

Corporate Social Responsibility Approaches of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba State, Nigeria: Focus on Taraba State University, Jalingo.

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Abstract

Corporate social responsibility is what all organizations, including tertiary institutions, must adopt as a public relations tool in managing their publics internally and externally. It is a management approach towards building and sustaining a cordial and harmonious coexistence between an organization and its environment. Organizations including tertiary institutions conscious of corporate social responsibility, find themselves not only ensuring that the welfare of their internal publics is not only taken care of, but they ensure that they give back to their communities what they have taken from them. This study is, therefore, carried out to determine whether tertiary institutions in Nigeria, especially the ones in Taraba State recognize and apply corporate social responsibility in relating with their environments. Anchored on the stakeholder theory, the study adopted survey as its design with data quantitatively collected through the instrument of questionnaire. The collected data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Findings revealed that even though the university under study recognizes corporate social responsibility as a public relations tool of achieving harmony with its environment, it does not apply it effectively. Findings further showed that inability of the university to be effective in the application of corporate social responsibility is not unconnected with lack of adequate financial sponsorship by the government. This situation leaves the university in a very pathetic situation as often the university operates without electricity and other social amenities, staff are often denied their benefits with constant strikes which have become the order of the day. The study, therefore, recommends, among many others, that government of Taraba State and Nigeria as a whole should take education more serious by allocating substantial part of their budgets to education.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Environment, Nigeria, Tertiary Institutions & University.

Introduction

It is the belief of all progressive minds that development is a collective affair. This implies that for development to be attained, all hands must be on deck; every institution, whether family, health, agriculture, religion, and so on, is expected and has a very key role to play. This cognition agrees with the saying that “in the rendezvous of victory, every hand must be on deck.” The foregoing discourse is pointing to the fact that the success of any organization, public or private should not only be the concern of that organization but it should also be the concern of the entire society. Society, according to Chiakaan and Agaku (2014) does not exist in a vacuum; it has institutions

whose achievements are tied to it. This means that where the various organizations or institutions in a society are doing well, achieving their goals, it will, no doubt, lead to the attainment of the goals of the society resulting in development. It is on this note that they way and manner the various institutions or organizations in Nigeria relate with their publics and their society becomes something to be concerned about.

The way tertiary institutions in Nigeria relate with their publics and the entire Nigerian environment, to a very large extent, is a fundamental ingredient that determines their success or failure (Ajala, 2001). Even though, other sectors also have various contributions to make for the development of Nigeria, the educational sector where tertiary institutions belong to appear to be providing a leading role. Ward (1883) in Igbiniedion and Abraham (2012) in line with this view, posits that education is an essential force for progress. Accordingly, Igbiniedion and Abraham note that educational institutions are centre for human betterment for the progress of society. Tertiary institutions, no doubt, are a force to reckon with for the purpose of development due to the objectives which they are established to achieve. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) National Policy on Education, higher education institutions including professional educational ones are established to achieve the following aims;

- i. To provide, develop and inculcate proper-orientation for the survival of the individuals and the society;
- ii. To develop the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate environment;
- iii. To provide both physical and intellectual help which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community;
- iv. To provide an overview of the local and external environments.

All these goals of higher institutions, as observed by Chiakaan (2016) “are tied to the development of the Nigerian society. Even though the goals of the institutions are aimed at benefiting their environments, they can find it difficult to attain them if they operate in isolation from them (environments); a cordial relationship is, therefore, what is expected between the two. This is the jurisdiction of corporate social responsibility. In line with this submission, Osunbiyi (2004) states:

As earlier observed, higher institutions of learning can attain their goals only when they have a good or cordial relationship with not only their publics but environment or society. Achieving harmony with the environments of tertiary institutions and others concerned is the sphere of public relations that is professionally referred to as corporate social responsibility.

Corporate social responsibility is a global standard practice that integrates an organization with its environment or society. Cruzem, Calacal, Bruce, De Alday and Macalangay (2016) have stated that:

Corporate social responsibility is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. CSR is generally understood as being the way through which a company achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives, while at the same time addressing the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders.

