

Level of awareness of corporate social responsibility by host community: A case of Bowen University

Olufolakemi Oludami Afrogha* and Deborah Ogooluwa Aderonmu

Accounting Programme, College of Social and Management Sciences Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding author. Email: folakemi.alabi@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the level of awareness of Bowen University's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by its host community in Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria. The objective of this study was to determine the level of awareness of the host community of Bowen University's CSR activities. The study employed the survey research design through the use of questionnaires to obtain data from respondents within the community on the university's CSR activities. A sample of 150 questionnaires were distributed and 127 returned. The data obtained from the questionnaire was analysed using Chi-square statistical technique. Findings revealed that residents of the host community are aware of Bowen's CSR activities and that the university engages in CSR activities that benefit the community. Thus, the study concluded there is a level of awareness of the host community about Bowen University's CSR; Bowen University carries out Corporate Social Responsibility activities within its host community.

Keywords: Community, corporate social responsibility, corporate sustainability, university.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary societies, no institution, organization or business operates in a vacuum. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is widely recognized as a worthy commitment to ensure sustainable benefit for both corporations and communities. CSR is becoming an important base for businesses to build trust and confidence in their stakeholders, with the possibility to provide a competitive edge (Urip, 2010). CSR is a form of self-regulation, conscious attempts and self-efforts undertaken by organizations for self-preservation and enhancement of their operations. CSR is usually integrated into a business model for an organization to be able to live in harmony with its operating environment. Corporate social responsibility entails developing businesses with a positive relationship to the society which they operate in. The social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time.

Also, there is the expectation that ideas and knowledge generated by individuals who have gone through university training should impact of the society. Thus, it is necessary to determine the social responsibility of universities which could be examined through the university's social, cultural and economic development in the society (Ankit and El-Sakran, 2020). Elobeid et al. (2016) note that universities social responsibility cannot be overlooked especially in developing countries.

CSR is a commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources (Carroll and Shabana, 2010). Pasour (1987) said that CSR is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large. In a study of CSR by Asogwa and Onuh (2014), a key indicator to determine the true worth of modern organizations is their ability to give

back to the society part of what they earn through some mutually beneficial initiatives. University social responsibility in developing countries, societies, and economies cannot be undermined (Elobeid et al., 2016). These initiatives are captured in the concept of corporate social responsibility. Considering the fact that the primary objective of corporate organization is to increase profit, this research was centered on the increasing calls for corporate entities to be socially and environmentally responsible.

Therefore, because an organization operates in an environment, it has to make the environment conducive for business to thrive. However, to achieve this, the organization must have the interest of the public in mind. Regrettably, the continued deteriorating socio-political and economic situation in Nigeria seems to have made organizations not to make any meaningful impact on the social lives of the public. According to Raufu (2005), the principle behind CSR is that it is a social investment that derives from the notion that a company has a responsibility to the community in which it operates. CSR is a necessary ingredient to improve corporate image and continued peaceful coexistence between an organization and its communities (Asogwa and Onuh, 2014). Uzoka and Eze (2015) posited that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the act of taking care of one's immediate community. CSR generally takes into consideration the social and, sometimes the infrastructural needs of the host community and various stakeholders. In a developing country like Nigeria, such needs may include provision of electricity, pipe borne water, roads and scholarships to the youths of the community as well as support for their festivals and other celebrations. Asemah et al. (2013) noted that the goodwill and corporate image of organizations requires the instrumentality of Corporate Social Responsibility. CSR will not only promote productivity and efficient service delivery but also ensure peaceful co-existence within and outside the immediate environment. CSR also applies to tertiary institutions considering its pivotal role to the development of education on one hand and the socio-economic development of the society on the other hand.

More so, Ukah (2014) noted that education facilitates the advancement of knowledge in pure, applied sciences and technical areas which serves as vehicle to the advancement of developing economies like Nigeria. Furthermore, studies carried by Asogwa and Onuh (2014) on corporate social responsibility in higher institutions and Asemah et al. (2013) on universities and corporate social responsibility performance have shown that institutions, organizations and businesses must factor consideration of their host communities and other stakeholders in their policies and action. This premium consideration is termed corporate social responsibility. The subject of social responsibility of institutions, organizations, businesses and government agencies has been emphasized by scholars and professionals in the management discipline.

