



THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (SR) STRATEGY ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SMSES AND ENTREPRENEURS IN THE NORTH EAST REGION OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study, empirical assessment of the effects of social responsibility (SR) strategy on the performance of SMSE's and possible improvement on entrepreneurs in the north east region of Nigeria was undertaken and found that social responsibility has made an impact on the operation, economic growth and survival of SMSE's sub-sector in Yobe State of Nigeria. The study was built in SMSE's sector of the region, the "Thermo Fisher's 4i Values" (Integrity, Intensity, Innovation and Involvement) it made up the sector in questions a great interaction with customers, suppliers and partners, communities and each other. These four values are foundational to our SR approach (Thermo Fisher scientific, 2020). Incognizance of the importance of SMSE, this study has expanded the body of knowledge in respect to social responsibility of small and micro enterprises. Specifically, the study worked out means in which SMSE sector be encouraged profitably. Only few of SMSE's do participate and recognized the activities of SR. The study also recognized that financial institutions like banks, individual financier and government are attracted to few SMSE that participated in SR (Basariya, Al Kake, 2019). The study realized that "Social Responsibility (SR) has become a fundamental way of defining the role of business in society" (Itziar & Josep, 2011). Other prominent writers in this context believe that, the needs of current and future generations cannot be met unless there is respect for natural systems and international standards protecting core social and environmental values. It is increasingly recognized the critical role of business sector. As a part of society, it is in business' interest to contribute to addressing common problems. Strategically speaking, the study has captured that business can only flourish when the communities and ecosystems in which they operate are healthy (Marylyn, Caroline & Sheena, 2011., Judy & Victoria, 2011., Cameron, 2011., Tobias & Frank, 2011., Min-Dong, 2011, & Babafemi, 2015).*

KEYWORDS: Social responsibility, Strategy, Performance, SMSE's, Entrepreneurs.



INTRODUCTION

North east region of Nigeria is blessed with enormous small-scale business mostly at micro stage, which a need to device means in which they will grow to meet the international standard is urgently required. “very little research has directly examined social responsibility (SR) from outlook of small and micro scale business, either in terms of how the owners perceive the social activities impact on the organization’s performance or on their employees or even on the communities/customers” (Sandberg, 2011, Adekoya, et;l 2020).

“However, SR application on SMSE and the present call entrepreneurship is being emphasized, as stated in the EU Green Paper, SR practice has so far primarily been the domain of large corporation whereas its wider application in SMSE including micro-businesses is of central importance, given that they are the greatest contributors to the economy and employment” (Wilfried, 2005). Hence, re-testified that SR has been overlooked heavily in the context of developing countries and Many companies today believe that SR acts as a reservoir of goodwill” (Mzembe, & Downs, 2014., Pozas, Lindsay, & Monceau. 2015, Janssen, Sen, & Bhattacharya, 2014).

Economic development in any sense must start somewhere; considering the value that SMSE’s possess in the history of economic development of any nations and the emancipating role of SR in the Global economy (Ibrahim, & Mohd, 2015). This work seek opportunity to develop cohesive and strategic framework that integrate SR in SMSE’s and entrepreneurship of Yobe State as a study area, to mean that the sufficient value the two elements (SR & SMSE) possess may be impacted into the domain of business enterprises in the state and across the region.

The SMSE and entrepreneurship sector is strategically positioned to absorb up to 80% of jobs, improve per capita income, increase value addition to raw materials supply, improve export earnings and step up capacity utilization in key industries. The sector is structured across other key sectors, including Agriculture, Mining and Quarrying, Building and Construction, Manufacturing, Solid Minerals, etc, and thus, has strong linkages with the entire range of economic activities in the country” (Meridian Group International and Pathfinder International, 2006).

