

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: How Does This Crucial Component of Corporate Social Responsibility Leads to Sustainable Development of an Organization and of the Society as a Whole?

Farhana Jannat^{1*} Mallick Rakibul Hasan^{1, 2} Anindya Chakraborty^{1,3}

1. Department. of Apparel Manufacture & Technology, BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology, S.R Tower, 105 Uttara Model Town, Sector # 7, Uttara, Dhaka-1230
2. Department of Business Administration, BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology, S.R Tower, 105 Uttara Model Town, Sector # 7, Uttara, Dhaka-1230
3. Department of Fashion Design & Technology, BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology, S.R Tower, 105 Uttara Model Town, Sector # 7, Uttara, Dhaka-1230

Abstract

The main objective of this review paper is to explain the concept of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights as an integral component of Corporate Social Responsibility and to explain its rationality for companies, its impact on global issues and its participation in the business strategy of the organizations as far as sustainable development is concerned. CSR is a voluntary contribution of the organizations toward their stakeholders and the environment through its ethical practices in order to elicit a proper economic return for itself and the society as a whole. From a theoretical viewpoint, the concept of CSR encompasses a multitude of components, the compilation of which, makes it complete. Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights is one of those important components.

Keywords: Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), corporate social responsibility (CSR), Sustainable development, Society.

1. Introduction

The area of the Corporate Social Responsibility has been a subject of strong argument and attention over the past three decades. The argument is raised due to the creation of different conceptualizations regarding the term in question. CSR has been defined in various ways from the narrow economic dimension to the broader voluntariness, stakeholder, social and environmental dimensions (Dahlsrud, 2008; Crowther and Aras, 2008; Nasrullah and Rahim, 2014).

CSR is the degree of moral obligation that may be ascribed to corporations beyond simple obedience to the laws of the state (Kilcullen and Kooistra, 1999; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). The aforementioned definition explains only the voluntariness dimension. However, various research papers and texts have found methods to establish the best definition of CSR out of many notables (Dahlsrud, 2008; Nasrullah and Rahim, 2014). Furthermore, it has been found that the most frequent definition of CSR was the following, put forth by the Commission of European Communities in the year 2001: “A concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.” It has been noted that the said definition was the most frequently used in various research representations simply because the content of the definition contained most of the aforementioned dimensions concerning the concept of CSR (Dahlsrud, 2008).

It is remarkable to note that the definition has attributed CSR as one of many prime methods for interacting with stakeholders who could be individuals or organizations that exist both within a firm and outside. The wider aim of social responsibility is to create higher standards of living, while preserving the profitability of the corporation, for peoples both within and outside the corporation (Hopkins, 2003). The aforementioned philosophy indicates a popular concept known as the “stakeholder approach of CSR” (Nasrullah and Rahim, 2014; Jamali, 2008; Freeman and Velamuri, 2006). This approach simplifies social responsibilities of business entities by ensuring an ethical and welfare oriented relationship with their stakeholders.

The term “Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights” is steeply directed towards one such group of stakeholders: the employees and workers of various organizations. Hence, it is considered one of the very important components of CSR. The SRHR ensures the welfare of internal stakeholders such as workers and employees in terms of their sexual and reproductive health. To many organizations, SRHR was attributed to have made significant progress in terms of increased motivations, decreasing employee turnovers and better productivity in lieu with a developed standard of living and working conditions (Bearinger et al, 2007).

Both SRHR and CSR have been recognized as one of many tools used to uphold sustainable practices (Langer et al, 2015; Nicolopoulou, 2015; van Marrewijk, 2003). From a theoretical perspective, sustainability comes in three pillars: Social, Economic and Environmental (Hansmann et al, 2012; Crowther and Aras, 2008). The SRHR component of CSR is said to cover the social pillars of sustainability, given its contribution to the

development of health and happiness of the general mass.

Henceforward, considering the aforementioned factors of CSR, SRHR and their contribution to sustainable development, this research intends to investigate how effective indeed it has been in terms of bringing about social sustainability amongst a workforce of a particular industry. This was decided to be done by initiating a thorough review of the current CSR and SRHR developments in progress in the Ready-made Garments sector of Bangladesh.

2. Methodology:

The nature of this paper is strictly a review of the current progress of sustainable development contributed by practices pertaining to the SRHR of the labor force of the organizations. Being strictly a review, the research simply collected comprehensive data from various sources; i.e. published journals, articles, news papers, websites, books etc. The review has been segmented into three distinct categories. In the introduction, the concept of CSR, SRHR and their relationship with sustainable development have already been defined backed by some scholarly definitions. In the literature review, further theories concerning the same would be briefed which can help to sharpen the rationale of SRHR as a component of CSR. In the discussion part the research has analyzed the outcomes of the literature review and finally, a conclusion was drawn in order to elicit some recommendations for managerial practice as well as for future research.

