

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT:

The concept 'Corporate Philanthropy' has its origin way back to ages in almost every civilization. It was mostly economical in nature and was voluntary. But the modern word 'Corporate Social Responsibility' is the social, ethical and environmental responsibility of the business in the way of paying back to the society. The concept has vivid dimensions in the outlook of the authors and researchers. In spite of broad perspectives of Scholars like Carroll, Frederick, Friedman, Elkington and so on, research is still going in defining the concept. Some of them supported the 'Social' dimension and some others argued that the key objective of business is 'Economical' i.e to protect the interests of the shareholders. This paper is an attempt to consolidate the reviews of various scholars under vivid heads, taking the secondary data.

Key words: Corporate social responsibility, Social, Ethical, Environmental, stakeholders, shareholders, dimensions of CSR

Introduction:

The industrial revolution of the 18th century had ushered in the remarkable growth of industries as well as increase of production. The science and technology is always exploring new methods to increase production to meet the growing global demand. In addition to these developments, the LPG (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization) reforms in the late 20th century opened doors to the companies to move freely throughout the world for production as well as marketing. The globalization made the world a small village and with the revolution in communication technology the distance among the nations was further lessened. This led to the intensification of global companies whose attention is on large scale production utilizing the natural and human resources in large quantity. These changes burdened the natural and human resources, which led to environmental pollution, dislocation of people by the industries, violation of human rights etc. that resulted in the emergence of the concept "corporate social responsibility" (CSR), the responsibility of the business and industry towards the community, nature and employees.

Many efforts have been made for decades by the authors to bring a complete definition of CSR, yet there is ambiguity on this. None of the definitions actually defines the social responsibility of business, but rather describes CSR as a phenomenon. This confusion is not pertaining to its definition, but to the constituents of CSR¹. These constituents or dimensions made the concept unclear as to which dimension is more significant. In this chapter it is attempted to clear the haze by analyzing some existing definitions in the field of Corporate Social responsibility, which coordinate with the present study.

I. Objectives of the Study:

- To study the definitions of various authors
- To analyse the dimensions of the scholars on CSR
- To consolidate the overview of the researchers on CSR

II. Methodology of the Study:

Data: This study is based on purely secondary data. The Books and Research articles of vivid authors have been taken for review. Hence this is purely descriptive study.

III. The Description:

There are number of definitions of CSR from various points of view. As quoted by Shohreh Saboji (2011, p.17) ² it is as an ambiguous (Fischer, 2004), subjective (Frederick, 1986), unclear (McWilliams, 2001), amorphous (Margolis and Walsh, 2001), highly intangible (Cramer *et al.*, 2004), fuzzy (McGuire, 1963) concept with unclear boundaries and debatable legitimacy (Lantos, 2001). Hence, in this paper, related studies and surveys that give a comprehensive meaning of CSR are mentioned to offer a wider outlook of the concept.

For this paper, the relevant studies have been categorized under the following heads:

- Studies related to the Social definition and dimensions of CSR
- Studies related to the Environmental definition and dimensions of CSR
- Studies related to the Economical definition and dimensions of CSR
- Studies related to the implications of CSR
- Empirical Studies related to perceptions of CSR.

1. Studies related to Social Dimension of CSR:

Bowen was the first man to use the word ‘Social Responsibility of businesses. He, in his book ‘Social Responsibility of Businessman’ opined that ‘CSR refers to the obligations of business to pursue those policies, to make those decisions or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society.’ Bowen felt that the business must go with the desires and objectives of the society as it is the part of it³.

This view was supported by **Frederick**. He says that the age old traditions and objectives of business are outdated and we should follow new standards. Frederick (1960) in his article says that “the values that determined business responsibility in the past are gone. Somehow, we must set up a new standard by which businessmen can evaluate their obligations to their company and to society. Social responsibility in the final analysis implies a public posture towards society’s economic and human resources and a willingness to see that those resources are used for broad social ends and not simply for the narrowly circumscribed interests of private persons and firms.” He opined that distributing profits only to the shareholders is a narrow concept and the aim of business is not to serve the narrow interests of some persons or firms but to the society as a whole⁴.

Some proponents of CSR argue that at least some part of the business benefits should reach the community. **Davis** (1960) describes “CSR as ‘businessmen’s decisions and actions taken for reasons at least partly beyond the firm’s direct economic or technical interest.”⁵ All these views support that business should not only concentrate on the shareholders interests, but also the community’s. In its normal course of activities every firm aims at economic aspects besides the legal obligations.

