

## True Concept of CSR: Pakistan Context

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### Abstract

*Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an emerging concept. Every organization is determined to achieve societal beliefs of social responsibility to maintain its business for the long term and achieve sustainability. In Pakistan there is minimal government endorsement for CSR; many companies are doing it voluntarily. Results indicate that most organizations do not have dedicated departments for CSR and more concerned about sustainable resources and positive contribution through philanthropy. Initiatives are same that practice around the world but local organizations are more focused on societal issues in the local framework. However, the prime focus of most of the organizations is not to create visibility rather they believe that CSR builds reputation and strengthen identity directly or indirectly. Overall driving value is through minimizing risk and giving back to the environment and society. Multinational companies are committed to practice socially responsible activities according to the standards their respective regional offices have set. But national firms are moving towards the true need and concept of CSR realizing the constantly changing obligations of organizations as well transformation of societal mentality.*

**Key Words:** CSR, Sustainability, Indigenous Practices, Societal Mentality.

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### Introduction

Organizations are like citizens who have particular rights and duties; they have interdependent relationship with other businesses, economy and community. Today organizations are striving to build social image, make social investments, want to influence the community in an optimistic manner and behave like responsible citizens. This phenomenon in which organizations tend to perform responsibly and optimistic towards the welfare of the society, are termed as Corporate Social Responsibility. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) emerged in the era of industrial revolution where every single organization strived to fulfill its purpose. The purpose was to contribute to the betterment of the society (Krumwiede, Hackert, Tokle, & Vokurka, 2012).

## Background of the Study

The involvement of organizations in CSR indigenous practices leads them towards the sense of responsibility regarding welfare of the society and other stakeholders too. These in return, bring long term sustainability, image building within the society, trust building among the customers and long term profitability and much more. But few organizations are still lag behind in the race of implementing the indigenous CSR practices (Birch, 2011; Kazmi, Leca and Naccache, 2012).

Pakistan is facing so many ongoing problems concerning political issues, terrorist activities. The reason of these problems is lack of necessary endeavors by the government, giant organizations and the civil society. Due to high inflation rate over 70 million people of Pakistan became more vulnerable and this conveys the negative image of Pakistan and organizations in the foreign countries (Carrol, 1999; CSR Pakistan, 2013).

Philanthropy had been practiced in Pakistani organizations but they have started integrating the rules, activities and regulations of CSR. It is in the emerging stage and will take time to deepen its roots throughout the organizations. There is limited knowledge; lack of professionals and much more problems are in the pipeline of these organizations (CSR Pakistan, 2013). The understanding of CSR is still under the scrutiny and every organization perceives this concept differently. Through most of the articles it is reflected that in Pakistan philanthropy and philanthropic activities are considered to be CSR (Shariff, 2011).

This study will clarify the dilemma whether the organizations are in reality encouraged to contribute to the wellbeing of their stakeholders considering their social and ethical values, and either they experience any hurdle or government intervention while executing the true indigenous CSR activities or they experience consistent support from their stakeholders in mapping the positive impact on the lives of the people. In a nutshell the study is designed to explore the reality of CSR and true ideology behind its indigenous activities.

## Study Objectives

- To identify the organization's motives behind doing corporate social responsibility practices. To explore the modern understanding of CSR in Pakistan with emphasis on the waves, issues, and modes of CSR among indigenous organizations.
- To dig out the experience of organizations regarding problems, issues, understanding, or encouragement while executing the CSR projects and activities.
- To recognize the role of government in encouraging CSR practices and how the government framework or regulations regarding CSR, if exist, affect the organizations' indigenous CSR practices.

Chappel and Moon (2015) mentioned that the CSR practices involve three types of 'waves'. These are community involvement, socially responsible product processes, and socially responsible employees' relations. The 'issues' are the areas where organizations are emphasizing to work like health or education, and the modes according to Chappel and Moon are three, that are philanthropy, partnership, and foundation and codes but further these modes which are initiatives discusses by Kotler and Lee in their book that there are 6 initiatives and philanthropy is a common mode although other initiatives are also discussed in the paper.