An organization, from the foregoing discourse, that is conscious of its corporate social responsibility will not only be satisfied that its internal publics are happy and satisfied but it will

be equally concerned about the interest of the entire environment or society in which it operates; will care for the economic, environmental and social needs of its society.

Shading his views on the ongoing discourse, Wood (1991) in Igbinedion and Orbiagele (2012, p.34) posits that CSR is a self-regulating mechanism whereby corporate bodies monitor and ensure their support to law, ethical standards and international norms. It follows, therefore, that the basic concern of CSR is to ensure that corporate entities impact positively on their environments, consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders and all other members of the public sphere, (Igbinedion & Orbiagele, 2012).

If corporate social responsibility is understood as it is being depicted by Wood, Igbinedion, Orbiagele and others, it becomes imperative to determine whether tertiary institutions in Nigeria recognize and practice it. This becomes necessary given the central position which tertiary institutions, as providers of moderate and high level manpower, occupy in Nigeria. Fundamentally, if tertiary institutions employ corporate social responsibility, they can attract the support of Nigerians and achieve harmony which is very essential for the attainment of their goals for developmental purposes.

Being socially responsible also entails delivering on their goals for which they have been established. It, therefore, implies that where the institutions cannot produce the desired quality manpower that can lift Nigeria out of the shackles of underdevelopment, they can be said to be failing in this very important aspect of public relations practice. This explains why corporate social responsibility is broader than imagined, it is multi-faceted because it goes beyond communicating to achieving peace and harmony between an organization including a tertiary institution and its environment; it involves series of activities embarked upon by an organization to ensure that the so much needed peace and harmony are achieved for the smooth operations of the organization.

It is in regard to this that universities and other tertiary institutions are expected to take up on themselves the duty of ensuring that they are socially responsible to their environments. There is, therefore, high need for managements of tertiary institutions in Nigeria and all over the world to be conscious of corporate social responsibility which is a very powerful tool of public relations (Asemah, Okpanachi & Olumuji, 2013). Organizations including companies or universities ought to be socially responsible to their host communities so as to enable them win the goodwill of such communities. Winning the goodwill of the environments in which organizations including tertiary institutions exist is a fundamental tool required for effective operations, survival and attainment of their goals, this entails that no organization, university or any tertiary institution needs to underestimate the power associated with corporate social responsibility.

Universities, like other organizations, must effectively apply corporate social responsibility because the environments in which they operate provide strong purchasing or patronizing power, provide fertile land and employment advantages as well as other benefits to them (Raufu, 2001). Corporate social responsibility, based on the foregoing discourse, requires that a symbiotic relationship exist between organizations and their environments. Organizations, in this regard, are expected to impact positively on their environments so that their environments cannot feel cheated and even regret why they should allow them to operate in them (environment). Where organizations including universities and other tertiary institutions are ignorant of corporate social responsibility or where they are not ignorant but do not apply it as expected, the relationship between them and their environments will be hostile, thorny and turbulent.

Statement of Problem

Several studies carried out by different scholars have shown that tertiary institutions in Nigeria, like their counterparts especially in developed societies, are not ignorant of corporate social responsibility, how effective they are in applying it in order to achieve peace, harmony and support in their environments, however, remains what is yet to be ascertained. For instance, Musa and Joel, (2016), Awah (2005), and many others have, in their separate studies affirmed that corporate social responsibility plays a significant role in Nigerian tertiary institutions but its application appears to be faced with some challenges. This implies that the way and manner tertiary institutions in Nigeria apply this important tool of public relations to achieve harmony with their environments is seriously questionable. Moreover, in spite of the fact that several literatures exist on corporate social responsibility and tertiary institutions in Nigeria and other parts of the world, there has, so far, no study carried out about tertiary institutions in Taraba State. This study is therefore, carried out to determine the recognition and application of corporate social responsibility by Taraba State University, Jalingo.

