internal stakeholders, as this terminology reflects their role within the organization who have a stake in the initiatives of CSR of business entities. The goal of the establishment of the list of practices in the organizational approach, translated from the individual approach is to provide a foundation to assess the extent to which individuals and CSR initiatives currently can do for alleviating eco-anxiety which would answer RQ1. The main aim of this coding is to provide a comprehensive list of recommendations both for employees and management as internal stakeholders. The categorization of established practices allows for the development of strategic development and offers practical guidance on the strategies and practices that companies who are engaged in a sustainable and responsible mindset could employ to effectively address eco-anxiety. To summarize, qualitative coding can be utilized in two ways: to understand what could alleviate eco-anxiety and as a guideline for addressing it.

The limitation of this method is certainly that there is no handful of analysis on how actually these initiatives work in reality and do not present measured outcomes on the result of addressing eco-anxiety. Furthermore, the websites carry different types of nature regarding the audience and the approach whether it is for businesses or individuals in general. Consequently, the data for the qualitative coding was collected from secondary sources, primarily sourced both from academic and non-academic sources as well. The decision to collect data as a sort of scoping review from secondary sources on the internet was driven by the need to access a comprehensive list and wide range of information on different methods, which was lacking in the existing academic literature. Furthermore, online sources provide access to up-to-date and publicly available information, ensuring a foundation for the qualitative coding and analysis processes. The reason why these websites were used in the first place for coding is that, on the one hand, most academic sources do not entail the alleviation of eco-anxiety but rather analysis of the phenomena from psychological or semantic perspectives. On the other hand, internet sources were more focused and provided more methods for relieving this state of mind. Furthermore, sources did not provide an organizational approach, only entailed possible practices, dedicated to individuals, so the translation was needed.

The coding process began with an exploration of sources, primarily sourced from Google and Google Scholar, in search of valuable insights related to alleviating eco-anxiety. To find relevant sources regarding the topic, a search on Google and Google Scholar was done using certain keywords as comprehensively as possible:

- Alleviating eco-anxiety/climate anxiety,
- Addressing/Tackling Eco-anxiety/climate anxiety,
- Methods against eco-anxiety/climate anxiety,
- CSR and eco-anxiety/climate anxiety.

During this examination of the sources, each new recommendation was assigned to a different number. This numbering system allowed for the creation of a comprehensive inventory of identified recommendations, ensuring that each method was uniquely cataloged and the recurrence of a particular tip in other sources. After reading and understanding the selected sources, a total of 16 distinct points were established where every point stands for one recommendation or possible solution to be able to alleviate, mitigate, or tackle eco-anxiety based on the aforementioned 14 different sources. During the analysis, practices mostly for individuals have been found, indicating an individual approach. Later on, the organizational list will be established in order to answer RQ1.

Specifically, these sources carry different tones in terms of alleviating eco-anxiety since the approaches originate from a business perspective, a professional perspective, or a more personal, unprofessional view. While more sources could have been included, this intentional limitation aimed to ensure the multilateral approach and different guidelines that these sources provided. In general, these websites deal with other mental health issues or provide other business- or sustainability-related perspectives and advice where particularly eco-anxiety is mentioned. The authors of these webpages are mostly professionals, written by journalists, experts, or academic researchers, but there are some blog entries with unprofessional or non-academic background which are known for their reliability in conveying psychological or business matters. Beside online sources, one article was also used in the qualitative coding, namely "Eco-Anxiety and Environmental Education written by Panu Pihkala (Pihkala, 2020), which gave comprehensive methods on this topic.

### **3.3 Data collection - Case study**

Case study in general is a method of empirical investigation that examines the phenomena through a given example. Case studies are part of a qualitative methodology in which the researcher examines extensively a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Priya, 2020). A case study investigation provides the researcher the flexibility to employ any data gathering approach that is suitable for their objective (if the method is viable and morally acceptable). Case studies can be descriptive, explanatory or exploratory. In the case of this study, exploratory case study has been used as the purpose of choosing this method is to answer, explore and identify the second research question. In this study, Patagonia company and its initiatives towards CSR and climate anxiety has been mentioned and examined as a stellar example of showcasing creative and efficient sustainable engagement that could be followed. The reason behind choosing Patagonia is since nowadays no companies are addressing eco-anxiety officially while Patagonia stands out as a compelling case study due to its global recognition as one of the foremost sustainable companies

and its initiatives can be viewed as pioneering efforts and some initiatives could theoretically alleviate negative emotions connected to climate change. During the process, the official website of Patagonia and different articles related to Patagonia have been viewed and referred to. In addition, in this section, the initiatives of Patagonia have been labeled with the corresponding practice from the qualitative coding to showcase which of their efforts could alleviate eco-anxiety. The limitation of choosing Patagonia and case study approach is that it analyzes only one company, but it can give a good start for other researchers to analyze other companies in terms of eco-anxiety.

### **3.4 Theoretical framework and theory-driven approach**

A theoretical framework is a systematically constructed set of concepts and propositions derived from theories, providing the foundation for structuring a study (Varpio et al., 2019). In this study, a theory-driven content analysis was used to link theoretical concepts like eco-anxiety and CSR through qualitative coding of various sources. The focus was on understanding strategies, practices, and impacts related to eco-anxiety and CSR, aiming to advance theoretical understanding between these concepts.

For RQ1, the premise is that organizations can implement CSR practices to mitigate eco-anxiety among internal stakeholders. Furthermore, CSR initiatives act as mediators, moderating the relationship between knowledge of climate change and providing potential support to cope with this phenomenon. Regarding RQ2, companies like Patagonia are actively engaged in implementing various CSR practices that either implicitly or explicitly, can contribute to alleviate eco-anxiety among internal and even external stakeholders as well by enhanced brand perception. Moreover, businesses can leverage CSR practices by incorporating ecopsychological concerns and promoting sustainability, generating positive outcomes both financially and in terms of societal impact. Psychological theories of stress and coping inform individual and organizational responses to eco-anxiety, while institutional theory examines how businesses use CSR to address this phenomenon.

To maintain a structured research approach, certain steps and considerations were followed according to established recommendations and guidelines, created by Bengtsson (2016). The process unfolded as follows:

1. Planning - Defining the theories and aim of the study
2. Data Collection - Actively seeking and consistently exploring diverse sources
3. Data analyzing - Interpreting relevant sources and create coding individually
4. Creating a report - Establishing the list of practices from the coding
5. Presentation of the report - Include it to the thesis

The study applies a theory-driven approach to explore different practices for alleviating eco-anxiety, establishing a translation from individual to organizational approaches. These practices are then connected to Patagonia's initiatives, maintaining alignment with the thesis scope, focusing on the internal stakeholders. Overall, the theoretical framework guides the analysis and interpretation of results, aiming to contribute to theoretical understanding within the domains of eco-anxiety, CSR, and employee well-being. After presenting the theoretical framework, the results and the research questions will be further analyzed and answered.

## 4 RESULTS

See the list of established practices for individuals in Table 1. To enhance clarity and create a classification, these exercises were systematically categorized into four distinct groups based on their nature. The following groups are: Physical and emotional practices (yellow), Proactive, sustainable practices (blue), Educational and professional practices (orange), Community based practices (green). This classification not only showcased a more understandable result of the qualitative coding but also provided a more transparent layout for all the 17 practices.

