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ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC AWARENESS TOWARDS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PRACTICES OF ORGANIZATIONS IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF ILORIN METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in recent times has captured the interest of different bodies, from the academia, formal and informal sectors to the government. The general public is also concerned about the adoption of CSR by organizations as a responsible way to doing business in the 21st century. The study examined the level of public awareness towards CSR practices of organizations in Nigeria with Ilorin metropolis as case study. Modal instance sampling technique was used to select the study sample while the results were presented using descriptive statistics; the hypotheses were tested by the use of chi-square. It was concluded that despite appreciable awareness of the concept of CSR by (53%) respondents, the awareness of the activities of organizations in CSR is still inadequate by members of host communities as only few (36%) respondents can recognize CSR projects undertaken by organizations within their community. It is recommended that organizations should improve on more CSR activities and its disclosure to the public.

Keyword: *Corporate Social Responsibility, Awareness, Organization, General Public*

INTRODUCTION

Organizations have always been an offshoot of the society and both the organizations and their host communities share a symbiotic relationship, the interdependence is essential and therefore, they are expected to reinforce each other. Organizations depend on the society for their inputs, security and patronage of their goods and services while the society in turn expects its socio-economic and environmental development to be enhanced by the presence of these organizations. However, both can only cohabitate

harmoniously if they meet up to their respective expectations. The presence of organizations in the society, however, does not come without its challenges, as their day to day activities are expected to be carried out ethically and legally while also committing themselves to the realization of their stakeholder expectations. This brings about the concept of corporate social responsibility which is regarded as a panacea to the achievement of these expectations. The term corporate social responsibility (CSR) is used interchangeably with concepts such as “socially responsible business”, “social responsibility of business”, “corporate social responsiveness”, or “corporate accountability” but the most common is the notion of corporate social responsibility.

In Nigeria, the practise of CSR is not unfamiliar due to the long conviction that businesses have a responsibility to 'give something back' to the communities where they operate. Indeed, there existed certain initiatives in the past designed to 'give something back' to host communities, the quest for formalised CSR practice started during the military interregnum of the 1990s as typified by the petroleum exploring multinational companies (MNC) in Ogoni land entanglement to the sudden realization that one cannot continue to take so much without the restoration of little. Often, it takes a crisis to precipitate attention to CSR. The issue since then has never been that nothing is given in return, but whether what has been restored justified the expropriation. There is an evident disproportion between the numerous privileges MNCs enjoy and the minuscule and scarce obligations undertaken by them. As an illustration, for a society that craves for basic amenities like portable water, medical facilities, good roads and electricity to mention few, scholarship awards to gifted and perhaps indigent students might be too individualistic, cosmetic, non-utilitarian and not altruistic enough. Despite the fact that CSR practise can be traced to over two decades in Nigeria the perception of residents of host communities is still multifarious.

The notion of CSR is commonly perceived and practiced as corporate philanthropy by Nigerian companies at the moment, as they mostly make cash donations and corporate gifts and report such as provision of pipe-borne water, educational materials, buildings donated such as schools and hospitals, medical aids, vehicles, scholarships, wheelchairs to the handicapped, sport kits, clothing and household items, food items, surveillance electronic gadgets etc. aimed at addressing socio-economic development challenges which agitations by civil society groups in the host communities and society at large have brought to the fore. This is what is excused by observers as an entry model to CSR. However, there is limited government regulation to ensure sustainable socially responsible behavior (Abdullahi, Lawal, Ijaiya & Ibrahim, 2012; Ojo & Akande, 2014). It is against this background that the study examined the level of awareness of Ilorin public concerning social responsibility of organizations within the metropolis and their respective view son the practice of CSR by the organizations.

Literature Review on Corporate Social Responsibility

An uncontested definition of corporate social responsibility is yet to appear in literature (Maignan & Ralston, 2002; Dahlsrud, 2006). Birch and Moon (2004) also noted that there is no single formula for CSR. Rather, CSR is multifaceted, dynamic and context specific (Moon, 2007). Consequently, a plethora of definitions have emerged over the past six decades to express the role and/or responsibilities of business to their society. Current definitions of CSR are based on universal ethical principles which are impartiality, commitment, active collaboration with stakeholders, and transparency (Benarova & Chovancova, 2014). According to the European Commission Green Paper (2001), CSR is defined as a voluntary integration of social and environmental concerns into everyday financial matters and interactions with corporate stakeholders. The International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) in its definition sees CSR as an open and transparent business practices based on ethical values and respect for employees, communities and the environment, which will contribute to sustainable business success. As these definitions seem straight forward, social responsibility as a concept can be difficult to understand, this is because different people have different perceptions about the actions that can improve the lot of the society (Ojo, 2008).