Objective of the Study

The study is carried out to achieve the following objectives:

- i. to determine the extent to which Taraba State University, Jalingo applies corporate social responsibility in achieving harmony with its environment.
- ii. to identify the areas of corporate social responsibility by Taraba State University, Jalingo in achieving harmony with its environment.
- iii. to find out whether Taraba State University, Jalingo effectively applies CSR approaches in achieving harmony with its environment.
- iv. to find out, if there are challenges faced by TSU, Jalingo in the application of corporate social responsibility.

Theoretical Framework

This study is majorly anchored on the stakeholder theory. The stakeholder theory is a managerial theory which is fundamentally concerned about ensuring a cordial and harmonious relationship between an organization and its environment. An environment, in this regard, does not operate in a vacuum, it is made up of people of various categories and interests whose actions, are capable of affecting the operations of an organization positively or negatively. Organizations are warned not to take for granted the interest of such people in whatever society or environment they are operating.

Historically, the stakeholder theory has roots in the views of philosophers concerning the nature of civil society itself and relations among individuals. The word “stakeholder” as is being perceived and used in modern time first appeared in 1963 in an internal memorandum at the Stanford Research Institute. Its popularity, however became more in the 1970s when scholars like Hein Kross and Claus Schwab wrote so much about it offering a plethora of definitions of it and theorizations about it.

Scholars at this period approached the theory from a more holistic perspective arguing that for organizations to integrate with their environments and attain long term growth and prosperity, they must serve not only their shareholders but all their stakeholders. It was on the basis of this that Lan Mitroff was inspired to publish a book titled “Stakeholders of the Organizational Mind in 1903”.

Incidentally, in spite of various efforts by various scholars in bringing the stakeholder theory on board, its origin is attributed to R. Edward Freeman who is also considered to be the father of the theory. Freeman specifically wrote an article with the title "Stakeholder Theory," which was published in the *California Management Review*. Apart from that article, Freeman had published many other articles and books on the stakeholder theory. The most famous of the books he published enlightening organizations on the tenets and application of the stakeholder theory was his "Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach" in 1984. Shading more light on the theory, Ekwe, Ngwu and Ahaotu (2018, p.1) have posited that "Freeman (1994) noted that two core questions articulate the focus of the stakeholder theory. The first question is: what is the purpose of the firm? The second question is: What responsibility does management have to stakeholders?" Specifically, the stakeholder theory is a pre-crisis management theory; it seeks to address issues that can pitch organizations against their publics or stakeholders. When an organization marries its interests with those of its stakeholders, it can be seen as adopting the best approach towards preventing outbreak of hostility between it and its environment. All stakeholders such as employees, customers, suppliers, financiers, communities, governmental bodies, political groups, trade associations and trade unions are vital to the attainment of organizational goals and as such their needs cannot be overlooked. Perhaps, universities being more volatile organizations need the stakeholder theory more than other organizations. They have internal stakeholders including students and staff who are very conscious of their rights and responsibilities of their institutions; Osunbiyi (2004) refers to their internal stakeholders as non-conformists, they have the outside stakeholders whose lands and environments are crowded and taken over, this implies that they need compensation; adopting the stakeholder theory by managements of universities, therefore, becomes compensational and consolatory in this regard.

Literature Review

The subject matter of what constitutes corporate social responsibility has so much been talked about and discussed by various scholars that one may even be tempted, mistakenly of course, to overlook a review of any literature on it. The academic culture, however, requires that for a discussion of any concept to be held, its review is necessary to enhance comprehension (Chiakaan and Ahmad, 2021). Armed with this background, it becomes expedient to refresh our memories with the fact that corporate social responsibility is a major public relations strategy applied by organizations and institutions whether they are public or private in order to achieve harmony and acceptability in their environments of operations.

Fundamentally, corporate social responsibility expects organizations, whether profit or non-profit oriented to give back parts of their profits to the society in which they are situated carrying out their activities in form of support for the well-being of such an environment (National Open University of Nigeria, 2010). Alshuwaikhat and Abubakar, (2008), Haden, Oyler and Humphreys (2009), Hoffman and Woody (2008), Asemah, Okpanachi and Olumuji (2013) have posited that business cannot be successfully carried out in a rancorous atmosphere. Organizations need information about them, they need peace, they need the understanding and cooperation of their environments to enable them attain their goals, this further reiterates the fact that corporate social responsibility is an indispensable strategy for organizations (Chiakaan & Chile, 2015).

