

An Examination of the Knowledge and Attitudes of staff towards Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability

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Abstract: In the world of business today, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been given honest concern. It appears that many organization are not observing the principles of CSR. Hence, this paper focuses on the examination of the knowledge and attitudes of staff towards Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability at the Adventist University West Africa (AUWA), Liberia. In the last century, the notion of CSR has become an important issue among business owners and academicians (Eweje, 2014). Based on the review of related literature, there is no evidence to show that staff of AUWA are well knowledgeable on CSR and sustainability. Therefore, empirical research need to be carry out to address this study on the knowledge and attitude of staff towards CSR and sustainability (2015-2020). Hence, helping organizations and businesses to observe the principles of CSR.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, sustainability, Knowledge, Attitude, Principle.

Introduction

CSR turn out to be an area of interest to every organization. In order words business exist for many reasons rather than just profit making but they need to be concern about the social and environmental needs of their stakeholders. According to Mc Williams and Siegel's work (as cited in Ramakrishnan, Hishan, and Kanjanapathy, 2016). defines CSR as "actions that appears to further some social good, beyond the interest of the firms and that which is required by the law." (p.205). In other words, companies that engage in advancement of their CSR are usually viewed more positively. Good governance is expected from companies and they are responsible for the way business is managed. The study examine the knowledge and attitude of employees of the Adventist University of West Africa about CSR and sustainability (2015 – 2020) in same vain enlighten staff about the need for CSR and at the end contribute to the existing knowledge.

Background to the study

The ideas of CSR shows to us that companies has responsibility that encompasses both the social and economic aspect (Carroll, 1999). According to some scholar's presumptions, says companies will yield high performance if they involve themselves with social responsibility based on the study that was conducted "on the influence of CSR actions on the economic performance". Even though, empirical research has not be able to give clear results on the relationship of "CSR activities and economic performance" (Ahn, & Park, 2016 p.119).

The application of Social responsible in business has resulted to argument that is centric to management practices. Scholars are of the opinion that managers of organization should only be concern with satisfying the shareholders instead of concerning themselves with using organization wealth for social good because they feels it weaken market techniques and can lead to un sustain organization (Carson, 1993; Friedman, 1970). Contrarily, other scholars are of the opinion that businesses actually have responsibility towards their community by resolving their social issues.

Davis and Velasque's work (as cited in Hinson & Ndhlovu, 2011). supporting this viewpoint, suggested, that every individual should have that interest in CSR because it has to do with ethical behaviour and it is important for the organizational effectiveness The idea of CSR implies that businesses must have good rapport with their environment where they are located and this includes actual environment and the company's stakeholders – "who are the employees, customers, suppliers, NGOs, banks, local authorities, neighbors, investors, and shareholders". doing this will bring success to the company or organization (Buchner, 2012 p.45). Many studies have been conducted on the issues of CSR and the position they have play in assisting the government to meet society needs to which they belong as a business entity but the question remains if this concept is actually familiar in Liberia and more importantly in AUWA.

This study will examine the knowledge and attitude of employees towards corporate social responsibility and sustainability at AUWA. This article will point out the extent to which staff is aware, knowledgeable and

their attitude towards the concept. Theoretical research will be conducted to explore employee's knowledge and attitude on the subject under discussion. The study will at the end expose staff to the concept and add to the existing knowledge in this field of study.

Objectives to the study

1. To examine the knowledge of employees of AUWA towards Corporate social responsibility and sustainability.
2. To determine the attitude of staff as regards their social responsibility.
3. Analysis statistical relationship between staff knowledge towards CSR and their attitude towards it.

Scope of study

This study is primarily focused on the examination of the knowledge and attitudes towards corporate social responsibility and sustainability among staff. This study will be conducted on the Adventist University of West Africa campus and its aim to include both faculty and staff of the institution.

Literature review

Organization is been called upon to be accountable for the ways they influence the society and natural environment in their operations. Corporations around the world are faced with a new role, of meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the future needs and applying sustainability principles (Marrewijk & Verre, 2003).

Corporate social responsibility (CRS) is the actuality of business operation this twenty-first century, since it inclusion, about "500 companies now include a senior-level position in their organizational structure dedicated to CSR issues" (Beal, 2014). The goal of this literature review is to examine the knowledge and attitude of employee as its concern the concept of CSR and sustainability.

The concept of CRS and sustainability

According to scholars, CSR first commence in 1950's and in 1953 a book was written by Bowen, H.R. titled; "social responsibility of the businessman". This concept is dynamic and receptive to internal and external environmental attributes and drain. In a study by Eweje (2014) Considered CSR as a voluntary business strategies that focuses on business owners committing to the good of the nation and protecting the natural environment in the process of achieving economic gain. Thus in promoting CSR principles, firms must possess high level of ethical and moral standards in their business operation (Baughn, Bodie, McIntoch, 2007; Hess, Rogovsky & Dunfee, 2002; Smith, 2003). Today, CSR has been recognized for two things. First, for development and global trade and information, developing new ways to improve accountability and transparency (Smith, 2003). Second, government in the past, were responsible for improving social well-being of the citizens however, because of knowledge of governments to resolve many of these social problems thus, private sector is been called upon to address sustainability challenges (Smith, 2003). On the other hand, corporate sustainability (CS) can be concerned as a business path that creates long-term value for the organization by infusing economic environmental and social aspect into its business decisions (Eweje, 2014).

