

Factors Influencing the Corporate Social Responsibility of MSMEs in Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises play a vital role in driving the Nigerian economy, as they account for 96% of businesses and 84% of job creation. This study examines the corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in the Jos metropolis, focusing on four variables: information on corporate responsibility, attitudes towards business ethics, firm reputation, and economic responsibility. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the relationship between these variables and the CSR of microbusinesses in the study area. The study findings indicate a significant positive effect of these variables on the CSR practices of microbusinesses. Therefore, the study recommends increasing awareness and integrating these determinants into the strategic planning of microbusinesses to have a positive impact on their CSR practices. This research provides insights into the factors that can enhance microenterprise engagement in CSR activities not only in the Jos metropolis but also beyond. In the same vein, the study's supports the assertion that businesses should prioritise the interests of all stakeholders, including the community, and engage in activities that will promote mutual benefits, which is consistent with both stakeholder theory and social exchange theory.

Keywords: Information on Corporate Responsibility (ICR), Attitude to Business Ethics (ABE), Firm Reputation (FR), Economic Responsibility (ER), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs)

Introduction

Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises are playing an increasingly important role in promoting corporate social responsibility (CSR) worldwide (IFC & UNDP, 2021). The survival and sustainability of these enterprises depend to a large extent on their social contribution and development efforts for all stakeholders (Zhu et al., 2021). According to a report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2022), MSMEs play a crucial role in promoting social responsibility, particularly in developing countries where they are often the primary employers and sources of livelihoods for communities. Therefore, the nature of their social obligations defines their prestige, trust, and image projections (Bikefe et al., 2020). The activities of managers of corporate social responsibility have received significant attention from academia and are being included in commercial enterprise agendas in both

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developed and emerging economies (Crawford & Scaletta, 2005; Knox, Maklan, & French, 2005; Vo, 2021). Although, CSR is used as a tool for advertising and marketing social issues in the light of obtaining appraisals from all stakeholders, recent literature suggests that it is becoming increasingly common in advancing moral and environmentally friendly business practices (Han, & Yun, 2020; Xu, et al., 2021; Pavlyshyn, 2021).

CSR involves balancing the demands of stakeholders, finding solutions to social and societal problems, addressing employee welfare, bridging profit gaps, and addressing monetary and environmental issues. While CSR was initially used to attribute activities to larger companies, it is less well-known in small businesses (Ma, 2012). Micro- and small-medium enterprises (MSMEs) have received little attention and are rarely seen as avenues where CSR ideas can be scaled down or examined (Jenkins, 2006; Morsing & Perrini, 2009; Tilley, 2002; Yáñez-Araque et al., 2021). However, this does not imply that MSMEs are not attempting to be socially responsible. Small businesses appear to label social responsibility differently or are simply unaware that they have begun CSR (Bikefe et al., 2020; Jenkins, 2004). The arguments surrounding MSMEs suggest that they are far from utilizing CSR theories and reflecting significantly on the contributions to distinct stakeholders in the enterprises (Davies & Crane, 2010). Nonetheless, MSMEs' contributions to CSR have gained paramount attention in educational research due to the substantial contributions of MSMEs to developing economies globally (Castka et al., 2004; Spence & Rutherford, 2003; Yonla et al., 2021). Over 90% of businesses globally are MSMEs, and Nigeria's economy relies heavily on MSMEs (Marina et al., 2020). MSMEs are critical to the development of Nigeria's economy, particularly the industrial sector. They contribute immensely to employment generation, technological advancement, and the economy's diversification (Adebusuyi, 1997; PWC, 2020). MSMEs represent 90% of the manufacturing industries in Nigeria, contributing a higher percentage to GDP (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2020; Yonla et al., 2021).