Also, CSR points out a way for companies to contribute to the well-being of the society. It also gives the opportunity to create a true competitive advantage and positive reputation for the business world (Sefyang and Smith, 2007). Moreover, CSR is about the honesty with which an organization runs its operations; fulfils its duty, lives by values acceptable to the community, engages constantly with its stakeholders and measures the impacts of its actions and publicly reports on its activities (Uzoka and Eze, 2015). Thus, corporate social responsibility is a crucial communication tool used by organizations to foster a conducive operating environment and its role. Therefore, universities, as centers of knowledge creation and sharing, play a very important role in problem-solving of the world. However, it is questionable whether universities are appropriately concerned about corporate social responsibility performances within the environment they operate. According to Atakan and Eker (2007), quite a number of universities tend to focus only on teaching social responsibility in terms of corporate social responsibility initiatives and do not go beyond this in attempting to improve their communities. Okoh and Ojoh (2008) thereby opined that in order to contend in the changing education industry and to also fulfil their mission in a world of continuous transformation, higher education institutions must recognize that their own actions should just reflect the values and standards which they claim to exemplify for this will not only be beneficial to the institution alone but, also to the society as whole.

Corporate social responsibility is gaining ground by business organizations and its growing importance is driven by competition amongst organizations and deterioration of the environment. However, it is important for tertiary institutions to understand all the elements of CSR to ensure that they implement them comprehensively. CSR has numerous benefits to an organization, ranging from good reputation, attracts investors, increased employee motivation, correcting social problems created by businesses, differentiating an organization, attracting ethical customers and profitability.

Moreover, research on corporate social responsibility in higher institution by Asogwa and Onuh (2014) and corporate social responsibilities of tertiary educational institution to host communities by Igbiniedion and Ovbiagele (2012) have shown that tertiary educational institutions have some negative operational impacts on their host communities which demand some level of social responsiveness on their part as a way of cushioning some of these impacts. Some of these negative impacts include the fact that these host communities have to live with increase in crime rates and cultism, compulsory acquisition of land without adequate compensation and increase in the cost of living due to higher demand pull. Significantly, socially responsible tertiary educational institutions sometimes find it difficult to tie the short-run cost and long-run benefits which can prompt the non-

absorbance of such relationship with host community. Therefore, there is a strong agitation for tertiary institutions to not only provide knowledge to its student but impact positively on the community.

Bowen University is a private owned tertiary institution in Iwo, Osun state Nigeria. The university although within a village community has endeavoured to give back to the society through corporate social responsibility activities. Some of these activities include but are not limited to; the donation of a Toyota Hiace bus to the Oluwo of Iwo land (Adio, 2019). According to Bamigbola (2020), Bowen University donated relief materials to residents of Iwo to cushion the effect of COVID-19. Also, Bowen has carried out other activities within the community such as repairs of major road into Iwo town. This research focused on the awareness of Bowen University's Corporate Social Responsibility by its host community. The research problem was prompted because it has been observed that many tertiary educational institutions have some negative operational impacts on their host community which demand some level of social responsiveness on their part. Most tertiary institutions focus on providing education and fail to incorporate the social and environmental effects of their activities.

Thus, the main purpose of this research is to examine the level of awareness of the Host community of Bowen University's corporate social responsibility activities.

Research question

What is the impact of Bowen Universities CSR activities on its host community?

Research hypothesis (Ho)

There is no awareness of the host community about Bowen University's CSR activities in the community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has gained unprecedented force in public debates and has become a strategic issue which affects the way in which a company operates (Oguntade and Mafimisebi, 2011). CSR is an integral part of corporate governance, particularly when there is a conflict between the goal of benefiting society and corporate goal of maximizing profits (Saeidi et al., 2015). Ayandele (2012) sees social responsibility as a form of self-regulation, conscious attempts and self-efforts carried out by organizations to sustain self-preservation and promotion of harmonious co-existence while Odetayo et al. (2014) noted that CSR also known as corporate conscience or social performance is

seen as an operational mechanism whereby organizational activities are carried out by responding positively to societal priorities and expectations with the commitment to meet the ethical standard of the society and the organizations.