## Significance of the Study

This study is conducted to know the true concept of CSR and this would be advantageous for national and multinational organizations' employees, consumers and society as a whole. This is going to be a source of encouragement for those national organizations which are not aware of true CSR concept and also didn't perform CSR activities for the betterment of society and for their sustainable businesses. This study is also be beneficial for other small and medium organizations and for stakeholders too to follow the rules and regulations of CSR, and to know that how they can be able to implement the CSR practices, and which social issues are needed to be focused for the welfare of the society.

## Literature Review

From the eighteenth century, the concept of CSR was evolved and organizations like Cadbury worked for the welfare of the stakeholders and society by implementing the successful and environment friendly business practices.

In the journal of political economy, in 1916, Clark illustrated that "like people, organizations are also responsible for their business actions, whether they are accepted by law or not". In simple mean, organizations are the entities working in the society like common man so its acts and dealings directly or indirectly influence the society as a whole. Prof. Krep (1931), he came up with the concept of "social audit", he introduced the course namely Business and Social Welfare to Stanford. The organization reporting's was considered as social audit of company's social responsibility by him. In 1942, Drucker, in his book, "The Future of Industrial Man", clearly mentioned that an organization is liable to perform its economic purpose but societal responsibility must also be fulfilled by it.

In the era of fifty's and sixty's in last century, most of the authors agreed on the concept that CSR is point where economic and legal responsibility met. But eventually in 1963, Mcguire gave the idea that only assembling of these two obligations is not CSR but there are some other responsibilities attached with this phenomenon. In 1970, Friedman, in one of his article, enlightened that every entity is liable to fulfill its social responsibility which is the employment and utilization of the resources in such manner that generate long term profits so they can enjoy the rules of game till the end (Amaeshi, Adi, Ogbeichi, & Amao, 2006). Organizations' prime focus must be economic responsibility but they are the constituents of the society and strongly and enthusiastically interdependent on each other. Here the concept of CSR is discussed initially with the worldwide perspective then it narrow down to current scenario. The emergence of CSR in Pakistan then discussed briefly. (Bhattachariya, Sen & Korschun, 2012).

CSR is a promising concept, each and every organization is determined to sustain better position within the society and to run its business in the long run. "CSR is the path along which organizations would progress the social well-being through implementing discretionary practices and through contributing their resources. According to the author, discretionary activities are the voluntary commitments that companies make for the development and performing the best CSR practices". (Kotler & Lee, 2005). Companies balance the environment (planet) with employees and stakeholders (people) and generate maximum profits. This interrelated cycle reflect the true mirror of CSR (Kotler & Lee, 2005; Werther & Chandler, 2010).

There are six options for doing well. Cause promotion is the phenomenon of raising awareness regarding any social issue. Corporate Philanthropy is direct donations, charity, volunteering and provision of direct aids. Cause Related Marketing is when organizations, for the specific span of time, support any social cause, or resolve any social dilemma through donating the particular portion of their revenues. Corporate Social Marketing is organizing plans, establish and run the behavioral change campaigns for the community well-being and safety. Employees, partners or franchise member of the organizations, when

contribute their time for resolving the social issues or cause is said to be community volunteering. Socially Responsible Business Practices are that within the organization and surroundings, organizations develop and execute discretionary business practices, through which they can provide safe, secure, healthy and favorable environment to all its stakeholders (Kotler & Lee, 2005; Bippes, n.d.).

Carroll (1991) introduced the hierarchy of responsibilities that lie on the shoulders of the organization. He explained the levels of responsibilities that every organization needs to pursue. Primary responsibility is economic responsibility. Other is legal responsibility in which organizations are liable to conduct their business operations in accordance with laws, rules and regulations imposed by the local government of the country. Then ethical responsibility of every organization is to make decisions based on the justice, equity, and impartiality. Last but the most crucial responsibility of any business is discretionary responsibility. Discretionary practices are the voluntary commitments and contributions of organizations for the well-being of community and other stakeholders. Not a single discretionary act is backed by law or any rule but it is the way of bringing self-assurance, prosperity and long term sustainability.

