

# **The Role of Public Administration in Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability: A Descriptive Analysis of Lagosian Perception in Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT:** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is set to be a concept whereby companies decide voluntarily to contribute better to societal development and cleaner environment in relationship with the State Government. This development pushes governments' developmental plans to act and impact public policies through adoption of CSR as a complementing factor to government programs. This study tries to examine and evaluate how the concept of CSR can be linked to Governance in managing public corporations and environmental integrity which public administrator needs to strengthen the philosophy of sustainability in increasing the support required by government and non-government actors by providing for public sustainability given the rapid adoption of CSR in business strategy. This paper addresses the question of how the theory of CSR practice can provide directions and support for Government Institutions. It's explores how CSR and practices can be integrated into public services to behave in a responsible and sustainable manner by discussing the perceptions of Lagosian and their responsibilities.

**KEYWORDS:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Public Policies, Governance, Public relations, Welfare state

## **Introduction**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a major actor and practices in the public services and political economy of many countries. Under the current economic philosophy, they are regarded as the engine of growth, development and an integral part of Public Services. Based on these premises, the performance of Governmental institutions is of interest to both the government and the citizens. For any successful Government corporations, corporate social responsibility has long been identified as a core factor. It is also believed that corporate governance cannot be effective without effective corporate social responsibility (CSR).

LAGOS State Governor, Akinwunmi Ambode, has charged corporate bodies in the state to urgently support the effort of the government by engaging in Corporate Social Responsibility, (CSR) to develop grassroots communities in the state. He stated that the population of Lagos had been increasing on a daily basis, hence the need for the private sector to support the efforts of the government through CSR. "The challenge has increased over the years because of the recession in the economy which has stretched the resources of the government to cater for the weak and the old," he said, adding that the people at the grassroots had risen to the challenges of their environment by engaging in self-help projects. (Akoni 2017).

Jimi (2008) observes that presently, CSR is a family of concepts dealing with corporate philanthropy, corporate citizenship, community relations, community advocacy, corporate governance, accountability and transparency, corporate competence, corporate ethics, employee relations, human rights and so on. Essentially, various measures, models and concepts have been developed globally and nationally to ensure that these corporate social responsibility organizations survive and operate in the best interest of all stakeholders including the government. Wikipedia defines Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a concept that organizations (but not only) corporations have on obligation to seek the interest of customers, employees, shareholders, communities and ecological considerations in all aspects of their operations.

According to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (1999), CRS is defined as "the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the work force and their families as well as the local community and society at large" (cited by Odunlami 2008).

Jimi (2008) defines Corporate Social Responsibility as the capability of business (or any, organization) to pay more attention to its relationship with society and multiple stakeholders, rather than focus narrowly on maximising shareholder value”.

The above submissions underscore the relevance of the contention made by (Oso, 2008) that, “it appears all major companies have come to accept Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as an important component of business philosophy. Their acceptance, to be seen as being good and socially responsible corporate citizens, is a big shift in paradigm. The shift has more or less being forced on them by changing social values from the 1960s, particularly the ‘intrusion’ of the people into the political arena”.

CSR, in general, survives where good corporate governance of public administration is best practiced whereas the survival of corporate governance is tied to the effective application of Corporate Social Responsibility. This study explored the efficacy of corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, which impact the lives of Lagosian and public services performance resulting in accountability, transparency and people’s oriented governance through the provisions and sustainability of public services for the benefits of the communities. The paper also enumerates the essence and impact of public administration performance and provide additional insights into the relationship between CSR and public services.

### **Briefing about Lagos State of Nigeria**

**Lagos** (*Èkó*) is a city in the Nigerian state of Lagos. The city, with its adjoining conurbation, is the most populous in Nigeria, and the most populous on the African continent. It is one of the fastest growing cities in the world (UN Habitat 2006; Diop, Barousseau and Descamps 2014) and also one of the most populous urban agglomerations (Kaplan 2014). Lagos is a major financial center in Africa; the megacity has the highest GDP, and also houses one of the largest and busiest ports on the continent. (Lees, Shin and López-Morales 2015).

Lagos, the capital of Nigeria since its amalgamation in 1914, went on to become the capital of Lagos State after its creation. However, the state capital was later moved to Ikeja in 1976, and the federal capital moved to Abuja in 1991. Even though Lagos is still widely referred to as a city, the present day Lagos, also known as "Metropolitan Lagos", and officially as "Lagos Metropolitan Area" is an urban agglomeration or conurbation, (Caprio 2012) consisting of 20 LGAs, 32 LCDAs including Ikeja, the state capital of Lagos State. This conurbation makes up 37% of Lagos State's total land area, but houses about 85% of the state's total population (Lagos State Government, 2015). The exact population of Metropolitan Lagos is disputed, as at 2015, unofficial figures put the population of "Greater Metropolitan Lagos", which includes Lagos and its surrounding metro area, extending as far as into Ogun State, at approximately 21 million (Wikipedia n.d.).