Therefore, the aims of this study are to addressed these issues among others specifically in and across the state, and that is the knowledge gap the study attempt to bridge

The main aims are to establish perceptions and good understanding by owner/managers of SMSE’s, the importance of SR participation, the relevant activities (customers, employees, and communities) and the benefit (business survival) that could be derive by the stakeholders and the organizations in the State. Below are the key areas investigated:

- To investigate whether SMSE’s Employee Motivation play a significant relationship in improving Enterprise Survival.
- To determine whether SMSE’s Community Relation play a significant relationship in improving Enterprise Survival
- To examine whether SMSE’s Customers Satisfaction play a significant relationship in improving Enterprise Survival
- To identify whether SMSE’s Social Responsibility play a significant relationship in improving Enterprise Survival



LITERATURE REVIEW

Development of Social Responsibility

Carroll A. B. “traced its emergence to the 1930s. However, the heightened prominence that the concept of Business Social Responsibility (BSR), variously referred to as Social Responsibility (SR), Corporate Social Investment (CSI), Corporate Social Performance (CSP), Corporate Citizenship (CC) and so on, has attained in recent times comes amidst growing concerns that, while businesses bring progress to society, their actions more often than not, produce negative externalities that are unintended and need to be repudiated. The fact that these externalities accrue to societies who are not party to the economic decisions of businesses that bring them into being, makes it imperative that ‘victims’ are rewarded and perpetrators take responsibility and provide means to at least minimize their impact. Social Responsibility can be seen as a way of ‘compensating’ society for the hardships endured. In this sense, it is fair to say that SR has a strong social focus” (Carroll, 1979, 1991). Of this view also (Moir, 2001., Karaye, Ishak, & Adam, 2014, Farooq, Farooq, Jasimuddin, 2014, & Julian, & Natalia, 2020).

In another perspective the development of SR is described by Zadek in terms of three generations:

- “In the first generation of SR, organizations show that they can be responsible in ways that do not detract from, and may contribute to commercial success. This is the most traditional and pervasive form of SR, most often manifested as corporate philanthropy. It is not part of the main business of the organization but may add commercial value through reputation enhancement. Typically, a company may donate (old) computers to schools, staff may volunteer to work with local community groups, or the company simply finds a 'good cause'. Other approaches are concerned less with reputation enhancement than with reputation protection”.
- “The second generation is developing where organizations, and whole industries, see SR as an integral part of long-term business strategy. This is where the businesses, taking a lead in the field of SR, are positioned. There is a growing body of evidence that SR is good for business and leadership by pioneering companies and business leaders has been crucial in moving companies towards second generation of SR” (Zadek, 2001).
- “The third generation of SR is needed in order to make a significant contribution to addressing poverty, exclusion and environmental degradation. This will go beyond voluntary approaches by individual organizations and will involve leadership companies and organizations influencing the markets in which they operate and how the markets are regulated to re-mold whole markets toward sustainability. This process will need to involve both partnerships with civil society and changes in public policy, which will both reward SR and penalize poor performance. According to him this process could include changes to the corporate tax regime, mandatory social and environmental reporting and support for consumer education” (Zadek, 2001, Carroll, & Shabana, 2010, Taral, 2014).

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development has described SR “as the business contribution to sustainable economic development. SR typically includes ‘beyond law’ commitments and activities pertaining to; Governance and ethics, Health and safety, Environmental stewardship, Human rights (including core labour rights), Sustainable development, Conditions of work (including safety and health, hours of work, wages),



Industrial relations, Community involvement, development etc (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2007, Gregor, & et'al 2022).

With the discursion above, made it clear that SR is not a new phenomenon in business looking at it initiatives (1930) and the benefit it possess toward enhancing sustainable enterprises. Therefore, elaboration on it is of paramount to economic development.

Why is social responsibility becoming so important?

We realize that every inch of economic emancipation there also be a situation that need to be equally adjusted. As every sickness has medicine so also every economic dwelling has cause to answer. UNIDO and the world summit on sustainable development analyzes the following issue which stand as the reason why social responsibility becoming so important: "Globalization and the associated growth in competition; Increased size and influence of companies; Retrenchment or repositioning of government and its roles; War for talent; companies competing for expertise; Growth of global civil society activism; Increased importance of intangible assets" (Raynard, & Forstater, 2002).