Corporate social responsibility can be seen as the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time (Carroll and Buchholtz, 2003, cited in Justin and Wadike, 2013). The concept of corporate social responsibility means that organizations have moral, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities in addition to their responsibilities to earn a fair return for investors and comply with the law. Carroll and Buchholtz's four-part definition of CSR shows the multi-faceted nature of social responsibility. The economic responsibilities cited in the definition refer to society's expectation that organizations will produce goods and services that are needed and desired by customers and sell those goods and services at a reasonable price. Organizations are expected to be efficient, profitable and to keep shareholder interests in mind. The legal responsibilities relate to the expectation that organizations will comply with the laws set down by society to govern competition in the market place. Organizations have thousands of legal responsibilities governing almost every aspect of their operations, including consumer and product laws, environmental laws and employment laws. The ethical responsibilities concern societal expectations that go beyond the law such as the expectation that organizations will conduct their affairs in a fair and just way. Apparently, this connotes that organizations are expected to do more than just comply with the law and also make proactive efforts to anticipate and meet the norms of society even if those norms are not formally enacted in law.

More so, corporate social responsibility is an approach whereby a company considers the interests of all stakeholders both within the organization and in society and applies those interests while developing its strategy and during execution. CSR offers organizations various opportunities not only to differentiate themselves from competitors, but also, for reducing costs (Ali et al., 2010). CSR is also defined as an intelligent and objective concern for the welfare of the society which restrains individual and corporate behaviors from ultimately destructive activities, no matter how immediately portably and leads in the direction of positive contribution to human betterment (Asemah et al., 2013).

The legitimacy theory was adopted for this research because it analyses the relationship between CSR activities of an organization and stakeholder's perception. It determines environmental protection, corporate citizenry, expectation of the society and CSR initiatives, effective communication in achieving legitimacy, relationship between CSR disclosure and organizational legitimacy, legitimacy gap and congruency in value system

of organization and the society.

Legitimacy theory developed by Dowling and Pfeffer in 1975. Legitimacy theory shows the social contract that exists between a business organization and its respective societies. The legitimacy theory provides significant insights into how CSR disclosure is done by firms operating in society. Legitimacy theory expresses how a business reacts to the pressures and expectation of its stakeholders to survive.

Yang (2012) conducted an empirical study between CSR and financial performance of Chinese listed companies. Using the regression analysis model, he discovered that CSR to shareholders has a significant positive correlation with companies' financial performance and proved that the concept of "shareholder first" is still the focus of Chinese listed companies. Belinda (2014) conducted a research on CSR in South Africa, using primary data obtained via questionnaire; it was revealed amongst other things that most customers believe that companies are morally obligated to be socially responsible.

Abukari and Abdul-Hamid (2018) examined corporate social responsibility by telecommunication organizations in Ghana using qualitative content analysis. Findings showed that although some of these companies were involved in CSR activities, they have not proactively communicated same and that failure to use the appropriate communications channels of one's business activities could result in disbelief, doubt and uncertainty on the part of stakeholders.

Similarly, Jamali and Karam (2018) present a multilevel review of the literature on CSR in developing countries and highlights the key differentiators and nuanced CSR-related consideration that qualify it as a distinctive field of study. This study identified the key differentiating attributes of the literature on CSR in developing countries in relation to depictions of how CSR is conceived and depiction of how CSR is practiced and implemented.

Asogwa and Onuh (2014) carried out a research on corporate social responsibility in higher institutions: A case of Kogi State University, Anyigba. The study examined the role of Kogi State University in terms of its corporate social responsibility and how its host communities have been positively influenced by its programme using the survey design method and the findings revealed that Kogi State University has played a considerable role in its CSR to its host communities but however the host communities are not satisfied yet. Also, CSR is the necessary ingredients for continued peaceful corporation within the communities, and an important tool for mutual trust and goodwill between organizations and its publics. The gap in this literature is on the basis of finding a lasting solution to the increasing wave of attacks on the university by some aggrieved residents and hoodlums from the host communities. According to Igbiniedion and Ovbiagele (2012), in their research on corporate social responsibilities

of tertiary institutions to host communities in Delta South Senatorial District of Delta State, Nigeria. The study employed the survey design method and findings showed that there is an agreement between the host communities and management of tertiary institutions on the type of intervention needed by the host communities. The study focused on the south senatorial district of Nigeria.