The policy direction of corporate social responsibility has led to changes in social expectations, with an emphasis on inclusive growth, social equity, and affirmative action. As a result, businesses are facing increasing pressure to demonstrate engagement in activities related to CSR. Unfortunately, the focus of CSR initiatives has mainly been on large and multinational companies, and the conventional literature on business behavior has underestimated the impact of micro- and small-medium enterprises on society. This is because micro-businesses lack information about CSR activities, and their focus is primarily on internal factors such as profits and growth rather than stakeholder benefits, which are key to business growth (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). One of the major concerns facing modern micro-businesses is how to achieve growth in profit, innovation, and geographical expansion while taking on additional responsibilities and pressures associated with CSR (Mackey & Tyson, 2007). Therefore, business growth cannot be achieved solely through profit maximisation but also through responsible behaviour and market orientation. Social progress is a necessity for sustainable growth to be realised.

After conducting a thorough literature review on the subject matter, it is evident that corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been extensively researched by scholars worldwide. The existing research on CSR has approached the subject from various angles, using either one or two variables to study it. In contrast, this study employs four variables, namely: information on

social responsibility, attitude towards business ethics, firm reputation, and economic responsibility, to investigate CSR. The purpose of this research is to look into the level of knowledge, attitude, reputation and economic responsibility practices of Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in Jos metropolis regarding corporate social responsibility activities, specifically in terms of information needs, attitudes toward business ethics, reputation, and economic responsibility. In addition, previous researchers have adopted different theories to examine CSR, including stakeholder theory, institutional theory, and shareholder value theory. For this study, we adopt stakeholder theory as the underpinning theory and social exchange theory as the supportive theory to support both the dependent and independent variables. It is also noteworthy that prior research has explored CSR in diverse contexts across the globe. However, this study narrows its focus to micro, and small-medium-scale enterprises within Jos's metropolis.

Based on the research objectives and research need, the gap being addressed in this study is the level of information needs, attitudes toward business ethics, reputation, and economic responsibility of micro and small-medium enterprises (MSMEs) in relation to corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Specifically, the study aims to investigate the following;

- Whether MSMEs have the necessary information they need about CSR activities (H₁)
- Whether MSMEs' attitudes toward business ethics are positively correlated with their participation in CSR activities (H₂);
- Whether there is a significant relationship between firm reputation and CSR activities of MSMEs in Jos metropolis (H₃); and
- Whether there is a significant relationship between economic responsibility and the CSR activities of MSMEs (H₄).

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

This study is guided by two theories to understand the association and relationship between the study variables and CSR. The stakeholder theory, which is the underpinning theory that explains corporate social responsibilities, as well as a supporting theory that explains one of the study's independent variables, and the social exchange theory. The stakeholder's theory of CSR is used as a basis to analyses those groups to whom the firm should be responsible.

Stakeholder theory: The concept of CSR and stakeholders' theory holds the views that business entities must consider all stakeholders' interests in addition to shareholders (Freeman, 2017). Concerning CSR, MSMEs must consider how their actions may affect the stakeholders, such as their employee, clients, suppliers, and the community's interest where the business is operating. Freeman, (1984), documented that business have the responsibility to take into account the interests of all parties involved, not just shareholders. Stakeholders in this context, refer to those who means a lot to the organization's decisions, these include its workers, clients, suppliers, immediate communities, and individuals that helps in the progress of the organization. Similarly, stakeholder theory unravelled momentous role in attaining the organization's goals and objectives set (Rodríguez-fernández et al., 2023). Consequently, the principles of businesses should support their interactions with investors in a way that profit will be maximise for all parties (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Orlitzky, Schmidt, and Rynes (2003) applied Stakeholder theory to the context of CSR in their studied. A study of meta-analysis of

84 respondents, conducted research to evaluate the connection between corporate social performance and financial performance and found out that businesses that pay attention to CSR scores perform better financially over the long term. Stakeholder theory unravelled a helpful framework for the understanding of how businesses are responsible in terms of corporate social responsibility that may mean a lot to businesses and their investors. Van Bommel and Spicer (2019) conducted a study that established the relationship between CSR and investors participation using the stakeholder theory. A Dutch energy company conducted a case study and found that, stakeholder engagement was a crucial responsibility in the success of every business's CSR initiative. The scholar note observed that stakeholder theory can help firms do the needful to their business owners, which can ultimately lead to more better practices of CSR.