McGuire (1963) adds social obligation to this. He says, “The idea of social responsibility supposes that the company has not only economic and legal obligations but also some social obligations towards society which extend beyond these obligations.”⁶

Some scholars explained the need for business to have social responsibility. **Eells and Walton** (1967) stated that ‘CSR refers to the problems that arise when corporate enterprise casts its shadow on the social scene, and the ethical principles that ought to govern the relationship between the corporation and society’.⁷ They opined that as the effects of business, often, throw negative shades on the society, business organization should take the responsibility of compensating that loss by benefitting the community with its developmental activities.

In this process firms should not neglect the economic interests of the organisation, but should maintain a balance. **Andrews (1973)** made an effort to define in his book CSR as ‘a balance between voluntary restraint of profit maximization, sensitivity to the social costs of economic activity and to the feasibility of focusing the corporate power on the objectives that are economically less attractive but socially desirable.’⁸

From this discussion it is revealed that businesses should co-ordinate its economical as well as social responsibility within the legal framework. But in **1979 Carroll** took a turn in defining CSR by adding ethical and discretionary expectations. In his opinion ethical responsibility goes beyond the

law. It means when society needs, sometimes, the firms should cross the legal limits. He says that 'the social responsibility of a business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time.' The discretionary expectations imply the freedom of choice of the firm according to the stakeholders' needs⁹.

Carroll's opinion was emphasized by **Jones (1980)** in his work 'Corporate Social Responsibility Revisited Redefined.' He stated "Corporate social responsibility is the notion that corporations have an obligation to constituent groups in society other than stockholders and beyond that prescribed by law and union contract."¹⁰ Hence it can be concluded that CSR is a link between business and society beyond the legal obligations as the business has the liability to pay back to the society where it operates. It is in the words of **Woodward-Clyde, 1999** that CSR has been defined "as a 'contract' between society and business wherein a community grants a company a license to operate and in return the matter meets certain obligations and behaves in an acceptable manner."¹¹

EU Green paper on CSR (2001) elucidates that 'corporate social responsibility extends beyond the doors of the company into the local community and involves a wide range of stakeholders in addition to employees and shareholders: business partners and suppliers, customers, public authorities and NGOs representing local communities, as well as the environment.' EU has extended the scope of CSR to external stakeholders, who have interest in the firm indirectly. As business is not exclusive but inclusive part of the society, the motive of CSR is to make the business contribute to the development of the society¹².

Chhouhad et al. (2007) in their book '*Corporate Social And Environmental Responsibility in India: Assessing the UN Global Compact's Role*', state that 'The concept of corporate social responsibility is based on the idea that not only public policy but companies too should take responsibility for social issues. In the recent studies it is viewed as a concept of the companies bringing together social and environmental concerns in their activities voluntarily. In their opinion, CSR must be voluntary not forced¹².

National Voluntary Guidelines, 2009 clearly stressed this notion 'voluntary' explaining that "CSR is not philanthropy and CSR activities are purely voluntary- what companies will like to do beyond any statutory requirement or obligation."¹⁴

Mallin(2001) is also supporter of this view. In the Glossary of his article, 'Corporate Governance and the Bottom Line' he says "the voluntary actions that a company may take in relation to the management of social, environmental and ethical issues are called Corporate Social Responsibility practices of the organization". Besides supporting voluntary nature of CSR, Mallin used the word 'ethical'. He means that the firm, in performing its business activities, must not neglect the ethics¹⁵.

It is proved in many studies that the ethical behavior of the firm improves its corporate image. **Jackson and Hawker, 2001** accepted this notion saying that 'Corporate social responsibility is how firm treats its employees and all its stakeholders and the environment.'¹⁶

2. Studies related to Economic Dimension of CSR (views against CSR):

Though many authors emphasized the need of CSR, some scholars argued that the prime responsibility of the business is economical not social. They stated that the liability of the firm lies only in protecting the economic interests of the shareholders. They also stressed that no business exists without profits. Friedman was the stalwart among them. **Friedman(1962)** in his book 'Capitalism and Freedom' says that "there is one, and only one, social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game which is to say, engage in open and free competition without deception or fraud."¹⁷

In his opinion business should concentrate only on profits, as the shareholders invested funds to increase their economic value, but these profits should be earned legitimately. **Friedman (1970)** slightly changed his view later, but did not go in favour of CSR. He argued in his article,

“Economic institutions are established to meet the material needs of human beings. In that process the institutions should adopt certain moral values, if they are to be viable.”¹⁸