Freeman and Hasnaoui(2011) further noted that CSR has existed in name for over 70years and have been in practice by countries, administrators and students in academia around the world. The authors points out that there was no clear definition as regards corporate social responsibility. This article discuss four definitions pointed out by four countries governmental websites namely "United Kingdom, France, United States and Canada" (p.426).

For the enactment of CSR and practice, authors try to use "the triple bottle line" pointing out the need for a universal framework. The author also, pointed out that there is no universal definition for CSR and that the need for organizations to work with other collaborators from developing nations and NGO's to help the underdeveloped countries. "CSR has always been regarded as a vehicle for development in the absence of good governance and institutional development in host communities"(Freeman and Hasnaoui, 2011).

Examining the knowledge and attitude of employees towards CSR and sustainability

Corporate social responsibility nowadays is facing increasing demand and as such, as we discuss this topic, it will be fair enough to equally find out employees knowledge regarding CSR. Many studies has been conducted in this field. However, issues concerning knowledge and attitude of employees as it regard CSR and sustainability is a concern. This study will like to find out how the employees of AUWA view the issues concerning CSR and sustainability.

In a study by Kucharska and Kowalczyk (2018), in their article pointed out that people are the company. The article stresses that in the organization, it is the minority that are in charge of strategic approaches while

majority are there to implement daily routine task that lead to final result. The article examines "the network between organizational culture, achievement, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and character, from the workers point of view why looking at the organization' culture that must influence CSR practice". They conducted a survey among "employee of polish construction companies regarding CSR practice in their organizations. The result indicated that the higher the employees position, the more positive their perception of CSR practice was. CSR practice, reputation and performance were better perceived in large companies than small companies".

In a study by Staniskiene and Stankeviciute (2018). They also, points out that growing number of organizations have been putting issue of feasibility on strategic approach. The article points out six dimension of social sustainability which includes: workers involvement, employee partnership, equitability, personnel training, health & safety and external association. This article reveals the differences in the studies of employees towards the CSR practices. The findings suggested that employees/workers perspective should be considered when measuring social sustainability.

In another studies by Hae-Ryong Kim, Lec, Lee and Kim (2010). Subjected two identification curing factors relates to employees identification with their firm. The result shows that firms CSR strategies increase employee-company place to their company, at the same time controls employees obligation to their company.

CSR according to the authors is a positive way companies maintain effective relationship with their employees.

The literature review shows that employees have a great part to play as it regards CSR and sustainability. This has become a reassuring strategy that companies/organizations can adopt to be able succeed. Organization must have an effective real value to share with their "customers, stakeholders, and employees". CSR is a source of sustainability, competitiveness, and innovation (European Commission, 2011).

Discussions and findings of the study

Based on the review of related literature on an examination of the knowledge and attitude towards corporate social responsibility and sustainability among staff, shows that there is no research work addressing this area of concern even at the Adventist University of West Africa. Therefore, future research should address this issues. From the literature review we find out that employees have a great role to play on issues of CSR and sustainability and there is a need for them to be carried along in this regards, considering what other scholars has pointed out about employees having a vital responsibility to the company and as such they have to be part and parcel on matters on CSR and sustainability. Also, CSR as was discussed in the review of literature is a voluntary business approach to resolve and improve social well-being of the citizens. Again, the literature review shows that, it is the minority that are in charge of strategic approaches while majority are there to implement daily routine task that leads to final result.

Kucharska and Kowalczyk (2018), Popa and Salanta (2014), studied that CSR is gradually evolving from a theoretical concept to a complex managerial tool. They stresses that today CSR is more like a business strategy for many companies as such, staff need to be aware and equally demonstrate positive attitude towards it. Furthermore, Kucharska and Kowalczyk, (2018), stressed that "employee's perception of all CSR activities, aims and effects shapes up the company's development and improves its performance in other words, CSR performance relies on employee's engagement" This studies in other words support the need for staff to be knowledgeable as well demonstrate a positive attitude towards CSR and sustainability if they want the business to succeed.

Recommendation

The literature review has proven that some firms do not promote or observe the principles of corporate social responsibility. Hence, this paper recommends that

1. Empirical research need to be conducted on the knowledge and attitude of staff towards CSR and sustainability.
2. Education should be given to staff on the knowledge and benefit of CSR and sustainability.
3. Organization needs to convey their CSR to their shareholders in a positive way.
4. Medium should be created for the promotion of CSR at the Adventist University of West Africa.
5. Firms should involve themselves in the promotion and observance of the principles of CSR and sustainability.

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