In Nigeria, a university or tertiary institution which operates in a conducive teaching and learning environment; an environment that guarantees sound research leading to solutions to the country's underdevelopment problems, a university that is devoid of constant protests by students and staff resulting in constant closure or suspension of academic activities, a university that inculcates legal,

moral and other values cherished by the Nigerian society, and many others will be said to be socially responsible. Corporate social responsibility, in this regard, is broader than imagined; it involves the performance of an organization or institution in totality reflecting in the overall wellbeing of both its immediate and larger society. This underscores why Pohle and Hittner (2008) posit that:

...a growing body of evidence asserts that corporations can do well by doing good. well-known companies have already proven that they can differentiate their brands and reputations as well as their products and services if they take responsibility for the well-being of the societies and environments in which they operate. These companies are practicing corporate social responsibility...

The submission by Pohle and Hitter further reinforces the foregoing discourse that when an organization reflects the general interest of its society in its activities, it is practicing corporate social responsibility. CSR is, therefore, the way an organization achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives and at the same time addresses the expectations of both shareholders and stakeholders (Cruzem, Calacal, Bruce, De Alday & Macalangay, 2016). Corporate social responsibility activities, as can be implied, are numerous; they, according to Cornelissen (2011) cut across environmental conservation programmes, corporate volunteerism, charitable contributions, support for community education, healthcare initiatives, talent nurturing, promotions and other activities aimed at empowering minority, disadvantaged, vulnerable groups in the society.

Often, especially in developing societies, the ability of organizations, especially universities and other institutions to be socially responsible is thwarted by certain challenges such as inability of managements or government to provide the necessary incentives for the initiation and sustainability of programmes in this regard (Wright, 2010). In some situations, Pollock, Horn, Costanza and Sayre (2009, p.204) have revealed that “complex and ineffective governance, traditional disciplinary boundaries and lack of a shared vision by academic institutions often hinder university’s progress towards leading the world to a more sustainable and desirable future.”

Methodology

The study adopted a survey design using Krejcie and Morgan (1979) tabular sampling formular to determine the size of the study which was 385 drawn from the population of students, staff of the university and people in Jalingo, the town in which the university is cited. The 382 respondents were sampled using stratified random sampling method. After stratifying the respondents according to their strata, the study went ahead to adopt simple random sampling technique in determining those from whom data were collected. Questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection. The administration of questionnaire was carried out for three days. The researchers were able to collect back only 378 (98%) questionnaire from the field; the remaining 07(2%) were not returned. The analysis of data was, therefore, based on the 378 copies of the returned questionnaire. The data collected were presented in a tabular form using simple percentage with analysis contextually done.

Result of the Findings

Table 1: Extent TSU, Jalingo is concerned about CSR as a means of achieving harmony with its environment.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a low extent	324	86
To a very low extent	20	05
To a high extent	22	06
To a very high extent	12	03
Total	378	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Data in Table 2 seek to ascertain the extent TSU, Jalingo is concerned about CSR as a means of achieving harmony with its environment. Data collected revealed that 324(86%) of the respondents said the university's concern about CSR is to a low extent, 20(05%) said it is concerned about it but to a very low extent, 22(06%) of the respondents agreed that university is concerned about CSR to a high extent while 12(03%) pointed out that the university is concerned about CSR to a very high extent. By implication, TSU, Jalingo is concerned about corporate social responsibility but only to a low extent.