TABLE 1: Practices to alleviate eco-anxiety (Individual approach)

Physical and emotional practices (yellow)	Educational and professional practices (orange)
1. Channeling emotions constructively	9. Raising awareness through education
2. Prioritizing Self-care	10. Seeking professional help
3. Developing resilience skills	11. Attending eco-anxiety events
4. Engaging in physical activities	12. Participating in a dedicated program
Proactive, sustainable practices (blue)	Community based practices (green)
5. Reducing carbon footprint	13. Participating in community efforts
6. Encouraging PEBs and appreciate nature	14. Creating supportive spaces within communities
7. Establishing an emergency or safety plan	15. Listening to and share eco-anxiety experiences
8. Managing media exposure	16. Creating a community dedicated to eco-anxiety



In table 2, the identified recommendations with their respective number will be shown alongside their occurrences in various sources.

TABLE 2: Sources and their included solutions

1	Skedel, R. (2022). <i>Eco anxiety: What it is &amp; how to deal with it</i> , Choosingtherapy.com	8, 1, 5, 9, 14, 16, 2, 3, 10, 7
2	<i>6 simple tips to ease eco-anxiety</i> (2022). friendsoftheearth.ie	14, 9, 4, 5, 8, 12
3	<i>Why sustainable businesses need to talk eco-anxiety</i> , (2023). Falmouth University	10, 1, 15, 11, 6
4	Heid, M., (2022). <i>How to cope with eco-anxiety: 5 expert tips</i> , EverydayHealth.com	16, 11, 14, 9, 13
5	<i>Eco-anxiety &amp; how to cope</i> , (2023). AnxietyCanada.com	14, 2, 10, 8, 7, 16, 11, 1,
6	<i>Eco-anxiety: 5 tips to help you cope with climate anxiety</i> (2023). Calm Blog	16, 8, 9, 5, 13
7	<i>Understanding and coping with eco-anxiety</i> (2023). Mental Health Commission of Canada	10, 16, 5, 11, 1,
8	<i>How can business tackle eco-anxiety</i> (2023). Quest Studio	10, 15, 11
9	Wilkinson & Wray, (2021). <i>7 resources to help manage climate anxiety</i> , Time	14, 16, 11, 10, 13, 3
10	Fournier, (2022). <i>Responding to climate anxiety in the workplace</i> , Workplace Options	5, 6, 15, 14, 16, 1, 10,
11	<i>How to deal with climate anxiety? 9 activists &amp; experts share advice</i> (2022). Global Citizen	16, 9, 10, 2, 1, 14, 6, 5
12	Pickering & Pickering, (2023). <i>Reducing eco-anxiety is a critical step in achieving any climate action</i> , The Conversation	10, 5, 6, 1, 11,
13	<i>Eco-anxiety in the workplace: What it means for wellbeing leaders</i> (2023). Make a Difference	10, 5, 9, 11
14	Pihkala, P., (2020), <i>Eco-anxiety and environmental education</i>	1, 3, 4, 5, 14, 9, 12, 6

During the coding process, no specific software has been utilized. The decision not to use any particular software for the coding process was based on time constraint, the nature of the coding and the fact that premium software was not available.

In the upcoming section, a detailed overview of each group and their respective practices will be provided. Furthermore, their occurrence in the sources will be shared. Which practice has more than 5 occurrence considered as popular practice, which has 5 or less than 5, considered as less-popular practice. Afterwards, an organizational approach in terms of internal stakeholders that builds upon these individual strategies will be established, aiming to address RQ1 effectively.

#### **4.1 What could be the strategies and practices employed by companies to address eco-anxiety for internal stakeholders?**

As introduced earlier, to answer RQ1, qualitative coding has been established in order to have different insights on how actually companies could alleviate eco-anxiety with different methods. During the coding, several methods and practices have been found, but in a more personal, individual approach. Therefore, in order to answer the research question, these will be transformed into possible CSR practices to gain an organizational, company approach in terms of internal stakeholders. To have a more comprehensive list of methods, 4 main groups have been created. In the first part of this section, these groups and the regarding practices will be analyzed and introduced more in depth. Moreover, certain methods listed may address similar approaches but within different contexts, thus forming the basis of this classification. All together 17 different tips were established. At the same time, the translation of these methods into CSR practices will be presented so that they could be used in company environment and environmental management to showcase what could or should be the practices employed by companies to address eco-anxiety which is shown respectively to the given application so that a handful list of practices is presented along. It should be noted here, that given the diversity among individuals, particularly in terms of psychological attributes and sociocultural, educational, economical or even genetic differences, it's important to recognize that effective solutions for addressing eco-anxiety may vary from person to person. As mentioned earlier, it is a psychological phenomenon and can manifest in many ways, as well as triggering factors and alleviating methods can differ significantly among individuals. Although this list provides the most popular approaches and solutions, the answer to eco-anxiety along with the success of alleviation can also vary from person to person.

## **4.2 Individual approach**

### **4.2.1 Physical and emotional practices**

The first main group is called physical and emotional practices which stands for coping with eco-anxiety, encompassing a diverse range of strategies in a physical, emotional or psychological approach. Taking care of mental health is as vital as tending to physical well-being. Since eco-anxiety is a psychological phenomenon as well, finding solutions in the nexus of psychology can be the most powerful tools. During the coding process, various emotional and mental tips were found which will be introduced one by one.

#### **4.2.1.1 Channeling emotions constructively**

To make the list shorter, some tips were listed under this umbrella of the practice. Shortly, "Channeling emotions constructively" stands for trying to change perspective along with mindset and channel our emotions in a more constructive way in order to deal with our feelings about the environment. Practicing patience is important which means taking things one step at a time and not getting overwhelmed by all the problems. Furthermore, using humor to cope with eco-anxiety can lighten our mood and help us see things more positively where humor can be a coping mechanism as well, offering a lighter perspective on challenging environmental realities. Additionally, cultivating hopeful thinking and focusing on positive aspects to regain hope are effective practices as they involve focusing on the positive things happening in the world, even beside emerging environmental concerns, which can give us a sense of optimism about the future.

Occurrence: 8

#### **4.2.1.2 Engaging in physical activities**

According to different sources, engaging in physical activities can alleviate eco-anxiety too. It correlates with the benefits of stress reduction and mental health as it serves as a distraction from anxious thoughts. Additionally, participating in group sporting activities provide social support and community too. By prioritizing physical well-being and embracing physical health, individuals can feel better in the face of ecological challenges.

Occurrence: 3

#### **4.2.1.3 Prioritizing Self-care**

Prioritizing self-care can be a tool for maintaining emotional resilience in the face of eco-anxiety too. Self-care encompasses practices that promote physical and emotional well-being, reducing stress and anxiety (Richards et al., 2010). It involves both engaging in behaviors that maintain health and adopting a caring attitude towards oneself. This includes activities such as mindfulness, relaxation techniques, and engaging in activities that bring joy or fulfillment.

Occurrence: 3

#### **4.2.1.4 Developing resilience skills**

Developing and mastering resilience skills can be helpful tool as well. Emotional resilience refers to the ability to cope and adapt despite disruption or challenges while sustaining optimal functional abilities (Lloyd et al., 2016). This includes environmental threats, while maintaining a sense of hope and positivism. Individuals can develop resilience by adaptive coping strategies, seeking social support, practicing mindfulness or self-care. Additionally, a more resilient mindset is more capable of reframing catastrophic thinking patterns and having a more realistic understanding of the world.

Occurrence: 2

#### **4.2.2 Proactive, sustainable practices**

Proactive, sustainable practices entail different approaches to address eco-anxiety with actionable methods which are sustainable as well. These applications are addressing not just the acknowledgment of environmental concerns but encouraging people to do proactive tasks like PEB activities to alleviate their worry. By engaging in productive exercises, individuals can transform their negative and sometimes immobilizing feelings of eco-anxiety into constructive activities that contribute to positive change.