"These dynamics combined with the macro changes outlined in above have led to the emergence of a new approach to Social Responsibility (SR), with companies recognizing that improving their own impacts and addressing wider social and environmental problems will be crucial in securing their long-term success. Increasingly, high profile companies are implementing SR processes such as public commitment to standards, community investment, continuous improvement, stakeholder engagement and corporate reporting on social and environmental performance. SR is now being discussed and debated in the public policy sphere – the UK has a Minister for Social Responsibility (in the Department for Trade and Industry), the EU has recently published a Green Paper on the subject, 2005 has been designated the European year of SR, and the UN Global Compact is bringing together companies and UN agencies to address Social Responsibility" (Raynard, P. & Forstater, M. UNIDO Vienna, 2002, Turkey, 2009, Agan, Y., Kuzey, C., Acar, F, M., & Atif, A. 2014)

Now what are the key drivers to social responsibility?

Of course, there are some challenging instruments that enhance the adoption of Social responsibilities.

- "Values - a value shift has taken place within businesses where they not only feel responsibility for wealth creation but also for social and environmental goods
- Strategy - being more socially and environmentally responsible is important for the strategic development of a company
- Public Pressure - pressure groups, consumers, media, the state and other public bodies are pressing companies to become more socially responsible
- Companies - are often driven by one of the above but see a shift into other spheres over time. For example, for companies subject to high profile campaigns, such as Shell and Nike, the main driver for change has been public pressure. Over time SR has gathered strength and strategic importance within the companies as it is seen as a way of creating sustainable value. (Raynard, P. & Forstater, M. UNIDO Vienna, 2002, Elvis B. & et'al 2022).



Why the study focuses on SMSE?

- For developing countries, integration into the global economy through economic liberalization, deregulation, and democratization is seen as the best way to overcome poverty and inequality. Crucial to this process is the development of a vibrant private sector, in which SMSE play a central part. SMSE make up over 90 per cent of businesses worldwide and account for between 50 and 60 per cent of employment. However, their importance in the development process goes beyond their strength in number” (Raynard, P. & Forstater, M. UNIDO Vienna, 2002, &ERDF Special report, 2022).
- ” SMSE (partly because of the industrial sub-sectors and product groups covered by them) tend to employ more labor-intensive production processes than large enterprises. Accordingly, they contribute significantly to the provision of productive employment opportunities, the generation of income and ultimately, the reduction of poverty. It is through the promotion of small enterprises that individual countries and the international community at large can make progress towards reaching the global target of halving poverty levels by the year in target” (Raynard, P. &Forstater, M. UNIDO Vienna, & 2002, Stevens, 2015).
- “There is ample empirical evidence that countries with a high share of small industrial enterprises have succeeded in making the income distribution (both regionally and functionally) more equitable. This in turn is a key contribution to ensuring long-term social stability by reducing ex-post re-distributional pressure and by reducing economic disparities between urban and rural areas. SMEs are key to the transition of agriculture-led to industrial economies as they provide simple opportunities for processing activities which can generate sustainable livelihoods. In this context, the predominant role of women is of particular importance” (Raynard, P. &Forstater, M. UNIDO Vienna, 2002, Effiom, & Samuel, 2018).
- “SMSE are a seedbed for entrepreneurship development, innovation and risk-taking behavior and provide the foundation for long-term growth dynamics and the transition towards larger enterprises” (Raynard, P. &Forstater, M. UNIDO Vienna, 2002)
- “SME support the building up of systemic productive capacities. They help to absorb productive resources at all levels of the economy and contribute to the creation of resilient economic systems in which small and large firms are interlinked” (Raynard, P. &Forstater, M. UNIDO Vienna, 2002)

“Such linkages are of increasing importance also for the attraction of foreign investment. Investing transnational corporations seek reliable domestic suppliers for their supply chains. There is thus a premium on the existence of domestic supporting industries in the competition for foreign investors” (Raynard, P. &Forstater, M. UNIDO Vienna, 2002) “SMEs, as amply demonstrated in information and communication technologies, are a significant source of innovation, often producing goods in niche markets in a highly flexible and customized manner” (Raynard, P. &Forstater, M. UNIDO Vienna, 2002)



METHODOLOGY

Survey research design collected the data from SMSEs in Damaturu, potiskum and Gashua town of Yobe State. The population of the study consists of the SMSEs owners, communities within the business environment, and SMSEs employees. Data collected was analyzed used statistical package for social science (SPSS) and partial least square equation model (PLS-SEM).