Carroll (1989) asserts that evolution of corporate social responsibility can be traced to three turning points; she claims that the first was at the start of the 20th century in the United State of America during the entrepreneurial era, a time when American businessmen like John Rockefeller, J.P Morgan, among other business magnates were amassing wealth and building industrial empires. They were accused of the abuse of power and found guilty of anti-social and anti-competitive practices such as tax evasion, blackmail, kickbacks, and discriminatory pricing policies among others. There was pressure from the general public on the state to prohibit some business practices. These laws led to the definition of the relationship among businesses, the government and society and specified that business had a role to take part in the society beyond profit maximization.

According to Carroll (1989) the second turning point in social responsibility is the Depression era of 1929 through the 1930's. During this era the economy of the United State of America which was polarized by large organizations was criticised for shady financial practices. This behaviour forced the government to enact more laws in order to protect investors and small businesses. This time social responsibility was more detailed. The next turning point and the landmark in social responsibility came during the social era of the 1960's which was characterized with social unrest and greater government intervention in business practices. At this point, government was specific on who business was responsible to and who in the organization was responsible for certain practices.

Bowen's 1953 book, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessmen*, is considered the first definitive book on the CSR concept (Tulder & Zwart, 2006). In it, CSR was coined in its modern form and defined as "an obligation to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action that are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of the society". Many other researchers have also contributed to the development of the concept by following it, but there is still no generally accepted definition of corporate social responsibility in both the academic and business arena (Van Marrewijk, 2003; Hopkins, 2007). Votaw (1972) agrees that the meaning for CSR is also not the same for everyone, and the socially responsible activities and focus areas might also change over time.

The exact purpose of business could be the fundamental reason for controversies that lead to the disagreements in what the concept of CSR involves. This has led to the surge in theories that have been brought to bear on the concept. Depending on one's perspective, corporate social responsibility can be interpreted using either of the two major schools of thought which are at the two opposite extreme of the continuum. The classical and expansionist views which are often referred to as the shareholders and stakeholders theories, the former is composed of advocates of profit maximization while the latter consists of writers who are of the believe that businesses should incorporate people, planet into their profit drive (Aupperle, Carroll & Hatfield, 1985; Clarkson, 1995; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Waddock & Graves, 1997; Ruf et al., 2001).

The Shareholder theory

Milton Friedman is one of the major proponents of this theory. According to Friedman (1970), the most important responsibility of business is to increase shareholders wealth. For this reason, manager's main aim is to make as much profit as possible while conforming to the basic rules of society. Firms are commonly assumed to incur significant cost by pursuing social welfare objectives beyond profit maximization within the law. Levitt (1985) is also a strong advocate of this debate, this is evident in his article titled "The Dangers of Social Responsibility" in which he cautions that "government's job is not business, and business job is not government"

This theory asserts that management, as agents of shareholders, should pursue no other goal other than profit maximization and recognises the three aspects of CSR as propounded by Carroll (1999): economic responsibility, social responsibility and ethical responsibility but opposes the philanthropy responsibility, since, it can jeopardise the business and shareholders wealth (Herremans, Akathaporn & McInnes, 1993). They believe that free markets are responsible for and can handle social problems by creating incentives and disincentives to elicit appropriate behaviour from business (Shrivastava, 1995).

The Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory focuses on the relationship between group of individuals who can affect or be affected by the achievement of the organizations' objectives (Freeman, 1984). He is one of the major advocates of this theory and asserts that managers must satisfy a variety of constituents who are referred to as stakeholders (e.g. investors and shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, government and competitors). Clarkson (1995) defined stakeholder as a person or a group that have, or claim, ownership rights or interest in an organization and its activities past, present or future. Such claimed rights or interests are the results of actions taken by the organizations and may be legal or moral, individual or collective. Starik (1995) expanded the definition of stakeholder to include both human and non-human entities. He argued that the non-human natural environment can be integrated into the stakeholder management concept, since the natural environment is one of the important components of the business environment. According to this theory, it is not enough for organizations to focus exclusively on satisfying only equity holders or the owners of the business but also consider other group of individuals who can undermine its performance by their actions, which is a major reason for the study to be hinged on this theory.

Empirical Review

Ojo (2008) examined the extent of Nigerian business organizations' involvement in the concept of social responsibility with a view to recommending strategic importance of being socially responsible to all the stakeholders. A survey of forty (40) companies quoted on the floor of the Nigeria stock exchange was adopted for the study, selected from a population of 209 companies as at July 2007 using random sampling. Analysis of the data obtained from the organizations' annual reports and accounts (2000-2006) were analysed using correlation, regression and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to also determine the extent of relationship between turnover and investment in social responsibility. The result revealed that these organizations have contributed infinitesimal amount (less than one percent of their turnover) of their gross earnings in social responsibility and does not preclude that a positive relationship ($r = 0.118294591$) exists between turnover and investment on social responsibility. Thus, they need to increase their involvement in social responsibility to increase their reputational capital. Gunu (2008) examined the impact of corporate social responsibility on organizational performance. Zenith bank was used as a sample. Annual reports and accounts of Zenith bank were used as source of secondary data that spanned between 2002 to 2006. Regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between CSR expenditure and profit after tax, dividend, total assets and gross earning. The result of the study indicated a positive significant relationship between CSR expenditure and performance variables. Benarova and Chovancova (2014) aimed at assessing the awareness of Slovak public concerning corporate social responsibility using questionnaires to determine how the public understands corporate social responsibility in Slovakia. The data collected were

processed using mathematical and statistical methods for better understanding. The findings showed that socially responsible companies are not sufficiently promoted and people are familiar with the subject of CSR only briefly. It concluded that it would be an illusion to assume a smooth and rapid passage into the discipline of business life. Even in developed economies it did not happen overnight and it recommended that gradually individual entrepreneurs' behaviour should be cultivated to shape culture in-house management, inter-company competition and socially responsible corporate behaviour to the external environment.

Ojo and Akande (2014) examined the factor of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its relationship with societal perception and expectation. The study is a measurement of the disparity between what Lafarge Cement Nigeria Plc Ewekoro feels is her CSR and what the Ewekoro community expects from the company. The methodology is the primary one entailing the administration of questionnaire with the main aim of measuring the gap between societal expectation and what the management has been providing. Data collected were analysed using percentage analysis and hypothesis tested through Z score statistics at 0.5% significance. The result of the findings revealed the positive influence of CSR on promoting peace and harmony in the host community of an organization and thus reducing attendant societal menaces. The study however did not examine the recognition of CSR projects undertaken by organisations in the community which this study intends to assess.

Methodology

The study used questionnaire to obtain data for analysis. Samples were drawn from the study population that comprises of people in Ilorin Township, capital of Kwara State, Nigeria using the modal instance sampling technique. Different areas in Ilorin metropolis made up of Tanke, Adewole, Taiwo, Sango, Garage Offa and Gaa-Akanbi formed the population of Ilorin for the purpose of the study. A total of 300 questionnaires were conveniently distributed to residents of the selected areas who have attained the age of 18 and above because this is the legal age of maturity. 272 questionnaires were found to be properly filled among those retrieved from respondents. This number therefore constitutes the basis of our data analysis. The data collected from the field was analysed using descriptive data analysis.

The hypothesis for the study is stated in null form:

H₀: the residents of Ilorin metropolis have no adequate awareness of CSR activities within their host communities.

Presentations and Analysis of Data

The results of analysis and interpretation of the primary data collected through the use of questionnaires are as presented. Simple percentages, pie and bar charts were used to

present our data while chi-square was used to test the obtained data.