##### **4.2.2.1 Reducing personal or company carbon footprint**

Reducing personal or company carbon footprint is an effective solution because it results in tangible actions that individuals and organizations can do. By actively minimizing carbon emissions through sustainable practices, individuals can feel a sense of control which can alleviate feelings like helplessness and despair associated with eco-anxiety. Depends on the individual, but it is advised to start with small, manageable actions. The problem of climate change is enormous and can be overwhelming, but one must accept that since it is a global issue, even the smallest change is important to achieve larger sustainable goals in the future.

Occurrence: 8

##### **4.2.2.2 Encouraging sustainable behaviors**

While caring about the personal footprint, encouraging others, or providing an example to follow, can also alleviate eco-anxiety. By doing and promoting PEBs, not only benefit the environment but also motivate individuals to take meaningful action and later, maybe they can also inspire others to incorporate the same actions and start a butterfly effect. Furthermore, appreciating and spending time in nature can be a relaxing practice for renewal, inspiration and to be able to value nature more, particularly in the context of addressing eco-anxiety. Regaining our sense of interconnectedness with the natural world is the main goal of most eco-anxiety therapies too (Baudon & Jachens, 2021). These therapies

usually include contemplative rituals, conscious interaction with “non-human” nature, and other eco-therapeutic practices including participating in earth-caring activities.

Occurrence: 5

#### **4.2.2.3 Emergency plan**

It may sound radical at first, but preparing for the worst scenario can be a resolution as well as this kind of planning can foster feelings of security and control. For such emergency plans, it is recommended to have a minimal stock of supplies like emergency kits, food, water and first aid kit or religious things, toys even (Skedel, 2022). Furthermore, talking with family and creating a household emergency plan and preparing for natural catastrophes may cause anxiety itself, but later, can provide a sense of calmness.

Occurrence: 2

#### **4.2.2.4 Managing Media Exposure**

Managing media exposure can be a beneficial strategy for individuals dealing with eco-anxiety, especially when faced with distressing news about the environment. Staying informed is important, and as discussed earlier, the correlation between knowledge and anxiety level can be dependent, but managing media exposure by limiting the influx of distressing news from time to time is important. This practice allows for a healthy balance between staying informed and prioritizing mental well-being so it can create a space to process emotions.

Occurrence: 4

#### **4.2.3 Educational and professional practices**

The second main group is called educational and professional practices which stands for raising awareness to eco-anxiety by education or seeking professional support if needed to cope with this state of mind. Researchers often discuss whether there is a correlation between the level of education and the mental health outcome. Explanations for this correlation typically fall into two categories: social causation and social selection (Halpern-Manners et al., 2016). The social causation hypothesis means that education directly influences mental health by providing individuals better coping strategies, and more autonomy in their lives. Individuals with higher levels of education may develop problem-solving skills that help them navigate stressors and avoid negative life events. On the other hand, the social selection hypothesis foreshadows that preexisting differences, such as early-life mental health conditions, affects this correlation too. Initial mental health problems may influence educational achievement and lead to worse mental health later in life. All in all, education and being up to date could lead to worse mental health as well initially, but researchers suggest that in general it is more supportive to individuals, if they are aware of the current

situation. In the following, the established practices for this group will be presented.

#### **4.2.3.1 Raising awareness through education**

Raising awareness through education is a key strategy for alleviating eco-anxiety by educating people about climate change along with possible effects of other emotions regarding climate change. Educating about this phenomenon grants people the understanding of environmental challenges, empowering them to make more sustainable decisions and adopt sustainable practices. It provides more resilience and as discussed earlier, being educated and aware can maintain mental health on a better quality. Pihkala P. (2020b) in his aforementioned research, he analyzes whether ecopsychology should be part of environmental education (EE) which encompasses the education for sustainable development ESD and sustainability education as well. He argues that eco-anxiety along with other emotions should be part of EE, but there are some challenges that educators and researchers should keep in mind or figuring out when teaching about eco-anxiety. In EE, usually positive emotions have the predominance against negative emotions like anxiety, despair and the research done in the field is scattered across various fields and publications. Therefore, it remains a challenge integrating the emotional dimensions into EE models. However, if educators are sensitive enough to the emotional experiences of their students and could develop critical emotional awareness to lead and create discussions about eco-anxiety.

Occurrence: 7

#### **4.2.3.2 Seeking professional help**

Seeking professional help can be a crucial and radical step in managing eco-anxiety effectively, whether it is a form of therapy or a training, facilitated by external organizations. The support provided by trained therapists can help individuals with personalized methods and understanding to cope with it. Whether it is a one-on-one or a group session, trained persons can shed a light in different aspects of coping with emotions connected to ecopsychology and can offer a safe and non-judgmental space for individuals to explore their feelings parallelly helping them to identify underlying causes and develop resilience and coping strategies. One of the most prominent organizations in the field is the Climate Psychology Alliance, currently based in the United Kingdom and in the United States, where therapeutic practitioners, thinkers, researchers along with others are members of the organization who are interested or committed to delve into climate psychology and even help others to cope with eco-anxiety (Climate Psychology Alliance, 2024). Similar organizations are the Climate Psychiatry Alliance and Psychologist For The Future.

Occurrence: 10

#### **4.2.3.3 Attending eco-anxiety events**

Attending events and webinars related to eco-anxiety can be a valuable resource for individuals who are struggling with admitted negative ecological emotion or just interested in the topic to gain knowledge about the phenomena. These events, online or in-person, offer a platform for experts and visitors at the same time to openly discuss and explore the psychological realm of climate change where they can even have a breakthrough in terms of alleviation. Through interactive discussion, informative presentations and Q&A sessions, participants can gain a deeper understanding of different types of emotions as well where they find solace in knowing that they are not alone in their situation. Furthermore, if more events are held on the topic, more communities can be established as well in the future related to eco-anxiety.

Occurrence: 8

#### **4.2.3.4 Participating in a dedicated program**

One prime example for this is The Good Grief Network (GGN) and its 10-step program. GGN is a US-based nonprofit organization that facilitates peer-to-peer support groups aimed at addressing collective grief, eco-anxiety, and other intense emotions related to global crises like climate change (Good Grief Network, 2024). GGN's 10-Step Program, offers a peer-to-peer support group over 10 weeks with 10 identical steps, focusing on building community, processing emotions about global issues, and identifying actionable steps towards alleviation. Facilitated by trained leaders, they provide group sessions for no more than 15 people. The program is process-based, introducing one step each week, with the real work happening as participants integrate lessons into daily life. The aim is to build a resilient community and envision sustainable futures together.

Occurrence: 2

#### **4.2.4 Community based practices**

Community-based practices, as the 4th type of practices on the individual side, can play a crucial role in alleviating eco-anxiety in different ways. While this can be viewed as a proactive approach too, the methods that community-based exercises entail, individuals try to ease their anxiety in social efforts. By fostering collective action, engaging within local communities and connecting with others who share similar concerns can empower the recognition that one is not alone in experiencing eco-anxiety and can provide a sense of solidarity and support. Participation is advised in person as it can be more meaningful, but in the era of digitalization, there are more and more online possibilities as well. These practices not only alleviate eco-anxiety but can also strengthen social connections, resilience and open opportunities to make new connections with like-minded people.

#### **4.2.4.1 Participating in community efforts**

Participating in community efforts is a meaningful way to combat eco-anxiety and contribute to sustainability. Engaging in different local community activities like neighborhood clean-ups, tree-planting events or any events related to sustainability. By working together with others towards environmental goals, individuals can feel empowered and hopeful about making a positive impact. Through active involvement in community initiatives, not only related to sustainability, can develop resilience skills and create social bonds.