The study analysis of 37 definitions of CSR was not on to extract exact definition but on how CSR is socially constructed in an explicit context. There is lack of one universally accepted definition although with different phrases they represent one of the dimensions. CSR concept in different definitions reflects a phenomenon but it fails in guiding the way through which businesses can manage the challenges and also how to execute the concept while designing the overall corporate strategies (Bippes, n.d.; Broomhill, 2007; Dahlsrud, 2008).

Porter, Michael & Kumar (2006) says that businesses are crucial for community and it is imperative for the sustainability of organizations to be concerned about their stakeholders. From Indian organizations like Enron, Shell, it is evident that business sustainability goes hand in hand with CSR initiatives. In this paper, it is proved that business has certain relationship with society, pressure of stakeholders on business to run it in a socially responsible manner. CSR impact positively not only in creating image but in financial performance too, and it is also helpful in gathering human capital and competitive advantage.

Lundeberg (2006) says in one of her papers that organizations by adopting CSR can be able to portray better reputation in the society, can provide best quality products and services, and their procedures and strategies are collaborative with each other. According to her, CSR is the evidence of quality at every single step of business activities (SankarSen, & Bhattacharya, 2001).

The purpose of the study “integrating CSR, initiatives with business strategy: study of some Indian companies” was to know about true contribution of Indian organizations towards any social cause and by doing this what they can expect. It was concluded in this study that in Indian organizations internalization of CSR is adopted, integrated in business strategies and organizations are ready to reap heavy advantages from it, numerous strategies are taken for the implementation of CSR activities. In near future, Indian society would enjoy the benefits of CSR and in turn organizations will take pleasure of long term sustainability (Dey and Sircar 2012).

The study was conducted to know the strength of CSR understanding and its implication in five emerging economies that are Malaysia, Mexico, Argentina, Nigeria and Pakistan. The findings were that there is lack of CSR framework in these countries. That’s why the policies and procedures are haphazard. In Islamic countries like Pakistan and Malaysia true philosophy of CSR is not provided by religious idea as in Islam some businesses activities are condemned like usury (riba). He concluded with the fact that CSR is an evolving trend in these countries which would stabilize their economies and generate favorable working environment for organizations (Frynas 2006; Visser, 2008).

Ahmed in 2006 conducted the study which extracts the perception, understanding and practices of CSR in Pakistan. Pakistani organizations consider themselves socially responsible. Few facts discovered by author are that most organizations do CSR activities due to cultural beliefs and religious values. Their main focus is on health, education and social welfare areas. Direct donation is preferred, concentration is on stockholders rather than stakeholders, only few companies have set and follow the ethical standards and CSR practices. There is an identified gap between best practices and common practices. There are some obstacles in the improvement of CSR. The main motives behind the organization's contribution towards the society are based on personal interest of CEO, customers demand, Board of Directors or part of mission or vision (Hawn, 2012).

According to Waheed (2005), in Pakistan most of the organizations perceive that CSR is philanthropic activity; only few of the firms realized that true CSR concept is the provision of socially responsible business practices (SRBP). According to her, multinational companies are more responsive than national firms. These all were evaluated on the basis of some parameters like environmental and social disclosure, product reliability, stakeholders' involvement etc. She concluded that very few of the organizations are aware of true spirit of CSR, oil and fuel sector have better knowledge about CSR than others. Most of the companies follow pattern that are adopted in foreign countries and firms are unable to understand concept of CSR with their business operations and social interface. It was not visible from the activities of these firms that they were actually interested in resolving the social issues of Pakistan. Still CSR is considered as philanthropic concept and some of the firms look timid while reflecting their responsibility towards their stakeholders (Riaz, Mahmood, & Ali, 2008).