Table 1: Analysis of Public Perception of CSR (n=272)

(a) Awareness of the meaning of the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR)		
Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	145	53
No	71	26
Neither Yes or No	56	21
Total	272	100
(b) Recognition of CSR projects undertaken by organizations in the community		
Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	99	36
No	103	38
Neither Yes or No	70	26
Total	272	100
(c) Awareness of the benefits of corporate social responsibility to the community		
Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	113	42
No	100	37
Neither Yes or No	58	21
Total	272	100
(d) Residents view of the level of CSR uptake by organizations in the community		
Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	71	26
Low	139	51
Indifferent	61	23
Total	272	100
(e) Residents view on corporate social responsibility uptake reporting by organizations		
Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	82	30
Low	121	45
Indifferent	69	25
Total	272	100

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2014

Table 1 (a), reveals that 145 (53%) respondents indicated that they are aware of the concept of corporate social responsibility, 71(26%) of respondents indicated that they are not aware of the concept of CSR while 56(21%) were indifferent on the awareness of CSR. This shows that a slight majority 53 percent are aware of what CSR is all about and this implies that almost half of the sampled respondents are yet to be enlightened on the responsibilities of business to the society.

Respondents awareness of the concept of CSR



Fig 1: Pie chart showing analysis of public awareness of the meaning of CSR concept. The table 1 (b) also shows that 99(36%) respondents can identify CSR projects undertaken by the organizations within their community, 103 (38%) respondents do not have an insight of what the organizations within their community had embarked upon as CSR, and 70 (26%) respondents remained indifferent. This shows that majority of respondents cannot identify CSR projects in their community which might be as a result of low implementation of CSR by organizations in their community which are predominantly MSME in nature.

Respondents recognition of CSR projects

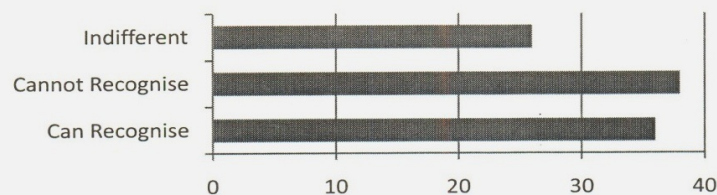


Fig 2: Bar chart showing analysis of public awareness of the meaning of CSR concept

Corporate social responsibility exceeds the required legislative framework and occurs only on a voluntary basis (Van Marrewijk, 2003; Dahlsrud 2006). The adoption by organizations brings many benefits to them, but despite numerous discussions in the field of CSR, there is still paucity in the awareness by residents of Ilorin as shown in table 1 (c) above, 113(42%) respondents indicate that they are aware of the benefits CSR uptake by firms have on their host communities which they also belong to, 100(37%) respondents declined knowledge of the benefits communities can derive from organizations uptake of CSR, while 58(21%) respondents are indifferent. This occurrence can probably be as a result of low implementation by organizations, as only 36 percent of the respondents can identify projects undertaken by organizations as CSR uptake in their community.

Respondents awareness of benefits of CSR uptake

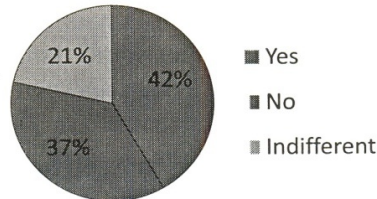


Fig 3: Pie chart showing analysis of public awareness of the benefits of CSR uptake

Organizations particularly the micro small and medium sized firms that are predominant in Ilorin Township are yet to understand the benefits of CSR uptake to them; rather they see CSR as an expense and not an investment in the future. This is evident in results from table 1 (d), where only 71(26%) respondents view the level of CSR uptake by organizations in their community as high, 139(51%) respondents in the contrary view the level of CSR uptake by organizations in their community as low, while 61(23%) are indifferent. This occurrence can be linked to the little or no project residents can point to as undertaken CSR by organizations within the community.