Occurrence: 2

#### **4.2.4.2 Creating supportive spaces within communities**

Creating supportive and safe spaces in the context of eco-anxiety within different types of communities, organizations or social circles can promote the sense of shared feeling, connection and support. There are ways to create these spaces where individuals feel safe talking about their feelings, whether it is related to climate change like organizing team-building exercises, roundtable talks, or even volunteer opportunities.

Occurrence: 8

#### **4.2.4.3 Listening to and share eco-anxiety experiences**

Sharing and listening to eco-anxiety experiences within any community can foster solidarity and validation, reducing stigma around climate-related emotions. By opening up or encouraging people to open up about their feelings in terms of these negative feelings, can lead to collective problem-solving and empower the sense of solidarity. To voice concerns and personal experience help in exploring coping strategies too and even strengthen bonds. This feeling can be comforting and reassuring in the face of difficulties or uncertainties.

Occurrence: 3

#### **4.2.4.4 Creating a community dedicated to eco-anxiety**

If there are no groups, communities or even the social circles are rigid or close-minded to discuss, one can always find people and create a community dedicated to eco-anxiety where like-minded people can gather within reasonable geographical reach. For sure, one could look around online as well.

Occurrence: 8

### **4.3 Organizational Approach**

After introducing all the established practices in an individual approach, in order to provide an answer to RQ2. In the following part, these will be introduced and defined again in the context of organizations and how business entities should act to address the mental health implications of the workforce,



particularly focusing on eco-anxiety. These practices will be translated into different practices that also correspond with the mindset of CSR and companies can incorporate them into their system to leverage their initiatives on an organizational level. Establishing this list of practices for companies provides an overview of the role that companies can achieve in mitigating eco-anxiety while identifying successful CSR practices. In order to do that, a new classification and 4 new subgroups have been created based on the practices of the individual approach, namely Well-being and Supportive practices, Policies and Organizational practices, Educational and Awareness practices, Community based practices. Each of them will be introduced in the following part of the section.

#### **4.3.1 Well-being and Supportive Practices**

The responsibility of companies towards the mental health of their workforce is paramount. Creating a positive work environment and offering different programs for the whole company are essential parts of the CSR mindset. Actions that alleviate the state of mental health and emphasizing open-mindedness, organizations can enhance employee well-being and productivity. Recognizing and addressing current challenges like eco-anxiety, not only benefits individuals but also contributes to a healthier and more successful workplace which can also enhance efficiency. Different researches demonstrated that human resource management practices that address employee well-being, linked to high-performance workplaces, correlate with enhanced employee well-being along with increased productivity and there is a positive proportion between these practices and organizational financial performance, too (Burke, 2014). Based on the physical and mental practices, business entities should integrate different workshops addressing emotional resilience, self-care and adaptive mental coping strategies into employee development programs by collaborating with different organizations. Employees with strong emotional resilience can cope with stress without breaking down, regardless of the nature of the source (Lloyd et al., 2016). This skill can be developed through teaching and learning, but true effectiveness comes from consistent practice integrated into a healthy lifestyle and work routine. Programs related to resilience are designed to build skills intended to reduce stress and improve how individuals think and feel. Besides training addressing overall resilience, wellness programs are meaningful tools to enhance overall well-being which can alleviate eco-anxiety too. In general, wellness programs are structured, employer-sponsored programs, aimed at assisting employees in adopting and maintaining behaviors that reduce health risks, enhance quality of life, improve personal effectiveness (Berry et al., 2010). Companies that provide wellness opportunities to their employees have seen significant benefits such as reduced healthcare expenses, increased productivity, and improved morale. Holistic wellness programs and events that encourage employees to engage in physical activities can help to reduce overall stress along with eco-anxiety. Hence, there is a necessity to promote and offer various

wellness programs for individuals experiencing overwhelming eco-feelings or general anxiety.

#### **4.3.2 Policies and Organizational practices**

In an organizational context, policies and organizational practices to address eco-anxiety involve implementing actionable and sustainable methods that business entities should do. This set of practices are based on the previous group of proactive, sustainable practices. Businesses that are socially responsible, clearly could prioritize sustainability and commit to broader environmental goals to be able to promote a culture of environmental mindset within the organization. By adopting sustainable practices and reducing organizational carbon footprint, employees can have a sense of reassurance that the company where they are working is sustainable, which can implicitly alleviate eco-anxiety too. Besides being sustainable, it is important to promote proactive engagement and organizing events, such as PEB activities, to empower individuals to transform negative feelings of ecopsychology into constructive actions. As for the personal approach, companies can also develop and implement emergency plans that address climate-related risks and ensure business continuity in the face of environmental challenges. While businesses do not have the power to manage employees' media exposure, providing guidelines and resources through events and workshops can develop the skills of employees to manage distressing environmental news and promote mental well-being. Inventing better health policies that promote the mental and general well-being of the given staff in the context of ecopsychology is a good start as well. One such strategy is providing options for remote or hybrid working, which can lessen the carbon impact of the company while simultaneously easing overall anxiety. Additional measures could be enhancing work-life balance, providing mental health resources where it is even possible to address particularly eco-anxiety.

#### **4.3.3 Awareness and educational practices**

Awareness and educational practices can play a critical role in addressing eco-anxiety within business entities. This section is based on the “educational and professional practices” for individuals. The aim is the same in the organizational approach which is to focus on raising awareness about eco-feelings through education and providing access to professional support when needed. While well-being and supportive practices entail workshops and training, this part does entail the same nature of practices, but focusing more on the education and raising awareness on the flaws of eco-anxiety with additional elements. One great practice is to organize an internal environmental educational campaign for employees which is a set of workshops, seminars and sustainability training which would include eco-anxiety as well. Providing these kinds of elements for the workforce is part of the social CSR and could not just alleviate eco-anxiety effectively but develop the quality of the workforce. Furthermore, providing access to mental health services, counseling and therapy resources for employees

who are experiencing general anxiety or emotional distress can reduce environmentally related concerns as well. Mental health services should be internal or done by an external professional person or by organization in collaboration with the given business entity. Additionally, Organizational mental health service, or the environmental management if eco-anxiety should be addressed, have the possibility to facilitate and promote events, conferences or workshops that support the mental health of the workforce or raise awareness about the phenomena. Partnering with organizations like the aforementioned Good Grief Network or other local organizations related to ecopsychology could offer structured programs beside these elements to support groups who are dealing with emotional challenges. These practices entail mostly the professional approach of dealing with eco-anxiety, but facilitating a more personal, community-based approach could work effectively as well.

#### **4.3.4 Community Engagement and Collaboration (Green)**

Community Engagement and Collaboration (green), labeled almost the same way as by the individual approach, offer a powerful approach to addressing eco-anxiety within business entities and beyond. Initiatives that are community based can play a crucial role in alleviating eco-anxiety through collective action and social engagement. Like the individual approach, these practices not only aim to mitigate negative feelings, but also strengthen social connections and encourage employees to forge new connections while it can reinforce the understanding that one is not alone in experiencing eco-feelings and collaborate toward shared sustainability goals within or outside of the workplace. Therefore, encouragement in participating in community efforts can have a positive impact, even beyond organization. Creating supportive spaces within the organization with the means of internal support networks, peer groups, events and open forums give opportunities for employees to open up about their negative feelings or share their experiences and receive understanding and support from their colleagues. Beside supportive spaces, creating an internal community dedicated only to eco-anxiety has the same aim but more particular. These practices foster a sense of community and reduce stigma around different mental health issues and promotes overall well-being in the workplace while listening to and sharing eco-anxiety experiences encourages empathy, mutual support, and ultimately contributes to a healthier and more supportive work environment for all employees.

The following Table 3 shows a summary of all the practices of the organizational approach.