The CSR phenomenon and its allied activities were new in certain prominent trends and types of socio-economic development scene and CSR in Pakistan. According to the author, three trends and four types were scrutinized during the research, these three trends were competition to cooperation, command to demand orientation, and outsourced versus in sourced fund management and the four types were politically motivated CSR strategy, globally aligned CSR strategy, externally imposed CSR and philanthropic and responsive CSR (Gill, 2007; Fariduddin 2007).

In 2009, different business executive participated in the conference and shared their views about CSR and intervention of government of Pakistan. Everyone was agreed to the point that government lag behind in developing CSR framework and other rules and regulations which are crucial for the implementation of CSR practices. There is no guidance available from the part of the government (Dawn News 2009; Smith, 2003).

## Conceptual Model

Concepts which are considered in this research are environmental concerns but it splits into two parts internal and external, reputation and social obligations. The external environment is based on global standards. Some of the constructs generate visibility with the passage of time and here in the process internal environment, external environment of organization, reputation and social obligations create visibility. If the organizations are found to be involved in the social causes or issues of Pakistan they are considered to be engaged in indigenous CSR practices that reflect that the organization's experience and perceive true principles of CSR (Williams, & Aguilera, 2008).

## Research Methodology

Phenomenological design is employed for the analysis and the philosophy of the study in interpretivism with inductive approach. To study the perception, experience and convictions and to explore the specified phenomena, phenomenological approach is used. Through in-depth information, experience and perception

of participants, phenomena are identified and the data is gathered through semi-structured in depth holistic and phenomenological interviews (Hycner, 1985; Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013).

Primary data is congregated through in-depth interviews of Managerial level employees of head office staff who directly dealt with CSR activities. Secondary data is gathered from the official websites, documents, news, research papers and sustainable annual reports etc.

Managerial level employees of head office staff of Engro, National Bank of Pakistan (NBP), Unilever, PSO, Shell Pakistan who have more than 2 years of experience in the specific department or committee was interviewed. Non-probability purposive sampling is considered and sample size is based on the judgment and purpose of the study, at least one in-depth interview from each of the organization is conducted (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

Questionnaire is designed through concept-dimension-element based analysis with the help of literature review. The hybrid questionnaire is used during the in-depth discussion and interviews (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The data that gathered through in-depth interviews is analyzed through phenomenological research approach. The data is explicit that means the constituents investigated the phenomena while keeping the whole context. The phenomenological process includes the open coding of the data that outlining the meaning units, then it leads to axial coding memoing, then selective coding in that themes will be generated along with conceptual based memoing and then summarizing, altering each unit of data (interviews), and finally extracting unique themes(categories) from interviews and discussion and at the end theoretical memo that is the composite summary will be generated (Hycner, 1985; Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffing, 2013).

## Discussion and Phenomenological Analysis

Through the phenomenological analysis, the organizations were evaluated on their experience based on the understanding, perception, and execution of the CSR and its practices.

The analysis and explicitation of the data reflect that the multinational organizations like Unilever, Shell Pakistan are aware of the CSR true concept but as far as its execution is concerned it is not up to the mark (Shell, 2013; Unilever, 2013). On the other hand, NBP management is aware of this phenomenon but the individuals are unable to implement it as there is traditional mentality that doing charity is CSR and it is being used as marketing tool but they are striving to spread up the concept and support the genuine issues of local society. Engro is enthusiastic towards employing the best indigenous CSR practices and works only for the welfare of the society, they agreed that their practices generate visibility but their focus is not on image building or identity creation, their focus is on the creation of the value for every member of the society (Engro, 2013). PSO, while being the giant national organization does not aware of the true concept of CSR, management considers that philanthropy is CSR but the mindset is under change following the change of Managing Director. Multinationals follow their regional offices initiatives that reflect that they are doing western mimicry as according to them the standards are set in regional offices located at European countries while in Pakistan they implement projects according to social requirement and dilemmas but theme is imitated. It is same as decided by regional offices (Pakistan State Oil, 2013). Engro's and NBPs motive behind indigenous practices is that their top level management is involved and believes that what they earn from the society must be given back to the community in the form of improved services, better offerings, and implementing necessary projects (National bank of Pakistan, 2013).