3. Literature Review:

Sexual and reproductive health and rights or SRHR is the concept of human rights applied to sexuality and reproduction. It is a combination of four fields that in some contexts are more or less distinct from each other. These four fields are sexual health, sexual rights, reproductive health and reproductive rights. In the concept of SRHR, these four fields are treated as separate but inherently intertwined (Bearinger et al, 2007). Sexual Health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual Rights embrace human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus materials. Reproductive Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Reproductive Rights is to recognize that the sexual and reproductive health of women and men, as well as gender non-conforming people, requires more than scientific knowledge or biomedical intervention (Ramkissoon et al, 2012; Washington and Tallis, 2010).

The concept of SRHR is associated with the social and stakeholder dimension of CSR. A stakeholder approach was used by Papasolomou et al. (2005) in the framework of Cypriot businesses. They identified six groups as key stakeholders including employees, customers, investors, suppliers, the community and the environment and delineates. According to him an organization should fulfill the following rights to the employees which are related to SRHR:

- Provides child care support/paternity/maternity leave in addition to what is expected by law
- Engages in employment diversity in hiring and promoting women, ethnic minorities and the physically handicapped
- Promotes a dignified and fair treatment of all employees

Investing in worker health is more than a social responsibility and there are compelling business results that arise from investment- higher productivity, lower staff turnover and reduced absenteeism (Jahan and Afsana, 2015). The practice of proper SRHR activities also ensures a sound social life through providing sexual and reproductive health services and establishing reproductive rights of the men and women (Karim, 2014). Hence, it is quite obvious to decipher that a healthy society can provide healthy people for the business.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) are issues of global concern. Sexuality and reproduction are core aspects of human existence, and shape the lives of people in all parts of the world. As conditions change, for example, through globalization and socio-economic development, new challenges and opportunities emerge (Germain et al, 2015; Karim, 2014).

Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is an important part of managing to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). SRHR, maternal health and gender equality are core elements of human dignity and are central to human development (Karim 2014; Khanna, 2013).

The stated problems, solutions and respective progress concerning SRHR practices clearly indicates its importance in terms of bringing about an impactful social sustainability as well as the means to achieve a profitable and goodwill-oriented end for business enterprises.

4. Discussion:

CSR is “a balanced approach for organizations to address economic, social and environmental issues in a way that aims to benefit people, communities and society.”

And one of the CSR components Sexual and reproductive health and rights can be understood as the right

for all, whether young or old, women, men or transgender, heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual, HIV positive or negative, to make choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction, providing these respect the rights of others to bodily integrity.

The companies operating in different places of the country are now highly concerned about the SRHR issue as this is a very important component of CSR and in this modern arena cost incurred for CSR are not considered as cost, but it is considered as investment (Carroll and Shabana, 2010; Elkington, 1999). The aforementioned discussion about SRHR is establishing the proper health condition of not only women but also the right of everyone irrespective of their gender. So ultimately it is not mere contribution, but more of establishing the right of the people. Hence, when people begin to achieve the sexual and reproductive health and rights, they will work enthusiastically for the achievement of the goals and objectives of the organization as a whole. As a result, absenteeism will come down, productivity of the employees will increase, healthy and safe environment will prevail in the organization and so ultimately profit will increase and the image of the organization will be brightened. So, establishing SRHR properly in the organization as a component of CSR will not only enlighten the employees' life, but also will stimulate a better society.

In light of this development, many theorists have also attributed the contribution of SRHR as a tool to increase the overall Gross National Happiness of a nation, which is an economic term that represents the economic standings of a country not only in terms of Gross National/Domestic Product but also in terms of the level of satisfaction and the underlying commitment that people have towards their duties and responsibilities (Gruber and Madrian, 2002). Apart from bringing about the improvement in the GNH of a nation, SRHR is also attributed to have significantly controlled population growth, wealth inequality, poverty, social security, etc (Jahan and Afsana, 2015; Karim, 2014). Almost all the countries and different organizations are working to eliminate these challenges. And the fact that SRHR is a very important component of CSR, can contribute a lot to mitigate these challenges. Through establishing proper SRHR in the companies and in the society and in the country as a whole, public awareness regarding population growth will increase, as a result, a positive change will be observed regarding population growth and so the social environment will witness significant improvement, poverty will be reduced and people will be able to lead a better standard of living, the pressure on environment such as deforestation will decline and so global warming will also be reduced. Therefore, it should be noted that establishment of a proper SRHR can do a tremendous work as far as social and an indirect environmental sustainability is concerned.

5. Conclusion

Corporate social Responsibility is treated as a dominant factor for sustainable development of an organization which can be explained from different perspectives and SRHR is one of the most important components of this issue. Proper implementation of SRHR is very crucial for the companies for establishing a systematic corporate and social life and its proper implementation can also mitigate the global challenges and can convert it into opportunities. Therefore, any organization can include it as a business strategy component to enhance continuous improvement of the organization.