TABLE 3: Practices to alleviate eco-anxiety (Organizational approach)

Well-being and supportive practices (yellow)	Awareness and educational practices (orange)
1. Emotional resilience trainings	9. Raising awareness through educational campaigns
2. Holistic wellness programs	10. Providing access to mental health services
3. Employee development trainings	11. Facilitating eco-anxiety events
4. Events for sporting activities	12. Partnering up with organization
Policies and Organizational Practices (blue)	Community Engagement and collaboration practices (green)
5. Reducing carbon footprint	13. Participating in community efforts
6. Encouraging PEBs and appreciating nature	14. Creating supportive spaces within workplace
7. Establishing an emergency or safety plan	15. Encourage to share eco-anxiety experiences
8. Work-life balance, health policy development	16. Community building

#### 4.4 Conclusion for RQ1

In conclusion, the research identified various practices aimed at addressing eco-anxiety both at the individual and organizational levels. Both approach practices offer coping mechanisms to navigate environmental concerns while promoting mental well-being. While the individual approach should have been created due to the lack of sources dovetailing eco-anxiety and CSR was lacking, it offered the foundation to create the list of practices that can be implemented into the internal CSR environment. The management has all the tools in every business environment to organize, facilitate training, various programs, activities and campaigns to promote implicitly or explicitly how to alleviate negative emotions and raise awareness. Furthermore, they can provide access to different

services and quality development by introducing policies to alleviate not just the eco-anxiety, but overall well-being of the workforce.

But the question, whether a company can or should implement the given practices to address eco-anxiety, should take some factors into consideration. To start, it is important for companies to measure the effectiveness and needs from the employee side. While eco-anxiety may not always be easily quantifiable, companies can gauge its impact through employee feedback, mental health assessments, and productivity metrics. Human resources or environmental management could facilitate personal audits first, where the level of anxiety could be measured through surveys and interviews, regardless of if it is environmentally related. Furthermore, it is crucial to assess whether employees feel supported, empowered, and less anxious because of these efforts. However, it is also evident to acknowledge that implementing such practices comes with associated expenses. Yet, there are creative ways to mitigate these expenses. For example, companies can leverage existing resources or encourage voluntarism. In addition, internal expertise or partnerships with external organizations that are motivated to give presentations, can develop cost-effective solutions. Although, fostering a culture of sustainability and well-being can lead to long-term benefits, including improved employee loyalty and productivity. However, it must be emphasized that before applying any of the practice, the aforementioned calculations should be done by strategic planning to decide which method can be the most effective in different cases, both in financial and anxiety terms.

According to the research of Hall et al., (2021) from an internal stakeholder perspective, CSR initiatives and storytelling has a positive effect on thriving and meaningful work. They argue that by using an integrated storytelling strategy about CSR initiatives and promoting them across different channels like internal reports, training sessions, and meetings, internal stakeholders can ultimately gain deeper insights into the company's CSR efforts. This means that in the case of eco-anxiety, CSR can have an alleviation factor itself.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study, such as the focus on theoretical propositions has been provided rather than empirical data and the lack of generalizability of the findings across different organizational contexts. Furthermore, the effectiveness of these practices has not been analyzed as there were no interviews or measurements of the potential alleviation results. Despite these limitations, the research tries to contribute to the understanding of ecopsychological concerns and offers practical insights for businesses seeking to support their employees' mental health in the face of environmental challenges.

Overall, the findings suggest that addressing eco-anxiety requires a multifaceted approach that combines individual coping strategies with organizational initiatives aimed at promoting well-being and fostering a sense of community to be more effective in coping. To enforce the initial theory, CSR initiatives play a crucial role in mediating and moderating the relationship between knowledge of climate change and providing support to cope with eco-anxiety. By implementing these practices, businesses can not only alleviate this

state of mind among their workforce but also contribute to creating a more sustainable and supportive workplace environment which ultimately leverages and broadens the concept of CSR.

## 5 QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF PATAGONIA

In this section, the following case study, focusing on the different CSR initiatives of Patagonia, known for its commitment to environmental sustainability and social responsibility, will be analyzed. CSR encompasses sustainability practices and initiatives that aim to produce and distribute products in a way that reduces negative impact while supporting profitability objectives. It entails the concerns and considerations for fair trade, ethical labor practices and consumerism (Michel et al., 2019). Patagonia admittedly aims to motivate people to buy less clothing which can impact consumer's environmental behavior as well which opens the possibility also to alleviate eco-anxiety by aligning to this campaign. The strength of Patagonia not only comes from their dedication of being carbon neutral, although they aim to reduce and eliminate their own emissions, but from building communities and providing options for and encouraging their stakeholder network on how to be more sustainable. While they do not have a specifically designed initiative on tackling eco-anxiety, the aim of their actions resonates with these practices. For this reason, too, the extent of CSR initiatives that could address eco-feelings is vast. Patagonia's diverse CSR initiatives showcase a wide range of practices and give insight on how other companies could establish unique solutions as well.

The primary objective is to examine the range of efforts of Patagonia explore to what extent their CSR initiatives are geared towards addressing eco-anxiety implicitly or explicitly. This approach answers RQ2, namely **“To what extent are Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Patagonia trying to address eco-anxiety?”** Ultimately, this section tries to provide a relevant answer to the given research question and theories.

Identifying and analyzing the strategies and practices employed by Patagonia offer valuable insights on different initiatives that can be employed by other companies to mitigate eco-anxiety and leverage CSR. In the following parts, with the help of the established qualitative coding and its practices by addressing their respective number at their initiatives will be mentioned under **“Alleviates eco-anxiety by”** in the context of internal stakeholders. Since some practices of Patagonia address external stakeholders, in the conclusion that dimension will be mentioned. This comparative approach can showcase and enrich the understanding of how Patagonia's initiatives align not only with the mindset of general CSR but how it can leverage the concept of CSR in order to incorporate the ecopsychological realm as well.

### 5.1 Patagonia Inc.

Patagonia, Inc., is a California-based outdoor recreation clothing company founded by Yvon Chouinard in 1973 in Venture which brand is synonymous with its emphasis on the environment and sustainability through responsible and

sustainable manufacturing and consumption (Chouinard & Stanley, 2012; Hwang, Lee, Diddi, & Karpova, 2016). For this reason, Patagonia became popular and renowned in the field of clothing and textiles for the past few decades because of their sustainability practices and are considered as pioneers. In addition, Patagonia became famous as one of the most socially responsible companies globally and is a leader in circular practices as they received the 2017 Accenture Strategy award for Circular Economy Multinational. Patagonia is guided by a strong commitment to sustainability, reflected in its mission to create top-quality products, minimize harm, and contribute to environmental solutions.

### **5.1.1 Yvonne Chouinard's character and ownership transparency**

Yvonne Chouinard is the founder of Patagonia, and its personality is a stellar example of how to act socially responsibly as an owner of a company. He says his journey started as a craftsman who became a businessman and now, he is advocating for sustainable practices, but he is also well-known as a rock-climber and philanthropist (Patagonia Ownership, 2023). His famous quote is that "Earth is now our only shareholder". In his open letter he elaborates further on the options for addressing the environmental crisis and how Patagonia strives to influence a positive change and its mission of saving the planet. In 2022, he donated his company to Holdfast Collective which possesses 98% of all non-voting stocks and to the formed Patagonia Purpose Trust which owns 2% and all voting stocks. Non-voting equities carry only economic value, whereas voting stock has both economic value and decision-making control. Patagonia is now owned by the Holdfast Collective and the Patagonia Purpose Trust. The Holdfast Collective owns 98% of the company and all the non-voting shares and The Patagonia Purpose Trust owns 2% of the company with all the voting shares. Nonvoting stock carries economic worth but lacks decision-making value. Voting stock has both economic value and decision-making authority. His idea behind the donation was to ensure profits are used for tackling climate change and he wanted to show an example of how to act responsibly to other companies, but the company remains a for-profit organization and commits to B-Corp. According to Patagonia, the Holdfast Collective will use every profit to fight the environmental crisis and support green, thriving communities. The Patagonia Purpose Trust was created to protect the values and mission of the company and ensure their commitment to the sustainable purposes forever. Their motto is "We're in business to save our home planet". Employees at Patagonia are ensured that this move does not change their status and they will be still highly appreciated.