Supporting his views on CSR **Hetherington** stated that “there is no reason to think that shareholders are willing to tolerate an amount of corporate non-profit activity which appreciably reduces either dividends or the market performance of the stock”. In Hetherington’s opinion shareholders don’t encourage or support to spend their funds on community activities. Hence, the managers don’t show interest in CSR activities¹⁹. As **Heath and Norman** opines ‘managers committed to strong CSR programs may fail to maximize profits and could thus risk losing their jobs if investors see an opportunity to make more money by scrapping CSR-related initiatives.’²⁰

Some authors argue that the responsibility of business is not to work for the economic progress of the country instead to earn profits for the organisation. They feel that earning profit itself is fulfilling the social responsibility as the profits earned are distributed among the shareholders, who make a part of it.

Arrow (1973) in his work says that “Firms ‘ought to’ maximize profit according to their social obligation since business profit represents the net contribution that the firm makes to the social good.

On this basis, profit should be as large as possible and only be limited by law and ethical codes.”²¹

This opinion was supported by **Henderson (2005)**, who says “economic progress does not depend on a commitment by business to bring it about, nor does it result from their good intentions or a sincere wish on their part to benefit people. It means, it results from innovative profit oriented activity within the framework of competitive market economy.”²²

3. Studies related to environmental dimension of CSR:

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) and the Kyoto Protocol on environment of 1990s made the world think about the planet seriously. Further, the TBL (Triple Bottom Line) concept proposed by John Elkington in 1998 gave a new direction to the concept of CSR.

Elkington in his definition used the terms ‘economical, social and environmental’ (Profit, People and Planet). Most of the contemporary scholars of this decade included the term ‘environmental responsibility’ of business in their definitions of CSR. One among them is **Frederick et al.** who defined corporate social responsibility “as a principle stating that corporations should be accountable for the effects of any of their actions on their community and environment.”

According to them CSR is the accountability of the business for the negative effects of their activities on community and environment.²³ **Rajesh Chhabara (2000)** states that ‘being socially responsible means not only fulfilling legal expectations but also going beyond compliance and investing “more” into human capital, the environment and the relations with stakeholders. The experience with investment in environmentally responsible technologies and business practice suggests that going beyond legal compliance can contribute to a company’s competitiveness.’²⁴

After the inclusion of the environmental aspect, CSR got tremendous recognition and many international organisations, committees tried to define it in their own perspective. **The Commission of the European Communities, 2001** also said that CSR is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.”²⁵ Thus, the responsibility of the business is to see that its activities would not harm the community. **Nalini Krishnan, 2012** in her research paper explains that “CSR was associated with voluntary and philanthropic activities undertaken by business firms in order to eradicate social ills. CSR is now increasingly seen as achieving commercial success in a way that honours ethical values and respect people, communities and the natural environment.”²⁶ This implies that business organization should minimize its negative impact on society and environment.

Guidelines of **DPE on CSR, 2010**, also stated that Corporate Social Responsibility is a company's commitment to operate in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner while

recognizing the interests of its stakeholders. This commitment is beyond statutory requirements. “Corporate Social Responsibility is, therefore, closely linked with the practice of *Sustainable Development*. Corporate Social Responsibility extends beyond philanthropic activities and reaches out to the integration of social and business goals. These activities need to be seen as those which would, in the long term, help secure a sustainable competitive advantage.”²⁷

4. Studies related to a comprehensive outlook of CSR:

The stance of the scholars on CSR was further broadened after 2010. As a lot of debate has been done in this area, scholars started defining CSR in a broader way. They looked this concept from the sustainability point of view. Hence the approaches were more refined.

Beal, B. D. (2013) in his book ‘*CSR-Definitions, Core Issues and Recent Developments*’ opines that ‘CSR is not about pressuring firms into engaging in philanthropy or obligating them to shoulder additional responsibility for different social problems. Considered broadly CSR is about establishing and perpetuating social norms that make economic markets more transparent and effective in serving social interests.’ Beal gave a new approach to CSR by broadening its scope as he said that CSR sets and maintains social standards that lead to transparency in markets²⁸.