Lagos was adversely affected during Nigeria's military rule (Draper and Hammond 2015). Also, on 12 December 1991, the seat of the Federal Government was also formally relocated to Abuja. However, Lagos still remains the financial center of the country, and also grew to become the most populous conurbation in the country. Lagos State is bounded on the north and east by Ogun State. In the west, it shares boundaries with the Republic of Benin. Behind its southern borders lies the Atlantic Ocean. 22% of its 3,577 km<sup>2</sup> are lagoons and creeks.

### **Background of CSR in Lagos State**

The concept of corporate social responsibility had been existing in Lagos State from antiquity. Historical records show that corporate social responsibility has a long history which dated back to the ancient times where existed what is called tribal communes which supervised the activities of the tribe as well as individual members of the tribe to ensure conformity with tribal norms. As time went by, the tribal form later matured to the level of agrarian communities whereby the concept of family came to the fore with the activities of family members were monitored by the family councils, (Lai and Bello 2012).

Recently speaking, The Lagos State Governor, Mr. Ambode said the population of Lagos had been increasing on a daily basis, hence the need for the private sector to support the efforts of the government through CSR. “The 24 million people who inhabit Lagos State today, including the

corporate players must see Lagos as one big family where the rich help the poor and where each is his brother's keeper," he said. The governor said he looked forward to serious partnership between the private sector and the government in the next 24 months in the areas of needs assessment of the communities which cut across drainage rehabilitations, roads, electricity, pipe borne water, among others (Akoni 2017).

### **The Role of Public Administration**

Public Administration is an instrument of the State welfare, when the state was confidently expected to meet all the social and economic needs of the citizenry, service delivery, resource allocation 'from the cradle to the grave'. It is a commitment to incremental budgeting focus on public service organizations, the dominance of the 'rule of law'; a central role in policy making and implementation through the State entering into a dialogue with private enterprises to frame a city development initiative with the aim to promote and support Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for the benefits of the people through socio-economic development plans, educational empowerment, recreational facilities and cultural purposes to improve the quality of life and the society at large.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a composite exploratory and survey design methodology drawing from the previous literature review and studies in the related areas. The top five Ministries and parastatals were selected from the 44 Ministries of the State because they were perceived to have very crucial connections with the people of the State due to the resources and advantages of adopting corporate social responsibility practices.

Furthermore, these Ministries and parastatals exhibited higher engagement in governance of the State. The study examined the data for the fiscal year 2018. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were generated through structured open-questionnaire administered to 50 respondents at the Ministries and parastatals such as Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Cooperatives, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Information & Strategy, Ministry of Local Government & Community Affairs who are closely related to the general masses of the State.

The questionnaire was structured into two sections. The first section elicited information on CSR practices by the State Government and the second section elicited information relating to respondents' views on CSR practices in the private firm sector. The target respondents comprised top-level management members of the Ministries and the private firms in the sample. All the questionnaire administered were returned and correctly filled.

Consequently, data presentation and analysis were based on responses extracted from the Fifty (50) copies of the questionnaire. The responses were analyzed on the four main focus of this study which are; Infrastructure development, Educational and Health, Security and Philanthropic responsibilities (private firms and banking sectors). The data generated constituted the exploratory and survey on the waves, issues and practices of CSR in the State. The results of the open-ended questionnaire and the content analysis of the web-based CSR reporting are presented below in the analyses and discussions.

The Secondary data were extracted from published literatures and case studies on the practices of CSR in the State.

### **Analyses and Discussions**

As was done in the interview, CSR was framed to reflect local realities functioning as tools for basic human need provisions by the Lagos Government administration and private firms giving back to the people as means for community development. All participant's respondents agreed that business firms must share part of their profits as contribution to sustain community development, betterment of the employee's life and their families, the society at large and to improve the quality of life.

The table below shows the critical area of priority the Lagosian preferred additional improvement in the area of public services to the people. Same table shows private business firms areas of concern by the people.