6. Recommendation

1. The concept of CSR and especially the concept of SRHR should be spreader firstly in the key persons and then in others through proper education and if possible it should be included in the curriculum of education in school, colleges and universities and in classrooms with peer engagement and discussion seems to be the most effective approach to improving SRHR learning and special training should be provided through needed experts i.e. NGO associates, trained nurses, maternity doctors in the organizations so that they will be aware of it and the whole nation will be engaged for its proper implementation not only in the organizations, but also in the country as a whole and especially the organizations will be able to use it as a competitive tool for their development.
2. But for all these, further research is required to find out how, where, why and for whom it will be more feasible and fruitful socially and economically and obviously logically.
3. Further research in this area should of utmost priority. Academic as well as industrial awareness regarding the success stories of SRHR should greatly improve the current sustainable measures taken by the industrialists and the government

References

- Bearinger, L.H., Sieving, R.E., Ferguson, J. and Sharma, V., 2007. Global perspectives on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents: patterns, prevention, and potential. *The lancet*, 369(9568), pp.1220-1231.
- Carroll, A.B. and Shabana, K.M., 2010. The business case for corporate social responsibility: A review of concepts, research and practice. *International journal of management reviews*, 12(1), pp.85-105.
- European Commission. Directorate-General for Employment, 2001. *Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility: Green Paper*. Office for Official Publications of the European

Communities.

- Crowther, D. and Aras, G., 2008. *Corporate social responsibility*. Bookboon.
- Dahlsrud, A., 2008. How corporate social responsibility is defined: an analysis of 37 definitions. *Corporate social responsibility and environmental management*, 15(1), pp.1-13.
- Elkington, J., 1999. Triple bottom-line reporting: Looking for balance. *AUSTRALIAN CPA*, 69, pp.18-21.
- Freeman, R.E. and Velamuri, S.R., 2006. A new approach to CSR: Company stakeholder responsibility. In *Corporate social responsibility* (pp. 9-23). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Germain, A., Sen, G., Garcia-Moreno, C. and Shankar, M., 2015. Advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights in low-and middle-income countries: Implications for the post-2015 global development agenda. *Global public health*, 10(2), pp.137-148.
- Gruber, J. and Madrian, B.C., 2002. *Health insurance, labor supply, and job mobility: a critical review of the literature* (No. w8817). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Hansmann, R., Mieg, H.A. and Frischknecht, P., 2012. Principal sustainability components: empirical analysis of synergies between the three pillars of sustainability. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, 19(5), pp.451-459.
- Hopkins, M., 2003. The planetary bargain—CSR matters. *Earthscan: London*.
- Jahan, R. and Afsana, K., 2015. Commentary: Sustaining progress towards comprehensive reproductive health services in Bangladesh. *Global public health*, 10(2), pp.180-182.
- Jamali, D., 2008. A stakeholder approach to corporate social responsibility: A fresh perspective into theory and practice. *Journal of business ethics*, 82(1), pp.213-231.
- Karim, S (2014). *Project Reference: The Knowledge Platform for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)*. Bangladesh: Share-Net International. P9-40.
- Khanna, R., 2013. MDG 5 in India: Whither reproductive and sexual rights. *CommonHealth, SAHAJ and RUWSEC*.
- Kilcullen, M. and Ohles Kooistra, J., 1999. At least do no harm: sources on the changing role of business ethics and corporate social responsibility. *Reference Services Review*, 27(2), pp.158-178.
- Langer, A., Meleis, A., Knaul, F.M., Atun, R., Aran, M., Arreola-Ornelas, H., Bhutta, Z.A., Binagwaho, A., Bonita, R., Caglia, J.M. and Claeson, M., 2015. Women and Health: the key for sustainable development. *The Lancet*, 386(9999), pp.1165-1210.
- McWilliams, A. and Siegel, D., 2001. Corporate social responsibility: A theory of the firm perspective. *Academy of management review*, 26(1), pp.117-127.
- Nasrullah, N.M. and Rahim, M.M., 2014. CSR in private enterprises in developing countries. *Evidences from the Ready-Made Garments Industry in Bangladesh*.
- Nicolopoulou, K., 2011. Towards a theoretical framework for knowledge transfer in the field of CSR and sustainability. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 30(6), pp.524-538.
- Papasolomou-Doukakis, I., Krambia-Kapardis, M. and Katsioloudes, M., 2005. Corporate social responsibility: the way forward? Maybe not! A preliminary study in Cyprus. *European Business Review*, 17(3), pp.263-279.
- Essack, Z., Toohey, J. and Strode, A., 2016. Reflecting on adolescents' evolving sexual and reproductive health rights: canvassing the opinion of social workers in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 24(47), pp.195-204.
- Van Marrewijk, M., 2003. Concepts and definitions of CSR and corporate sustainability: Between agency and communion. *Journal of business ethics*, 44(2-3), pp.95-105.
- Washington, L and Tallis, V. (2012). Sexual and reproductive health and rights: a useful discourse for feminist analysis and activism? . *A Journal on African Women's Experiences*. 2 (1), p6-10.