In its new Communication, the **European Commission** also expanded the range of CSR. It has put forward a simpler definition of CSR as “the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society and outlines what an enterprise should do to meet that responsibility.” It elucidates that the firm should leave its impression on society and CSR is the way to make that impression²⁹. Hence the modern definitions of CSR are broad viewed having long-term vision and demand the firm to create some impact on society. UNGC Guide to Corporate Sustainability (2015), defines “Corporate Sustainability is a company’s delivery of long-term value in financial, environmental, social and ethical terms.”³⁰

Bhaduri and others (2016) in their book ‘*Corporate Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility of Indian Companies*’ stated that CSR can be understood from three words. The Phrase contains ‘Corporate’ which covers the large spectrum of businesses, the word ‘Social’ refers to the local community with which they interact and finally by incorporating, ‘Responsibilities’ that are intrinsic on both sides of these relationships. Hence CSR is nothing but Corporate in its widest sense and on many levels, to include all stakeholders and constituent groups that maintain an ongoing interest in the organization’s operations along with the society within which it operates.”³¹

Since corporate sustainability is the result of a demand made by Kofi Annan for companies to contribute to sustainable development through the Global Compact, and later with the Millennium Goals, and finally, the Sustainable Development Goals, we understand that the integration of different concepts must follow the tripod of sustainable development (planet, people, and profit), which was translated by Elkington.³²

Wang C.et.al (2021) builds a hierarchical structure to approach the impact of corporate sustainability performance. We classify important factors into causes or effects and further identify those factors which are critical to improving the performance of Indonesia’s cement industry. Although corporate sustainability performance is a crucial topic in today’s business environment, sustainability strategies remain underrated in Indonesia. They confirm the validity of 19 factors within the following dimensions: environmental impact, social sustainability, economic gain, technological feasibility, and institutional compliance. The sub-dimensions of community interest, risk-taking ability, and regulatory compliance were identified as causes of perceived risks and benefits. In contrast, the following factors were identified as critical to improving corporate sustainability performance: renewable energy resources, contributions to charity, the perception of management regarding technology as a differentiator, and firm readiness to collaborate with high-tech companies³³.

5. Studies related to the implications of CSR:

Many researchers found that business receives external benefits in implementing CSR. CSR is linked

to favourable corporate evolutions like increased purchase behavior³⁴, higher customer satisfaction and enhanced market value³⁵. The supporters of CSR propound a view that CSR is useful to the society by inculcating higher levels of social and environmental performance than those required by law. **Hamann (2003)** explains that poor community relations can cause costly delays in a business' operations.³⁶ This view makes a sense that without the co-operation of society business cannot succeed. CSR is helpful to the state in implementation of laws so that it leads to good governance. **Blowfield & Frynas (2005)** argue that when the law is weak, CSR will be a useful step on the way to better National legislation in countries that failed to implement their laws³⁷.

Voluntary initiatives by the business also help the country's legal charter as **Sayer (2005)** states 'Voluntary codes are the immediate way of reducing harm to ecology and the suffering caused by the negative social impact of business.' He continues that "Companies are programmable machines, and we the people, through our moral principles, expectations, demands, and laws, must write the programme"³⁸ Hence the society has to tune the organisations according to their needs.

CSR, in the long run shows its advantages to the firms in the form of increased brand image and reducing risks. **Hopkins, M. (2004)** argues that CSR can help companies manage risk and improve their reputation and public image by strengthening the ties between companies and the communities in which they operate.³⁹ **Leonidas and others** tried to explore the perceptions of Greek managers' towards CSR and their attitudes towards the institutionalization of CSR. Their findings indicate that Greek Managers believe CSR activities provide many benefits to the organisation. They believe that CSR offers competitive advantage and value addition to the companies and also feel that CSR initiatives provide chances for better partnerships and alliances with public sector⁴⁰.

Many studies revealed that CSR reduces the costs and improves financial performance and productivity of the company. In the survey organized by **Loureiro et. al. (2012)**, they studied CSR of three car manufacturers in terms of employee practices, community relations and environmental care recording the responses from 329 Portuguese car buyers and users.

It was found that the consumers valued environmental performance much more than labour practices and community relations. It was concluded in this study that in the automobile industry CSR not only contributes to better financial performance, reducing costs and increasing productivity but increases consumer satisfaction.⁴¹

It was also proved from many surveys that the employee satisfaction and morale are positively correlated with CSR practices of the firm. This increases their commitment towards the organization, consequently increases its performance and lessens the employee turnover. A committed employee is an asset to the organization. In a survey conducted by **Stawiski and others** on "Employee perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility", they found that the employee commitment and corporate image are inversely related. Knowledge of the good deeds and practices of their organisation makes the employees discuss the company with outsiders, and instills in them better committed to their organisation.⁴²

Sims & Keon (1997) elucidated that an ethical work climate leads to more trust and stronger attachment to the company on the part of the employees. They also mentioned that there is a positive relationship between ethical climate of a company and job satisfaction of its employee.⁴³

Riordan et.al.(1997), in their study, found that a good CSR reputation may indirectly contribute to job satisfaction among the employees that leads to lower employee turnover by bringing up positive response from their family and friends⁴⁴. **Greening & Turban(2000)** in their study proved that individuals with strong values and higher concern for environment are more attracted to the firms with positive environmental records where as individuals with lower environmental concern and care find no difference between the firms that have better environmental record or low environmental record. Hence it can be concluded that environmental responsibility of a firm attracts better employees who care for environment⁴⁵.