Table 1. Areas of Public Services Improvement

No.	Preferred Area of CSR by the People from Lagos State Government	Respondent Percentage (%)	CSR Area of Priority by the People from Private Business Firms	Respondent Percentage (%)
1	Improved Education	100%	Effective Commitment	50%
2	Standard Health Sector	100%	Improved Roads	50%
3	Improved Infrastructures	100%	Area Pipe borne water	55%
4	Poverty Alleviation	100%	Public Toilet at Hospitals and Schools	65%
5	Stable Electricity	100%	Internet Access at the public parks	80%
6	Improved Security	100%	Provision of Subsidies Medical Drugs	65%
7	Drainage Rehabilitation	100%	Employees right	55%
8	Public Toilet at Motor Parks	100%	Community Development projects	75%

*Source: Rate of Respondents Views on CSR in Lagos State of Nigeria*

Summarizing above, there are positive trends with a number of initiatives regarding CSR among the elite people of Lagos State and calls on the private business sectors to engage CSR effectively and efficiently to better the lives of the people and the community at large.

- 1. Preferred Area of CSR by the People from Lagos State Government:** The respondents unanimously agreed in unison that State Government MUST improve the provisions of public services which is an expected norm as the Government must provide for the general public. The Government also understand that they cannot succeed in their administration when public cries are ignored and unattended to.
- 2. CSR Area of Priority by the People from Private Business Firms:** The Lagosians expected socio-economic development programs from the private sectors in the State as Government alone cannot meet the people's needs. Overall, the respondents are aware of the private sectors and firm's contributions significantly. They want the firms to be more concerned with social services project as giving back to the public as no firms can grow stronger without the masses who patronizes their goods and services.

### **Characteristic of the Nigerian Corporate Social Responsibility in Lagos, Nigeria**

CSR in Lagos State aimed towards addressing the peculiarity of the socio-economic development challenges of the State (e.g. poverty alleviation, health care provision, infrastructure development, education, etc.) and would be informed by socio-cultural influences (e.g. communalism and philanthropy charity). They might not necessarily reflect the popular western standard/ expectations of CSR (e.g. consumer protection, fair trade, green marketing, climate change concerns, social responsible investments, etc.) but it is an interesting case to explore the meaning and practice of CSR for many reasons.

It is a situation whereby Lagos State Government and the private companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their day to day administration business operations and with interaction with private firm's holders on a voluntary basis for the betterment of the community just like the Lagos State Governor Ambode said the state had now reached a time when non-state actors must play more role in supporting the self-help projects and programmes of the communities. He further solicits for serious partnership between the private sector and the government in the next 24 months in the areas of needs assessment of the communities which cut across drainage rehabilitations, roads, electricity, pipe borne water, among others.

Lagos had come to a point where CSR was greatly needed as government could not do all alone and needed the partnership of the private sector through CSR. In the same vein, the Deputy Consulate General, Peoples Republic of China, Guan Zhongpi, said the Chinese government had been partnering with Lagos in the area of CSR and that more attention would be given to the needs of the communities. He said the Consulate had previously implemented more than 10 CSR projects in Lagos, such as donating equipment to schools, sinking of boreholes at the Lagos University, among others.

Other Corporate Firms in Lagos also testifies that the issue of CRS is not new to them but this is an opportunity to further share development within communities. This tripartite partnership between, communities, corporate bodies and the government. It's an all-inclusive partnership that must come together to achieve for the development of the community.

This study finds out that CSR in Lagos consist of four main social responsibilities of the Government and Corporate bodies. These four are; Infrastructure development, Educational and Health, Security and Philanthropic responsibilities which are those actions that society expect for a company to be a good corporate citizen. With these, Lagos is engaging CSR to improve the well-being of society, comply with ethical, moral and environmental norms, foster relationships with corporate firms and banks in order to meet the dream of the mega city.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The State should develop a strategic partnership with the private sectors voluntarily to better the existing public utilities through professional management focusing on well-being of the people as contribution to sustainable development.

SCR projects should be made proactive, sympathetic, sensitive, and capable of meeting expectations of the public's needs and opinions because this will promote public confidence, encourages transparency and accountability which will have a positive effect on the social-cultural development of the grass-root sectors in Lagos State.

Finally, Lagos State Government should engage various partners from the business sectors, the private sectors, civil society Organization, and community based organisations in bilaterally and multilaterally capacity to create programs that train civil servants to promote better social and environmental practices in the society. The government as the determinant of policy should also serves to support and encourage the corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs of private sectors for the success of government programs in realising the society welfare and improving the quality of life of the people.

One of these roles is to run corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs into socio-economic empowerment programs through total implementation of socio-institutions as private sectors do not only exploit natural resources on a large scale in order to pursue economic benefits but must integrate social responsibility values as part of their policy for whole betterment of the State and her people.

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