The Social Exchange Theory (SET). The SET was built on the assumption of mutuality and exchange foundation (Memon & Ghani, 2020). The main principal of SET focuses on commitment, loyalty, and trust as the core relationships (Ahmad et al., 2023). Similarly, it also describes how individuals interact to make choices depending on their perception to costs and benefits of their actions. It may be seen from the angel of sociological and social psychological perspective. According to social exchange theory, people interact with one another simply because, the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. More so, social exchange theory to so many enterprises can be used to explain why firms choose to participate in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities to their communities as part of their business operations. From the standpoint of social exchange, businesses take part in CSR activities because doing so will place the business more at advantage. Such advantage can help to experience a rise in client loyalty, a boost to firm's reputation, and improvement in employee motivation and happiness at work (Turker, 2009). As established by research, companies who participate in CSR initiatives regularly get positive feedback from their investors. In consonant to a study by Turker (2009), corporations that are involved in CSR initiatives have a difficult reputation with both customers and staff. In a similar vein, Sen and Bhattacharya's (2001) survey discovered that companies that are involved in CSR initiatives are likely to keep their patrons and staff working. The benefits and drawbacks of CSR projects, as well as the factors that influence corporate participation, can all be better understood using the social exchange theory.

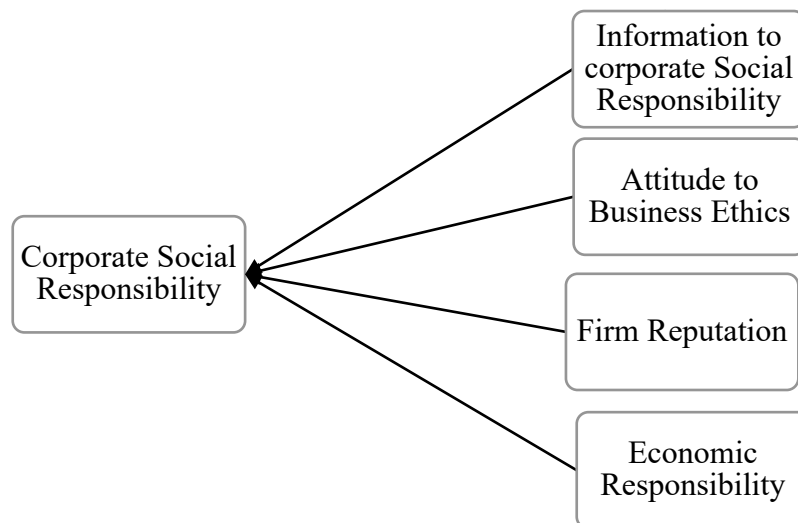


Figure 1: Conceptual Review

Source: Authors

CSR, including the effects it has on different businesses and how it relates to firms' performance. A study conducted by Hsiao et al. (2020) looked at how corporate social responsibility affects consumer loyalty and discovered that it has a favourable impact. A strong commitment to social responsibility is favourably correlated with financial performance, according to research by Ghoul et al. (2021) on the topic of corporate social responsibility and financial performance. The notion of corporate responsibility information has been studied by several academics as corporate social responsibility has grown in importance in recent years (Khan et al., 2022; Lozano et al., 2022). The information has a strong beneficial impact on consumers' behavioural intentions, according to research on the impact of corporate social responsibility information on consumers. (Krambia-Kapardis & Zopiatis 2021). Studies conducted by, Bremmers et al., (2019) examined the role of corporate social responsibility information in the context of corporate reputation and found that it plays a significant role in shaping stakeholders' perceptions of a company's status.