Brammer et.al.(2007) in his survey analysed the perceptions of 4,712 employees of a financial services company. In this survey he examined the impact of three perceptions of socially responsible behaviour on organizational commitment. He found that the external CSR is positively related to

organisational commitment and that the contribution of CSR to organizational commitment is as great as job satisfaction⁴⁶. In this survey **Valentine & Fleischman (2008)** studied the responses of 313 business professionals and found that CSR either fully or partially reconciles the positive association between ethics and individual job satisfaction. This study also suggested that firms can manage employees' ethical perceptions and work cultures with multiple policies⁴⁷.

6. Empirical Studies related to perceptions of CSR

Rupp and others (2006) conducted a survey to know employee perceptions on CSR and found that employees' perceptions of CSR have impact on their emotions, attitudes and behaviours as well as organisation's social accounts⁴⁸.

In their survey report, **Stawiski et.al. (2010)** explained that CSR makes a unique contribution to the firm, though it is a small contribution. They suggested the organisations to communicate about the CSR investment and their positive tangible outcomes to the employees so that it makes them more curious to discuss their company with outsiders.⁴⁹ **Guchait et.al. (2011)** investigated the influence of customer perceptions of CSR on loyalty, trust and commitment and behavioral intentions in hospital industry. This study proved that customers' favorable or unfavorable perception of CSR activities affects quality-driven customer services⁵⁰.

Lee Wang et.al.(2013) investigated multiple stakeholder perceptions in the Chinese forest industry. This study finds that the stakeholder theory is a useful tool for collecting and evaluating CSR data and it is also found that the industry performs better in its economic responsibility than its environmental and social responsibilities. It was also observed that values have a significant effect on the stakeholder perception of CSR performance⁵¹.

Yadav and others (2016) in their study on 'Customer's Perception towards CSR-A Case Study of Reliance Life Insurance' found that there is a significant increase in business performance and positive customer perception towards CSR activities. Consumers are positively looking forward to deal with firms that are actively involved in CSR⁵².

Glavas (2016) conducted a study to explore the relation between CSR and employee engagement. He tried to address the problems of low levels of employee engagement in the workplace. This study proved that authenticity mediates the relationship between CSR and employee engagement positively and significantly. The other mediator tested, revealed that perceived organisational support doesn't mediate the relationship significantly.⁵³

Prutina, Z., & Sehic, D.(2016) in their research article explored that the employees perceive their company as socially responsible, but also that there are variations in perceptions depending on stakeholder group and the study also pointed out the importance of the national business system and culture in CSR evaluation.⁵⁴

Shin, I., Hur, W. M., & Kang, S. (2016) in their research article examined the relationship between perceived CSR, organizational identification, job satisfaction, and job performance, and then develops by conducting a survey of 250 employees at hotels in South Korea. It was found that perceived CSR is indirectly and positively related with job performance and job satisfaction.⁵⁵

IV. Conclusion:

The G-20 took a small step in the right direction, by placing new emphasis on increased infrastructure investment as a shared responsibility of both the public and private sectors. We need much more of this kind of thinking in the year ahead, as governments negotiate new global agreements on financing for sustainable development (in Addis Ababa in July 2015); Sustainable Development Goals (at the United Nations in September 2015), and climate change (in Paris in December 2015).

The Indian Government also took a historical step on this area making the expenditure on CSR mandatory to the organizations with networth of rupees five hundred crore or more, or turnover of rupees one thousand crore or more or a net profit of rupees five crore or more to appoint a CSR Committee of at least 3 directors (one independent director) and spend in every financial year at least

2% of the average profits of the company made during the three immediately preceding financial years. This act made a list of activities that the firms can undertake, leaving the choice of activities to their discretion⁵⁶.

The objective of this paper is to discuss the views of various authors on the concept Corporate Social Responsibility. This paper is an attempt to offer a broad outlook of the concept by detailed description of the dimensions. This will be useful to future researches for having an analytical stance, to the state bodies in the enactment of laws and to corporate in implementation of their CSR policies.

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