RESULT

The result of the study divulge on the effectiveness of strategies employed in the administration of SR on SMSEs stakeholders and of course the impact that may be derive by SMSEs in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe State Nigeria. The outcome of study help identified the challenging factors affecting the implementation of SR by SMSEs and understanding the financial improvement on SMSE's that participated in SR within the domain (zones).

Discussion

Åsa Helg viewed that “more and more organizations are beginning to see the benefits from setting up strategic SR agenda. The SR movement is spreading over the world and in recent years a large number of methods and frameworks have been developed” (Åsa, 2007, Muhammad, 2010).

Nigerian Bureau of Statistics declared that in Nigeria, “Small firms and their practices play a significant role in the economy and society which constitute approximately 95 per cent of commercial organizations” (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Large Percentage of Nigerian business people operate at the small-scale level as most of the industries in Nigeria are comatose. “A study, done by the Federal Office of Statistics shows that “97% of all businesses in Nigeria employ less than 100 employees, implying that 97% of all businesses in Nigeria are, to use the umbrella term, "small businesses". The SMSE sector provides, on average, 50% of Nigeria's employment, and 50% of its industrial output. Indeed, there appears to be an agreement that the development of SMSE in Nigeria is a step towards building a vibrant and diversified economy (Mahmoud, 2005, Nwankwo, Ewuim, & Asoya, 2012, &OECD, 2015)

Implication to research and practice:

The study demonstrated an initiative for those in practice and researchers in those field (SMSEs and Entrepreneurship) to realize that these sectors need more innovation in terms of what may be called value addition. As indicated the cooption of SR activities by those sectors proofed viable, nothing that in findings those that engaged and participated in the act SR had kept their business lively and more customer were derived which led their survival far better than those whom doesn't participate.

Therefore, researchers and practitioners should give effort in innovating more variables in such a sector which may enhance their survival.



CONCLUSION

Organized small and micro scale enterprises sectors in Yobe State, Nigeria, lacks knowledge on benefit and importance of SR. These gaps manifested a lot of failure in their business operation, couple with a situation where most or all business in the domain were micro with few small-scale industries. The study has shown sufficiently the existence of SR and clearly indicated its benefit towards uplifting the business sector survival, not only SMSEs and Entrepreneurship but all other sectors of business across the globe. This situation has been of great concern to the government, citizenry, operators, practitioners and the organized private groups” (Agwu&Emite 2014, European Commission, 2021).

Relevance of SMSE in the state of economy induced this study to build in avenue that may assist in keeping the sector (SMSE) to survive (Eua-anant, Ayuwat, &Promphakping, 2011). Others of this view are (Martinez & Kang 2013., Tundui&Tundui 2012). This study realizes that some of those causes that led to its failure may be among other causes below:

- Lack of commitment of SMSE’s in the domain toward adopting SR
- Lack knowledge of benefit that SR established in business
- Little or no research ever conducted on SR specifically on micro and small-scale business.
- “Very little research has directly examined social responsibility (SR) from outlook of small and micro scale business (Sandberg, 2011).

In conclusion, the study brought tis sectors to edge of concern, so that owners realizes those benefit which adoption of SR activities pour on their business survival.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper dual on the investigation of social responsibility awareness and adoption by SMSEs and Entrepreneurs, however, future research should also look into the sectors concern to find out deeply the issue of communication challenges. Communication in business sector are vital however, in a SMSEs and entrepreneurship sector, most owners fall short in their communication process both with internal and external factors. Finding its effect toward their survival would be very most crucial.



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