The relationship between a individual's attitude to business ethics practices and other outcomes, like organizational commitment and job satisfaction, has recently been given attention by different scholars in literature. It is a fact that positive attitude toward the practice of corporate ethics is linked to greater levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, according to research conducted by Thibault and Gagné (2021). Consequently, Kalshoven et al. (2016) established relationship between corporate ethics attitudes and wrong behaviours to business activities. The results unravelled that an ethical mindset has close association to less unethical behaviours. (2022). Numerous literatures established the value of company reputation and how it affects a number of outcomes in different businesses. As in the case of Wang and Wang (2021) company's reputation affected customer loyalty in the setting of online platforms and discovered a favourable relationship between the two. Subsequently, Yang et al. (2021) documented the relationship between firm reputation and employee turnover intention and found that a good reputation is associated with lower levels of intention to leave. According to Döring et al., (2021), there is a close correlation between economic responsibility and environmental performance that is favourable. When O'Rourke and Connolly (2020) looked at how economic responsibility influenced corporate social responsibility practices, they discovered a strong correlation between the two. Social Responsibilities of Corporations CSR creativities can help MSMEs build solid connections with their local communities, improve their reputation, draw in clients that value social and environmental responsibility, and support sustainability and long-term financial performance. Similarly, Przybylska and Dzianuch (2020), Polish SMEs' financial performance was positively impacted by CSR procedures.

Research Methodology

Research Design, Population, Sample, Method of Data Analysis

The research employed a descriptive and cross-sectional research design to study the CSR of microbusinesses in Jos. The study population comprised 250 male and female business owners engaged in various Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises activities in the Jos metropolis of Plateau State, Nigeria. The sample was selected using a stratified random sampling technique, with 250 respondents selected according to the stratum. The data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire, and the study variables included information on

corporate responsibility, attitudes toward business ethics, firm reputation, and economic responsibility. The collected data described specific characteristics of the study variables and allowed for relationships or association among the variables to be identified (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005). Descriptive data presentation was employed to present demographic variables, including age, gender, educational level, business type, years of experience, and annual turnover. Correlation analysis was used to establish associations among study variables, and hierarchical regression analysis was performed to accept or reject the hypotheses stated. Table 1 shows the demographic features of the respondents' economic activity.

Table 1: Distribution of Population

Category	Population
Restaurants	10
Welding and Fabricating	45
Furniture making	5
Tailoring/Fashion Design	20
Barbing/Hairdressing Saloon	70
General Trading	100
Total	250

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 reveal that the majority of respondents were involved in general trading, followed by barbering/hairdressing saloons, welding and fabricating, restaurants, tailoring/fashion design, and furniture making. This indicates that the data was collected from individuals who have experience with various microbusiness activities and possess a good understanding of the study variables and concepts.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis Results

Study Variables	Mean	Std	1	2	3	4	5
Information to CSR (1)	.057	.755	1				
Attitude to Bus. Eth (2)	.000	.846	.258***	1			
Firms Reputation (3)	.094	.712	.329***	.415***	1		
Economic Res (4)	.099	.685	.253***	.349***	.426***	1	
CSR (5)	.057	.787	.440***	.319***	.320***	.236***	1

*Significant at 10%; *Significant at 5%; **Significant at 1%****

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 above shows that information on social responsibility significantly correlated with corporate social responsibility ($r=0.440$, $p\leq 0.01$). A firm's reputation positively correlates with the corporate social responsibility of micro and small-medium scale enterprises in Jos's metropolis ($r=0.320$, $p\leq 0.01$). More so, attitude to business ethics is also associated with the corporate social responsibility of micro and small-medium scale enterprises in Jos's metropolis ($r = 0.319$, $p\leq 0.01$).