In the same vein, Asemah et al. (2013) examined the need for universities to carry out corporate social programmes. Qualitative research method was used as the research method while interview was used to gather data from the respondents. Findings of the study showed that CSR helps organizations, including universities to improve on their image.

More so, Justin and Wadike (2013) researched on social responsibility performance of educational institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. Research questionnaire was used to gather data from respondents. Finding from the research questions showed that host communities rate the institutions moderate in their social responsibility performance; host communities expect special employment opportunities from the institutions and the level of satisfaction of the communities regarding social responsibility of the institutions is very low.

Also, Oyetunde and Olusola (2013) examined the factor of corporate social responsibility and its relationship with societal perception and expectation. The study measured the disparity between what Lafarge Cement Nigeria Plc., Ewekoro feels is her CSR and what the Ewekoro community expects from the company. Survey research method was adopted. 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 menace. It also revealed that there is significant relationship between Lafarge Plc. corporate social responsibility projects and community expectations.

Uwalomwa and Ben-Caleb (2012) examined corporate social responsibility disclosures in Nigeria: A study of listed financial and non-financial firms. The study employed multiple regression analysis as a statistical technique for analyzing data collected. Findings revealed significant negative relationship existed between firms' financial leverage and the level of corporate social responsibility disclosures. Odetayo et al. (2014) examined the impact of corporate social responsibility on profitability of Nigerian Banks using regression analysis. Findings showed that there is significant relationship between expenditure on corporate social responsibility and profitability of six sampled banks.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research adopted survey research design. Survey design is an extensive cross-sectional approach, where a number of cases are considered at a particular time and

data is gathered to study the opinions, behaviour, attitudes, habits, desires, values and beliefs (Farooq, 2015). The area of research for this study was limited to the host community; Iwo, where Bowen University is located. Iwo has an estimated population of 105,401 (NPC, 1991), while in 2006 population census puts the population of Iwo at 191,348 (NPC, 2006). Later on in 2016, Iwo population was projected to 263,500 (NPC, 2016) making it the most populous Local Government in Osun State. Other local governments in Iwo, are Aiyedire Local Government of a population of 76,309 as well as Ola-Oluwa Local Government which has the population of 76,227. For the purpose of this research, Iwo population is projected at 263,500 using the national population growth rate of 2.43% (CIA World Factbook). Therefore, sample size used for this research is determined by a model developed by Taro Yamane (1967).

A questionnaire which was pilot tested was used to collect data for this study. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires, since, by virtue of their occupations, all the respondents were literate enough to read the questionnaire items and respond to them in writing. 150 copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents in the study. This objective was met by asking respondents to use a 5-point Likert scale of responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) through disagree (2), somewhat agree (3) and agree (4) to strongly agree (5) to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with their university's exhibition of CSR in terms of its specific indicators that applied at their level. From the questionnaires distributed, 127 copied were considered valid for analysis as they had been properly completed. The remaining 23 were incomplete and not considered useful for the purpose of analysis. The results obtained were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20). The hypothesis was tested using the chi-square method. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, $\alpha = 0.05$.

RESULTS

The demographic profile of 127 respondents indicates that about half of them (51.2%) were in the age category of 29 years and below and majority (51.2%) of the respondents were single. These percentages are in line with the occupation of the respondents as most of the respondents were self-employed or civil servants (47.5%). Students (37%) within the community while other were unemployed (2.5%). Most (52.8%) of the respondents had gotten up to tertiary level of education. Majority of the respondents were male (55.9%) and female respondents were (41.7%). Majority of respondents were Christian (73.2%) while (25.2%) were Muslim (Table 1). Thus, with reference to the statistics above, characteristics and sampling procedures, it may be observed that the host community in this study is heterogeneous.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (n=127).