All of the organizations agreed that CSR is being used as marketing tool and it builds image and generates visibility but Engro is the only one organization which believe that their motive is not marketing as they have enough promotional strategies but it is universal truth that it creates optimistic image within the

society and make one visible in front of all stakeholders. From the previous researches it was reflected that only 5% of the national organizations are aware of the true concept CSR or sustainability.

This study proves that the Engro is less active. It truly understands the sustainable business practices and concept, NBP is also active in this race but just because of misconception of CSR regarding philanthropy and marketing tool it lags behind Engro while PSO is not equipped with the depth of CSR philosophy.

According to its management, they are now implementing the CSR activities and practices and in near future, they will have CSR department also. As far as multinational is concerned, they have adopted those areas which are needed to be focused but somewhat they are bound to select from the themes suggested by their head offices. For Shell Pakistan and Engro, minimizing risk and providing advantage to the society are the driving force which leads to fetch value in return, for Unilever executing sustainability at every step of business, for NBP and PSO the society well-being and top management involvement creates value.

These companies face problems while implementing the projects as people are less aware and illiterate here but shell believes that with the availability of resources, implementation of any project is easy. Additionally, the support of local people is crucial and lack of recognition of stakeholders' need creates hindrance in the way of development. The other problem for Pakistan is that there is lack of professionals in the field who can work purely for CSR.

There is no proper CSR framework designed by the government on which every organization should be accountable for contribution towards the welfare of the society. Some of the rules and regulations they have from their ministries or regulators but as a whole no written or guided policies, procedures or rules are present. Government interference is minimal, only PSO mentioned that they obtained the list of 45 NGOs out which they are tied to donate in 15 NGOs.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

Individual managerial intervention, desire of sustainability, use of CSR concept as marketing tool and central bank policy drive Pakistani organizations to be responsible and execute the indigenous CSR practices. On the other hand, multinationals have their set standards or considered it as the core business strategy, but Engro foundation practicing sustainability and it is executed in its business strategy. All the organizations understand and perceive CSR as overall cost effective strategy, it is a device which minimizes risk, it is true picture of sustainability. It is about providing benefits and quality life to community members. It reduces environment footprints and promotes positive contribution, but PSO is the only company whose focus is on philanthropy. This study verifies the existence of Lunderberg(2006) concept that CSR is essential to corporate image, reputation building, and provision of quality product and services.

It surges the overall business value of the organizations which execute the real CSR practices. Engro foundation along with Shell Ltd., and Unilever Pakistan do not experience any obstacle while implementing the CSR projects as they have sufficient amount of budget, involve local area people and are committed to their own employees while NBP and PSO in fact with the availability of heavy amount of money experience hurdles and practice philanthropic activities more than other initiatives. In 2009 many of the business executives in the conference shared the view about the low government intervention in promoting the CSR among the national and multinational organizations which was proved in this study that there is no regulatory framework or government set standards, policies or rules for employing and promoting CSR activities in Pakistan.

Government had started some concern about this phenomenon but the evidence was difficult to found from the in-depth analysis of organizations. Only PSO got the list of some non-profit organizations from the regulatory body, to donate some amount of money from their huge budget or in simple terminology it would be considered right if it is said that government promotes the philanthropic activities. True understanding of CSR and its reality is still under the investigation, there is lack of professional people, and government lags behind in structuring and instructing proper model of CSR.

For promoting the knowledge of CSR, seminars, workshops and different trainings should be arranged. For the future generation it is also necessary that business school must start teaching CSR subject in their schools. It will resolve the dilemmas like lack of awareness, lack of true understanding and lack of professionals. Government should take steps and design proper guidelines, policies and framework under which each and every organization, operating in Pakistan, is liable to act accordingly. Being citizens of the society it is their responsibility to invest from where they earn.

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