Table 2: Activities carried out by TSU Jalingo that are inclined to corporate social responsibility

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
TSU Jalingo provides health assistance to its staff, students and the Jalingo community	21	06
The University helps in creating and promoting cultural awareness in Jalingo and Taraba State as a whole	44	12
The university contributes in creating wealth and jobs for people in Jalingo, Taraba and Nigeria at large regularly	26	07
The university assists in providing for the educational needs of its host community and beyond	255	67
The university has water, electricity and sporting facilities which host community and beyond benefit from	32	08
Total	378	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The concern of Table 3 above is to identify activities carried out by TSU, Jalingo that are inclined to corporate social responsibility. Data collected revealed that 21 of the respondents (06%) agreed that TSU Jalingo contributes in providing health assistance to its staff, students and the Jalingo community, 44 of the respondents (12%) said the university helps in creating and promoting cultural awareness in Jalingo and Taraba State as a whole, 26 (07%) said the university contributes in creating wealth and jobs for people in Jalingo, Taraba and Nigeria at large regularly whereas 255(67%) of the sampled respondents said the university assists in providing for the educational needs of its host community and beyond; it is still the belief of 32 respondents (08%) that the university has water, electricity and sporting facilities which host community and beyond benefit from. Significantly, it can be deduced from data collected here that the university engages in different corporate social responsibility activities.

Table 3: Respondents opinion about the way and manner TSU, Jalingo carries out corporate social responsibility activities

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The university is effective	66	17.5
The university is not effective	274	72.5
The university is very effective in the area of corporate social responsibility	28	7.5
The university is very poor in the application of corporate social responsibility	10	2.5
Total	378	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Data collected in Table 4 were aimed at knowing respondent’s opinion about the way and manner TSU, Jalingo carries out corporate social responsibility activities. In this regard, 66(17.5%) of the sampled respondents said the university is effective, 274(72.5%) said the university is not effective, 28(7.5%) said the university is very effective while 10(3.5%) of the respondents said the university is very poor in the application of corporate social responsibility. Analytically, Taraba State University, Jalingo does not carry out CSR activities in an effective manner.

Table 4: Challenges faced by TSU, Jalingo in its corporate social responsibility activities

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Hostile attitude from members of host community	20	05
Students restiveness leading to constant closure of the university	21	05
Strikes by staff leading to constant closure of the university	93	25
Inadequate funds/subvention to the university making it difficult for the university to embark on effective corporate social responsibility projects	238	63
Leaders of host community being unfriendly and not cushioning their members against tempering with university property	02	01
All of the above	04	01
Total	378	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Data presented in Table 5 above have revealed the challenges faced by TSU, Jalingo in its corporate social responsibility activities. Here, data showed that 20(05%) of the respondents identified hostile attitude from members of host community, 21(05%) of the respondents identified students restiveness leading to constant closure of the university, 93(25%) respondents identified strikes by staff leading to constant closure of the university, 238(63%) of the sampled respondents identified inadequate funds/subvention to the university which makes it difficult for the university to embark on effective corporate social responsibility programmes while 02(1%) of the respondents identified leaders of host community being unfriendly and not cushioning their members against tempering with university property as challenges faced by TSU, Jalingo in its corporate social responsibility activities. However, to 04(1%) of the sampled respondents all the above mentioned are challenges faced by TSU, Jalingo in carrying out its corporate social responsibility activities. This implies that there are many challenges the institution faces in carrying out its corporate social responsibility activities.

Discussion of Findings

Several studies carried out by different scholars have shown that tertiary institutions like other organizations, need not only to recognize corporate social responsibility but also apply it effectively if they must live in harmony with their environments to deliver on their goals. This study was, therefore, specifically carried out to determine the application of corporate social responsibility approaches by one of the publicly owned universities in Nigeria, Taraba State University, Jalingo in achieving its goals. The study, in this regard, collected data that were aimed at finding out the extent to which the university shows concern about CSR.

Data collected in Table 1 have shown that Taraba State University, Jalingo is aware of corporate social responsibility but to, a low extent, shows concern about it. This is the position of 342(86%) of the sampled respondents.

If Taraba State University, Jalingo shows concern about CSR but only to a low extent, it goes down to the fact that the management of the university, like that of other tertiary institutions in Nigeria and beyond, as shown by studies by Musa and Joel (2016), Netaji, Shatael, Salamzadeh and Drael (2011) and many others, are aware of the importance of this public relations strategy

and uses it in one way or the other in achieving its goals. Tertiary institutions, according to Osunbiyi (2014) are established to achieve developmental objectives for the country and due to the volatile and wider nature of their environments are, no doubt, aware of the benefits of CSR hence their concern about it even though to a low extent.