#### Alleviates eco-anxiety by:

- 5 - Reducing carbon footprint
- 6 - Encouraging PEBs and appreciating nature
- 15 - Encourage to share eco-anxiety experiences



### 5.1.2 Employee benefits

Chouinard even wrote a book called “Let my people go surfing” in which he believes that “work has to be fun” but Patagonia is famous for their policy towards their employees as they provide flexible working hours and allowing them to engage in sports like skiing, surfing and take a shower before returning to work (Rattalino, 2017). This policy has vastly improved the quality of the work and strengthened the relationship between employees and management. Furthermore, the company facilitates environmental internship programs, educational events and different employee benefits in terms of health insurance, personal time off and nutritional benefits. During these environmental internship programs, employees are allowed to discover opportunities and work for a given period at any environmental organization while they are paid by Patagonia. For this reason, Patagonia has been awarded as one of the best employers by Fortune magazine in 2016. These initiatives and mindset alleviate not just eco-anxiety but general anxiety as well.

#### Alleviates eco-anxiety by:

- 2 - Holistic wellness programs
- 3 - Employee development trainings
- 4 - Events for sporting activities
- 6 - Encouraging PEBs and appreciating nature
- 8 - Work-life balance, health policy development
- 9 - Raising awareness through educational campaigns
- 12 - Partnering up with organization
- 13 - Participating in community efforts

### 5.1.3 Fair trade program - Social responsibility

Patagonia has been producing Fair Trade clothing since 2014 through its partnership with Fair Trade USA (Patagonia, Fair Trade Certified™ 2023). The company pays a premium for items made in Fair Trade Certified factories, directly benefiting local workers. The employees, through a democratically elected committee, decide how to use these funds, promoting community projects and purchasing goods. Patagonia's Fair-Trade program has impacted over 75,000 workers globally, focusing on worker well-being, safety, and environmental compliance. The company is committed to finding a permanent solution to ensure all its clothing workers earn a living wage and dissolve sweatshops. Among many other initiatives, Patagonia's social-responsibility program is a stellar example, and their view is to analyze and manage the impacts of business on the workers and communities in their supply chain.

#### Alleviates eco-anxiety by:

- 5 - Reducing carbon footprint
- 8 - Work-life balance, health policy development

- 13 – Participating community efforts
- 14 - Creating safe and supportive spaces within communities

#### **5.1.4 Patagonia Action works**

Patagonia has a long history of supporting financially and strategically grassroots activists tackling the environmental crisis (Patagonia Action Works, 2022). In response, they also established the “Patagonia Action Works” program, which aims to connect committed individuals with local environmental organizations. The program provides a platform that empowers individuals to act on pressing global issues, facilitating engagement with and support for community-based initiatives. Since it is a community and different events are organized, this can resonate with solutions in different ways. Yvon Chouinard once stated, “the cure for depression is action” and that was one of the motivational drivers why this program has been established. In addition, Beth Thoren, who is the director of Environmental Action EMEA at Patagonia shared her personal experience of how she turned her eco-anxiety into positive actions through Patagonia Action Works (Finch, 2021). She was volunteering as an engineer on a ship for Sea Shepherd to block whale hunting in Antarctica where she wanted to make an impact for a cause she believed in. She admits that this activity helped her alleviate her eco-anxiety and motivates other people to be involved in grassroots groups through platforms like Patagonia Action works because even small actions can collectively make significant impact in the light of environmental crisis.

##### Alleviates eco-anxiety by:

- 1 – Emotional resilience trainings
- 3 - Employee development trainings
- 5 - Reducing carbon footprint
- 6 - Encouraging PEBs and appreciating nature
- 12. Partnering up with organization
- 13 - Participating in community efforts
- 14 – Creating supportive spaces within workplace
- 15 - Encourage to share eco-anxiety experiences
- 16 - Community Building

#### **5.1.5 Circular economy-based programs and initiatives**

Patagonia is knowingly famous for their experiential marketing which emphasizes sustainability and circular economy. Rattalino (2017) wrote an article about the company’s effort towards circular economy named as “Circular advantage anyone? Sustainability-driven innovation and circularity at Patagonia, Inc.” where he collected different initiatives as fine examples. To start with and confirm why Patagonia counts as pioneers, they were the first in 1993 who started use of recycled materials and developed Synchronilla fleeces. When Patagonia recognized the environmental impact of conventional cotton, they shifted to use

100% organic cotton despite its higher cost in 1994 which played a crucial role in shifting the industry to organic solutions and Fair Trade Certified. Furthermore, they launched the "Footprint Chronicles" in 2007 which provides transparency on the environmental and social dimension of Patagonia products. This is an online feature where anyone can see how different products contribute to the environment. In 2015, they faced environmental concerns of durable water repellents (DWRs) hence they shifted to C6 treatment and promoted more natural solutions.

As an initiative for product-life extension and support circular economy, The Common Threads initiative was also launched. Its part is the "Don't Buy This Jacket" campaign which was launched in 2011 as well whose message was to encourage consumers to consider the effect of consumerism on the environment and buy just the items that are necessary. In addition, the flexibility and universality of design of the clothes allows it to be worn in different situations which also encourages to reduce the need to buy different apparels for different purposes. They encouraged their customers too to repair, reuse or recycle their clothes). To support repairing, Worn Wear program was also launched which offers free repair services at stores and online "Do It Yourself" (DIY) repair tutorials as Product Care 101 or discounts for trading used Patagonia apparels and its idea was also to emphasize sustainability with an intention to stop ever-growing consumption and build emotional connection to apparels instead. Patagonia has also partnered with eBay to be able to resell their used Patagonia products under "Used Clothing & Gear section" on their website which was branded as "Better than New". In this program, Patagonia collected an enormous collection of films and photographs from its consumers worldwide, showcasing their proud display of Patagonia apparel. If clients were unable to sell their clothing, they have the option to use Yerdle as a platform to publish them and earn Yerdle dollars which can be spent to acquire other garments whether they are new or old. In addition, Patagonia fully covered the expenses of transporting items that were beyond repair. Between 2005 and 2016, Patagonia recycled a total of 95 tons of clothing using this program. They even promoted these acts as "being cool" which supported the devotion for the 3 actions instead of buying new clothes.

Alleviates eco-anxiety by:

- 5 - Reducing carbon footprint
- 6 - Encouraging PEBs and appreciating nature
- 9 - Raising awareness through educational campaigns
- 16 - Community building

### **5.1.6 Patagonia Stories**

Patagonia Stories refers to their own initiative where, instead of traditional marketing, they use the power of storytelling as a central element in conveying their mission and values. On this web platform, stories are shared about people who are engaged in adventures, activism and do positive environmental impact

in the form of media elements like films, shorts or written content. The idea behind the brand's storytelling is to create conversations and make people advocates for the environment. The story of Beth Thoren or the letter of Chouinard was shared here too along with others where even stories about alleviating eco-anxiety can be published. An article, named "Stories We Wear: Promoting Sustainability Practices with the Case of Patagonia" has been written by Michel et al., (2019) about one of the sub entries of Patagonia, "Stories we wear". which initial aim was to motivate consumers to participate in sustainability actions related to repair and extend the usage of Patagonia brand clothes. Furthermore, the company encouraged people to share their stories beside their contribution to sustainability about how they fixed their clothes themselves. The article was a qualitative case study which examined its posts from 2015 to 2017 where six themes were identified such as keeping and fixing the garments, thanking Patagonia, adventures, imagining the future and describing physical characteristics. The findings of the study suggested that the blog postings had a positive impact on brand attachment and contributed to encouraging people to be sustainable.