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
					F Change	df1	df2		
1	.506 ^a	.256	.6860	.256	16.786	5	244	.000	1.811

a. Predictors: (Constant), economy responsibility, attitude to business ethics, firm reputation, Information to corporate responsibility.

b. Dependent Variable: Corporate social responsibility

The analysis of the hierarchical regression was conducted to established whether there is a relationship between the predictor variables and the criterion variable in this study. Table 3, shows the percentage of prediction and of an independent variable on the dependent variable. It could be seen that information on social responsibility, attitude to business ethics, firm's reputation, and economic responsibility contributed 51 % to micro and small business corporate social responsibility in Jos's metropolis, the study variables are positively correlated. The coefficient of determination R² value is 0.256 and the value of the adjusted R² is 24 %, this revealed that precisely 24 % of the changes in the dependent variable are explained by the combined effect of changes in the independent variables. Also, the table shows the value of p<0.05 this indicates that explanatory variables are significant and the regression model adopted as the basis of the analysis is a good fit.

Table 4: Hierarchical Regression Testing Hypotheses

Variables	Model 1 Control Variables	Model 2 ISR	Model 3 ABE	Model 4 FR	Model 5 ER	Model
Years of Experience	.013	.004	-.010	-.008	.021	1.508
ER		.271 ^{***}	.140 ^{**}	.119 [*]	.069	1.588
FR			.297 ^{***}	.207	.125	1.570
ABE				.200 ^{**}	.156 [*]	1.605
ICR					.362 ^{**}	1.811
R ²	.000	.056	.115	.153	.429	
ΔR ²	.004	.048	.104	.139	.184	
ΔF	1.067	7.301	10.616	11.028	16.786	
Durbin Watson						1.811

***P < .01; n =250,

The hierarchical regression test supported the four hypotheses in general. As a result, the relationships are both positive and significant. According to the findings, there is a significant and positive relationship between social responsibility information and CSR. Model 1 reveals that a positive change in information to social responsibility resulted in a positive change in corporate social responsibility ($\beta =.271$, $p.<.01$), thereby supporting the study's hypothesis (H₁) that there is a significant relationship between information to social responsibility and corporate social responsibility in this context. Similarly, attitudes toward business ethnics influence

corporate social responsibility significantly and positively ($\beta = .297, p < .01$). This supports the study's second hypothesis (H_2). Model 3 investigated the relationship between a small and micro-business reputation and its corporate social responsibility in Jos. There is a positive and significant relationship ($\beta = .200, p < .05$). This validates the result of H_3 of the study. Finally, model 4, confirmed the relationship between corporate social responsibility and economic responsibility ($\beta = .362, p > .05$). This verifies the study's hypothesis (H_4), indicating that business decisions require not only a moral philosophy but also a realistic economic attitude.

Discussion

The study investigated the relationship between information on corporate responsibility and CSR of micro and small businesses in Jos's metropolis. The study reveals that micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises have the necessary information they need about CSR activities. The findings showed that the respondents were satisfied with the fact that CSR is concerned with treating stakeholders in a socially responsible manner. This finding is consistent with the works of Davis (1973) and Singh and Misra (2021), which stated that businesses should commit themselves not only to their businesses but also to solving society's problems. The study supports the stakeholder theory, which focuses on businesses as members of society and suggests that businesses have economic, social, ethical, and environmental responsibilities. Primavera et al. (2017) view CSR as about business commitment, involvement, and the two-way relationship between society and corporations. Transparency and accountability are at the heart of the CSR movement, with all stakeholders, including the business itself, reporting and relating information on its moral, financial, social, and environmental concerns. Businesses need to communicate their CSR activities to improve their corporate image and competitiveness, which can be achieved by publishing an annual corporate social responsibility report and making it available online (Salb et al., 2011; Bikefe et al., 2020).