Profile	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Age (years)		
<20	31	24.4
20-29	34	26.8
30-39	29	22.8
40-49	15	11.8
>51	16	12.6
Not valid	2	1.6
Gender		
Male	71	55.9
Female	53	41.7
Not valid	3	2.4
Marital Status		
Single	67	52.8
Married	46	36.2
Widow/Widower	11	8.7
Seperated	1	0.8
Not valid	2	1.5
Educational Status		
Primary	18	14.1
Secondary	35	27.6
Tertiary	67	52.8
Not valid	7	5.5
Religion		
Christainity	93	73.2
Islam	32	25.2
Not valid	2	1.6
Occupation		
Student	47	37
Civil servant	24	18.9
Trader	14	11
Farmer	10	7.9
Umemployed	3	2.4
Artisan	14	11
Not valid	4	3.1

Test of hypothesis

The hypothesis was tested using the chi-square method and is tested at 0.05 level of significance (Tables 2). Therefore, $\alpha = 0.05$ and $X^2_{4, 0.95} = 9.49$. From Table 2, since $459.49 > X^2_{4, 0.95} = 9.49$; the null hypothesis H_0 (There is no level of awareness of the host community about Bowen University CSR) was rejected and alternative hypothesis H_1 (There is a level of awareness of the host community about Bowen University CSR) was accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a level of

Table 2. Chi square analyses

Variable	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E)	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
Strongly Agree	98	25.4	72.6	5270.76	207.51
Agree	24	25.4	68.6	4705.96	187.27
Undecided	2	25.4	-23.4	547.56	21.56
Disagree	3	25.4	-22.4	501.75	19.75
Strongly Disagree	0	25.4	-25.4	645.16	25.4
Total	127				$\Sigma\chi^2=459.49$

Expected = Total Observed ÷ Variable Number = $127 \div 5 = 25.4$.

awareness of the host community about Bowen University's CSR activities.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that respondents are aware of the existence of Bowen University within the community. Majority of the respondents (77.2percent) recognise the existence of Bowen University within the community. This implies that there is a high level of awareness of the existence of a university within the host community. This is necessary to recognise corporate social responsibility activities by the university within the community. This corroborates with the work of Barsoum and Refaat (2015), who note that organisations are part of societies, thus they should have a strong foundation of relationships, and increase their transparency by providing relevant information that enables people to take reasonable actions. This is why the onus lies on organizations to ensure societal responsibility and development as their activities affect the society. Ankit and El-Shakran (2020) note that Tertiary institutions have a function to offer and carry out research in relation to the environment. The issue of sustainability was highlighted with the Talloires Declaration where universities signed a commitment for sustainable development which could be achieved through its CSR activities. The CSR activities of the university tend towards community development which is corroborated by Maloni and Brown (2006). They note that CSR activities should tend towards community development activities. In this study, about 91.3 percent of the respondents agree that the CSR activities of Bowen University contribute to community development and growth.

Based on the analysis, findings revealed that majority of the residents of Bowen University host communities have a good understanding and can identify CSR activities some of which include; construction of bridges and roads, digging of wells, decoration of palace, clearing of gutters etc. It was also discovered that most of the respondents are aware of the existence of Bowen University within the community and aware that Bowen University carries out

CSR activities within its host community. This is in contrast with the work of Sherif (2015) who noted that universities have ignored the real needs of the society not paying attention to CSR activities. Also, from this research, it was discovered that the CSR activities provided by Bowen University contributes to the growth and development of communities; provides job opportunities, provide health services, provide donations and thus improves the standard of living of the communities.

Conclusion

From the results obtained in this study, it can be concluded that Bowen University corporate social responsibility has a significant impact on the host communities' development which includes provision of job opportunity, health services, donations, improving the standard of living of the residents thus contributing to the growth and development of the communities. There is a level of awareness of the host communities about Bowen University CSR; that Bowen University carries out corporate social responsibility on host communities; that Bowen University CSR has significant influence on host community's development; and there are CSR activities the host communities would prefer to be considered by the institution.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that tertiary institutions should:

1. provide other activities such coaching classes and scholarships for students who are indigenes of the host community.
2. sensitization the host community about their CSR activities.
3. promote cultural activities such as music and dance festivals, sport activities etc.
4. provide some basic social amenities such as wells and boreholes for portal water.

Limitations

Like any other study, this work was not devoid of limiting factors within the depth and breadth of this work. During the course of the work, some factors that mitigated the research work include inadequate time to have covered a wider scope of respondents for the questionnaire, rejection and reluctance on the part of the respondents to answering the questionnaires due to their haste or inability to interpret the questions properly.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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