Alleviates eco-anxiety by:

- 1 - Emotional resilience trainings
- 5 - Reducing carbon footprint
- 6 - Encouraging PEBs and appreciating nature
- 13 - Participating in community efforts
- 15 - Encourage to share eco-anxiety experiences
- 16 - Community building

## **5.2 Conclusion for Patagonia**

In conclusion, Patagonia stands as a front runner with their different CSR practices and initiatives, setting a prime example for other companies and the qualitative case study of Patagonia sheds light on the extent to which CSR initiatives can alleviate eco-anxiety of different stakeholders. Based on the theoretical framework, the following deductions can justify their relevance.

Through initiatives like Patagonia Action Works and Patagonia Stories, the company demonstrates how businesses can make a tangible difference in addressing environmental concerns. By sharing stories and fostering like-minded communities, Patagonia not only promotes and practices environmental solutions but also alleviates eco-anxiety among its stakeholder network explicitly. As analyzed, Patagonia's commitment to sustainability and social responsibility are showcased through various ways of its operations, encompassing fair trade practices, employee benefits, circular economy initiatives, community engagement, and storytelling. While Patagonia may not explicitly target eco-anxiety, its initiatives resonate with alleviating climate change concerns and encourage not just their workforce, but their consumers to act more sustainable.

These examples not only enhance brand perception, but also demonstrate a commitment to environmental sustainability, which can alleviate ecopsychological concerns as well among different stakeholders.

However, there has been some criticism towards some actions of Patagonia that have to be mentioned. In the study of Schillmann (2020), the feather scandal in 2010, the DWR controversy in 2011, and the wool producing controversy in 2015. Regarding the feather scandal, Patagonia faced criticism for sourcing feathers from suppliers engaged in animal mistreatment, prompting the development of the Traceable Down Standard (TDS) to address welfare concerns and supply chain transparency. Regarding the Durable water repellent (DWR) controversy in 2011, Patagonia was inspected for its use of harmful chemicals in products, failing to align with the Detox campaign and lagging competitors in addressing chemical safety issues. During The Wool producing controversy in 2015, Patagonia's partnership with Ovis 21 has been suspected by animal mistreatment, despite efforts to take actions with strict standards through the Patagonia Wool Standard (PWS), resulting in the company terminating relationships with Ovis 21 and ensuring ethical practices within supply chains. While the feather and wool producing controversy has been resolved, DWR needed more time. According to Patagonia (2015), the DWR issue has been addressed by transitioning from C8 to C6, which degrades faster and has less potential toxicity to nature and living organisms. While this solution is not perfect, it represents a step towards reducing the environmental impact of DWR treatments. Additionally, Patagonia continues to actively research and develop DWR chemistries with even less environmental impact.

Despite these issues, Patagonia handled the criticism and addressed these problems accordingly. In summary, Patagonia is a unique brand that puts profit in the background and environment and animals in the foreground. Undoubtedly, the company is more than transparent and faces even negative topics. The transparency in their actions further contributes to alleviating eco-anxiety, as the whole stakeholder network can feel reassured that there are companies like Patagonia that are working towards environmental sustainability.

However, it is important to note the limitations of generalizing from a single company, particularly in the case of Patagonia, given its status as a privately owned company, not driven only by profit maximization (Rattalino, 2017). As such, it can prioritize sustainable strategies without the constraints compared to publicly listed companies. Additionally, since the research relied on publicly accessible data, there's a possibility that some pertinent details may have been overlooked.

Overall, the examples highlighted from Patagonia, show how CSR initiatives can play a significant role in mitigating eco-anxiety, emphasizing the positive impact businesses can have on addressing environmental challenges and fostering a sense of hope and empowerment within communities. Through the lens of the established theoretical framework, this comparative approach contributes to a deeper understanding of how CSR practices intersect with

psychological well-being and environmental concerns which align with the broader CSR goals and can generate positive outcomes for both the company and society.

## 6 DISCUSSION

### 6.1 Practices for the external stakeholders - Consumer approach

While the coding of individual approach and its translation to organizational approach was mainly focusing on the internal stakeholders, the study should mention and provide recommendations for external stakeholders to provide a more comprehensive, holistic analysis. While this approach would need a different study as it should encompass different factors, some practices can be established based on the coding and the outcome of the research questions. As explained earlier, the external stakeholders are outside of the organization who are namely the society, government, customers, suppliers, creditors and shareholders. In this section, a new approach, the consumer approach will be briefly introduced. However, companies have less tools to alleviate the eco-anxiety of the consumers since they are out of the organizations. The reason behind this is that they mainly have direct control over the experiences and environments of their employees, allowing them to implement various practices and policies aimed at alleviating the psychological well-being among their workforces. These measures may include offering emotional resilience training, providing access to mental health services, organizing eco-anxiety events, or implementing sustainability initiatives within the workplace, as mentioned earlier. However, when it comes to consumers, companies have less direct influence and control. Consumers interact with companies mainly through their products, services, and marketing communications. While companies can adopt sustainable practices and promote environmental awareness through their brand, they have limited ability to directly address the eco-anxiety experienced by the individual consumers.

Although, if the main groups of organizational approach along with their practices are reviewed, some elements can be utilized and translated to address the eco-anxiety of the consumers. While the “Well-being and Supportive practices” along with the “Awareness and Educational practices” have been established mainly for internal stakeholders, the practices of “Community Engagement and Collaboration” could involve external stakeholders as well to develop and create communities, increase engagement in participating community efforts. Furthermore, any business entity could start official campaigns or facilitate events not just to their workforce but to their consumers to promote wellbeing, encourage people to PEB activities and open up about their feelings provoked by climate change. One other fact that can be highlighted is the growing awareness among consumers regarding the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions. If the company addresses environmental concerns, follows CSR and is sustainable through different policies and organizational practices, consumers are more likely to choose the company itself as their preferred option for their purchases or source of services. Overall, the best

practice of a company to alleviate the eco-anxiety of their consumers is to be as sustainable as they can and encourage individuals or other companies to be sustainable as well.

## **6.2 Corporate storytelling and management**

The power of storytelling should be mentioned as a meaningful tool as well. Generally, corporate storytelling serves as a potent PR communication strategy, fostering a stronger engagement within the organization (Gill, 2015). Purposeful narration enhances recollection and supports loyalty, contributing to a more positive internal reputation and commitment to the corporate brand and CSR values. Furthermore, carefully planned corporate stories, delivered at an individual level, encourage employees to align with the narrative of the company itself. Corporate storytelling is beneficial for improving employee engagement and taking ownership in CSR values. With the right storytelling practices, eco-anxiety can be addressed in a more comprehensive and holistic way to make practices more efficient. However, the management should take into consideration which practices they should incorporate that are easier or more difficult. The delegation of implementation should be also concrete, whether it is the task of the environmental management or human resources.