Micro and small-medium enterprises' attitudes toward business ethics are positively correlated. The study emphasizes the significance of a positive attitude towards business ethics and its correlation with corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. The integration of core values such as honesty, trust, respect, and fairness into policies, practices, and decision-making reflects an attitude towards business ethics. Ethical behavior benefits not only profits but also business relationships and employee productivity. Furthermore, the study confirms that attitudes towards CSR are positively related to CSR activities. Adda et al. (2016) found that ethical behavior benefits not only profits but also business relationships and employee productivity. Similarly, Ng et al. (2019) discovered that employees' perception of social responsibility is positively associated with their pride, which is associated with improved enterprise embeddedness. A positive attitude towards business ethics leads to a business's participation in CSR activities (Rizvi et al., 2012; Giri, 2017). Ethical business attitudes take into account different cultures and emphasize different values when conducting business activities (Giri, 2017). Businesses play a crucial role in society, and society has high expectations of them to be socially responsible. Stakeholder theory emphasizes that businesses have an ethical responsibility to consider the interests of all stakeholders. A positive attitude towards business ethics can be seen as an expression of a business's commitment to meeting stakeholder expectations and needs, including those of the broader community. Social exchange theory posits that stakeholders will have more positive attitudes towards a business that demonstrates a commitment to ethical behavior and social responsibility.

The study found a positive correlation between firm reputation and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Micro-business owners are known to align their CSR activities with their business interests and strategies, even going beyond their personal values and morals (Hemingway, 2005; Stuebs & Sun, 2012). Zhao et al. (2021) reiterated that CSR can significantly enhance a firm's reputation. Micro-business owners who integrate CSR activities into their daily operations and strategies tend to excel, which benefits their business identity and reputation (Singh & Misra, 2021). Additionally, when CSR efforts are tailored to address the social needs of the community where the business operates, there is a significant improvement in its operations. The relationship between firm reputation and CSR can be seen as a mutually beneficial exchange between the business and its stakeholders. By engaging in CSR activities that address the social and environmental concerns of its stakeholders, a business can build a positive reputation and enhance its relationships with them, leading to increased support and benefits for both parties.

The investigation found that economic responsibility and corporate social responsibility have a positive relationship is supported by recent literature. Sen and Cowley's (2017) study found that small and medium-sized enterprises that prioritize both economic and social responsibilities have better financial performance. Porter and Kramer (2011) suggest that businesses can create shared value by addressing societal issues through their operations, leading to improved financial performance. Economic responsibility involves balancing long-term business growth with ethical environmental and charitable practices. By combining economic decisions with social consequences, businesses can improve their operations and add value to their products and services. This, in turn, benefits society by increasing their standard of living through corporate social responsibilities. Economic responsibility seeks to achieve a balance between business, the environment, and philanthropy by adhering to established ethical and moral guidelines. By considering the total effects on society and enterprises, businesses can make more sustainable economic decisions that promote sustainable practices and efficiency. Ultimately, economic responsibility is a multifaceted field that can help businesses achieve long-term success while benefiting the community and society as a whole.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study found that micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in Jos's metropolis have a positive attitude towards corporate social responsibility (CSR) and business ethics. The integration of core values into policies and decision-making reflects an attitude towards business ethics, which positively correlates with CSR activities. The study also highlights the positive correlation between firm reputation and CSR, with micro-business owners aligning their CSR activities with their business interests and strategies. Additionally, the study confirms the positive relationship between economic responsibility and CSR, with businesses balancing long-term growth with ethical and charitable practices. This study contributes to a methodological position by providing evidence on how microbusinesses engage in CSR and presents a theoretical explanation of CSR. It also offers a helpful path for future empirical studies on CSR research. The findings of this study have practical implications for microbusiness owners and policymakers to incorporate CSR activities into their policies and strategies. The study supports the stakeholder and social exchange theory, emphasizing

businesses' ethical responsibility to consider the interests of all stakeholders, and suggests that CSR can create shared value for businesses and society

Recommendations

Drawing from the results and discussions of the analysis, the following recommendations are made;

- Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises owners should increase their involvement in CSR activities when drafting their policies and strategies.
- To facilitate CSR, a micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises should consider information on corporate responsibility very paramount as a necessary tool in their operations hence, the source for information on corporate responsibility to keep up with changing trends in the business world.
- Micro-business owners should be proactive in exploring and implementing CSR initiatives to improve the social, environmental, and economic well-being of their community.

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