Respondents view on level of CSR uptake

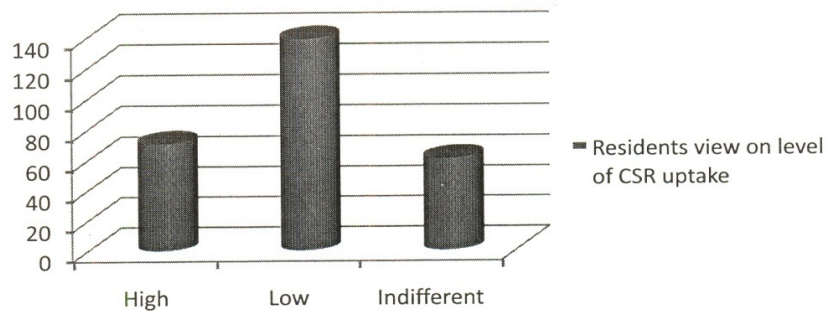


Fig 4: Bar chart showing analysis of respondents view on the level of CSR uptake

Table 1 (e), reveals that 82 (30%) respondents indicated that the reporting of CSR by organizations in their community is high, 121(45%) of respondents indicated a contrary view of low reporting of CSR by organizations in their community while 69 (25%) were indifferent on the awareness of CSR. This shows that majority of respondents 70 percent are either perceiving CSR uptake by organizations within their community as low or cannot even tell because of their ignorance of the concept.

Respondents view on CSR reporting by organisations

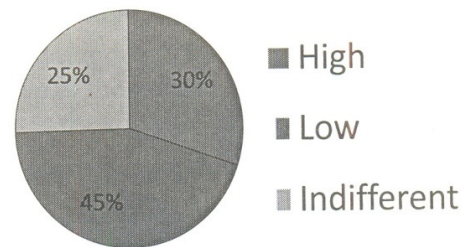


Fig 5: Pie chart showing analysis of respondents view on CSR uptake reporting by organizations

Test Statistics

	Question1	Question2	Question3	Question4	Question5
Chi-Square ^a	50.081	7.154	17.522	39.096	16.154
df	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.028	.000	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 90.7.

Test Statistics

	Awareness
Chi-Square ^a	258.750
df	10
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 24.7.

There is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis since the Chi-square results above shows that the p-value is less than significance value ($\alpha = 0.05$), cumulative Chi-squared value of 258.75 and degree of freedom of 10 gives a critical value of 18.307 at 0.95. Also, the Chi-squared value is greater than 18.307 then we reject the stated hypothesis and disapprove that respondents of the study have adequate awareness of CSR activities in their host communities. Hence, it will be an illusion to assume that the awareness of Ilorin public on CSR is inadequate.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the responses obtained from questionnaires administered, the study concludes that the level of awareness of CSR as a concept by residents of Ilorin Township is high; however, the recognition of CSR projects undertaken by organizations is relatively low. It is therefore imperative that organizations should engage more in community involvements (discretionary responsibility) such that residents of the community will be able to refer to them as CSR activities and understand the benefits since the other responsibilities like economic, ethical, and legal as categorised by Carroll (1999) may not be known to them if they are not investors, competitors, or government representatives respectively.

The study also recommends that CSR activities of organizations should be adequately reported, as only a meager 30 percent of respondents believe that the reporting of CSR by organizations is high, so that intangible activities like compliance to laws, healthy competition, and ensuring returns of investors are disclosed for public consumption. Finally, this study has only focused on examining the level of public awareness on organizations in their host communities, it is hoped that the study will provoke other researchers to venture into the study of other category of stakeholder's (customers, employees, competitors, shareholders, government) perception to CSR uptake by organizations of particular sectors in Nigeria and elsewhere.

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Appendix

Chi-Square Test

Frequencies

Question 1

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	145	90.7	54.3
No	71	90.7	-19.7
Neither Yes or No	56	90.7	-34.7
Total	272		

Question 2

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	99	90.7	8.3
No	103	90.7	12.3
Neither Yes or No	70	90.7	-20.7
Total	272		

Question 3

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	113	90.7	22.3
No	100	90.7	9.3
Neither Yes or No	59	90.7	-31.7
Total	272		

Question 4

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	71	90.7	-19.7
No	139	90.7	48.3
Neither Yes or No	62	90.7	-28.7
Total	272		

Question 5

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	82	90.7	-8.7
No	121	90.7	30.3
Neither Yes or No	69	90.7	-21.7
Total	272		

Test Statistics

	Question1	Question2	Question3	Question4	Question5
Chi-Square ^a	50.081	7.154	17.522	39.096	16.154
df	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.028	.000	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 90.7.

Test Statistics

	Awareness
Chi-Square ^a	258.750
df	10
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 24.7.