Specifically, as revealed by data in Table 2, the CSR approaches which Taraba State University, Jalingo applies are many but the major one according to 255(67%) of the respondents is the provision of the educational needs of both its immediate environment and beyond. This implies that the university admits qualified candidates into its various programmes from its host community and other parts of Nigeria. Other CSR activities of the university include catering for the health needs of its staff, students and its environment. The university also assists in creating and promoting cultural awareness in its environments, creating wealth and job opportunities for people in its host environment and beyond, providing water, electricity, sporting facilities to them are still other CSR activities carried out by Taraba State University, Jalingo in achieving harmony with its environment.

The application of different approaches by the university shows that corporate social responsibility is really a public relations tool that is not limited to only one activity. It has different dimensions economically, legally, ethically, socially and otherwise inclined (Justin & Wadike, 2013). Universities and other tertiary institutions applying diverse approaches in order to influence all aspects of their environments, are capable of making people in their environments feel happy and lucky to have them, this has the advantage of making their environments to embrace such institutions as theirs, thereby creating the desired peace and safety for the smooth operations of the institutions.

Taraba State University, Jalingo may be applying different CSR approaches but the basic question that requires an answer is, how well it applies them. Data in Table 3, therefore, have provided answer to this question. Data collected here have shown that the university does not carry out the various corporate responsibility activities in an effective manner. This is the position of 274(73%) sampled respondents. Findings here have, unfortunately, revealed that the university does not practice corporate social responsibility in an excellent manner as demanded by the excellence theory. This further shows that many or some of the needs of the university's stakeholders are not properly taken care of by the university which is against the expectation of the stakeholder theory. Where CSR is excellently applied, the different needs of the university's environment can be effectively taken care of.

Inability of Taraba State University to effectively apply CSR approaches, above all, implies that all is not well with the university. It implies that the university is faced with some challenges in this regard. This has, indeed, been proven by data collected in Table 4 where 238(63%) respondents identified inadequate subvention to the university by government as the major challenge. Respondents, (25%) still identified constant strikes by staff of the university as another challenge faced by the university.

To be candid, what makes a university and any other tertiary institution to be very functional is availability of funds. Unfortunately, lack of funds to tertiary institutions in Nigeria has been a major challenge militating against their ability to perform up to expectations like their counterparts in other parts of the world. This, no doubt, has to do with the government nonchalant attitude towards education. This shows why there are always constant strikes by both academic and non-

academic staff of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. When universities are closed down, different people such as taxi drivers, *keke Napep*, *Okada* drivers conveying students, staff, and others to and from the university, computer operators, banks, food sellers, book sellers, photographers and many others carrying out different commercial activities are rendered jobless thereby worsening unemployment and even insecurity situation in Nigeria. This is not a good development.

Conclusion

Corporate social responsibility is what universities and all tertiary institutions must not only recognize, it is what they must apply effectively if they must achieve harmony with their environments. Harmonious coexistence between institutions and their environments is very fundamental because the institutions cannot carry out their activities smoothly leading to the advancement of the country in a rancorous atmosphere. Incidentally, the institutions are not in the dark about the benefits associated with CSR, their problem lies in the inability of government to pay the desired attention to education which directly or indirectly affects the way they carryout corporate social responsibility activities.

Recommendations

Based on findings by the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. **Effective Application of CSR:** Managements of tertiary institutions in Nigeria should not only recognize CSR but they should be able to apply it effectively in order to achieve their goals and move Nigeria forward.
- ii. **Adequate Funding:** Tertiary institution and the entire educational sector should be adequately funded by government. This can enable the institutions to be more proactive in carrying out their corporate social responsibility activities. Of course, private bodies should also assist in the sponsorship of education in Nigeria.
- iii. **Workshop/Seminars:** Training programmes in form of workshops and seminars should always be organized by the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations and other management bodies for managers and other stakeholders in the educational sector on the importance of CSR.

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