## **6.3 Difficulties with eco-anxiety and engagement**

Some difficulties in the context of the negative ecological emotions should be mentioned. As Pihkala (2020b) argues as well, it is important to highlight the complexity involved in recognizing or acknowledging eco-anxiety. Factors such as identity politics regarding terms like climate anxiety can influence individuals' willingness or reluctance to acknowledge such feelings. Furthermore, it is difficult to say whether a person is more prone to anxiety because of his natural trait or the lack of resilience and for some individuals cause difficulty to talk about the real source of their anxiety, whether it is environmental related or not. Moreover, as mentioned before, there are different emotions connected to the nexus of ecopsychology and the use of coping mechanisms depend on the severity of the symptoms of the negative feelings connected to climate change. It can also occur that some people are just reluctant or ignorant to successfully address any kind of anxiety in their personal life. Other people can also face different social issues and injustices, hence any emotions regarding climate change may feel remote, despite the climate crisis impacting them indirectly in multiple ways. If so, some practices can even have a counterproductive outcome. Therefore, the difficulty of implementing different practices is multifaceted and varies depending on individual perceptions and personality, sociological factors as on the broader context of environmental awareness. In an organizational



environment, the management should assess these factors accordingly by conducting different surveys and exploring the mental health of their workforce. Corporate storytelling was mentioned because with an effective strategy, these factors could be solved to increase the level of commitment from stakeholders to reach overall success.

Nevertheless, Bednarek (2019) said that it is important to understand that these negative emotions regarding climate change are not something to be cured but rather acknowledged as a meaningful and logical response to the impact of humankind on the planet. To these negative emotions, those people are the most sensitive who are more informed about environmental threats. But instead of treating their anxiety as a disorder, he emphasizes that they should focus on what collective support is needed to prevent emotional detachment in the face of significant environmental challenges.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the research**

When this study was conducted, the possible correlation between CSR and ecopsychology were hardly analyzed and discussed. Although CSR initiatives provide tools that can enhance overall well-being and alleviate anxiety, addressing particularly eco-anxiety was lacking in the scholarly literature and companies had yet to fully explore the potential correlation between CSR practices and eco-anxiety mitigation. There are some limitations of the study which should be mentioned. The study may lack generalizability due to its focus on specific initiatives of Patagonia. Findings may not be applicable to companies operating in different industries or contexts and the sizes of the business entities have not been reviewed. There could also be bias in the selection and interpretation of literature, data and in the coding process too because of the researcher's own perspective since it is a qualitative study. This may influence the analysis and conclusions drawn from the research. In addition, subjectivity and difficulty in quantifying results are present as well. Furthermore, the scope, due to time and resource constraints, has been narrowed to internal stakeholders only. However, one section is addressing the eco-anxiety of consumers as external stakeholders as well in the light of the coding result. One of the main limitations is, however, that only secondary sources have been used, which did not provide a tool for exploring the mindset of companies in addressing eco-anxiety and measuring the effectiveness of the different practices. Identifying these feelings and recognizing the need for alleviation practices in different companies could be done by surveys or staff-led audits, but more methods could be identified in the future.

## 6.5 Future Recommendations

To overcome these limitations, different approaches and more scholars should explore the dimensions of dovetailing the two terms together. First of all, researchers could conduct comparative studies across how CSR practices and initiatives addressing eco-anxiety may be different in different business entities in terms of size or mindset towards CSR. This could provide a more comprehensive understanding of effective strategies. Furthermore, future researchers could employ longitudinal studies to track the effectiveness and sustainability of CSR practices in mitigating eco-anxiety over time. In addition, they could engage in more action-oriented research that actively involves not just internal, but the whole stakeholder network in the co-creation and evaluation of these initiatives in a voluntary manner. This could help assess the long-term impact of initiatives along with identifying factors that make a practice efficient or inefficient and even create new practices. Cultural differences, gender and age could be involved as deciding factors in measuring this research. Collaborating with scholars from diverse disciplines such as psychology, sociology, environmental science and business could further develop the current knowledge when connecting CSR with eco-anxiety which could provide a more holistic insight into the complexity of human behavior when talking about ecopsychology and relevant negative emotions. In the research, the difficulty of identifying and possible pathologizing of eco-anxiety have been mentioned. In the future, with the help of future research, developing a reliable and culturally sensitive measurement tool which considers the unique psychological and emotional aspects could be further developed. As a revolutionary idea, researchers could explore the potential of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence in enhancing the measurement and monitoring of CSR outcomes. Integrating technology-driven concepts could provide more accurate and less time-consuming practices as well in the future.

## 7 CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, the normative question, “Why and how should corporations address the issue of eco-anxiety?” can be posed and answered by recognizing the imperative for business entities to embrace CSR practices that not only mitigate environmental harm but also contribute to developing the social dimension that takes the well-being and psychological realms of different stakeholders into consideration in the light of ecopsychology. During the research, a list of different practices to alleviate eco-anxiety has been established in an individual and organizational approach and the consumer approach has been mentioned as well. It can be concluded that regardless of the type of business entities, the management and the whole organization can leverage CSR initiatives so that negative emotions connected to climate change are addressed as well. The study, based on the findings, established a comprehensive list, classified into different groups regarding the nature and approach of the given practices, which incorporates the dimension of eco-psychology into different CSR initiatives. However, if organizations use methods from the “well-being and supportive”, “policies and organizational”, “awareness and educational” or “community engagement and collaborative” practices to alleviate the eco-anxiety of their internal stakeholders, some factors should be considered. Such factors are the severity and level of different emotions provoked by climate change of their workforce, the potential effectiveness of different interventions considering their organizational culture and values and the resources available for implementing initiatives. Patagonia, a prime example in the context of the sustainability and creative CSR initiatives, showcase parallelly that directly or indirectly, organizations can address and alleviate eco-anxiety with their broad offer of sustainable practices and community engagement efforts. The intersection between corporate social responsibility and ecopsychology is not widely dovetailed yet, but the list of practices and the case of Patagonia demonstrates the possibility and the importance of aligning CSR practices with the mission of the organization to effectively mitigate eco-anxiety among internal and external stakeholders together.

Different negative emotions attached to climate change can manifest in different forms, but unfortunately, eco-anxiety is likely to become more prevalent, as the impacts of climate change intensify. As humanity faces a future where environmental challenges are increasing, it is crucial to acknowledge and address the psychological toll they can take. Living with climate change means not only adapting to its tangible impacts and mitigating them, but also finding ways to support mental well-being, build emotional resilience and proactively trying to do something against the stress, numbness, grief or anger that individuals can feel. Although individuals can manage their own anxiety levels, the responsibility to address the concerning emotions of ecopsychology should be considered by any companies, organizations, and corporations, given their significant contributions to climate change. The study showed that with a clear

strategy and various practices mitigating eco-anxiety is possible, emphasizing the importance of integrating psychological well-being into their stakeholder network initiatives where innovation and creativity are key elements as well to find new practices as well. It is also the mission of companies to change eco-anxiety into eco-optimism which refers to the belief that despite the current environmental crises, there is hope for positive change and sustainable solutions (Michalska & Lechner, 2023). In order to enforce this idea, companies must undergo a transformation towards more sustainable practices, fostering a culture of environmental stewardship and innovation that inspires eco-optimism among stakeholders. Patagonia's experience also presents that the path toward eco-optimism, goes through sustainability-driven innovation in both business models and products. This means not only to adopt environmentally friendly practices but also actively engaging with stakeholders to create awareness among them and inspire them to act for environmental conservation and resilience to make a difference, which is, as presented, is one of the most efficient ways to tackle eco-anxiety. Moreover, as one company embraces this mindset and is the central ideology, it can set a precedent for others to follow them, catalyzing a ripple effect throughout the corporate landscape, resulting in a greater impact on the overall economic, social, and environmental sustainability dimensions.

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