Intellectual Discourse

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Intellectual Discourse is a highly respected, academic refereed journal of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). It is published twice a year by the IIUM Press, IIUM, and contains reflections, articles, research notes and review articles representing the disciplines, methods and viewpoints of the Muslim world.

Intellectual Discourse is abstracted in *SCOPUS, ProQuest, International Political Science Abstracts, Peace Research Abstracts Journal, Muslim World Book Review, Bibliography of Asian Studies, Index Islamicus, Religious and Theological Abstracts, ATLA Religion Database, MyCite, ISC* and *EBSCO*.

Intellectual Discourse
Vol. 29, No. 2, 2021

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Book Review

Conference Report

Understanding Community Needs for Better Corporate Social Responsibility in Pulau Pinang and Its Educational Implications

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Abstract: Despite the positivity Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) brings to the corporate table, scant attention has been paid to understanding its impact on the communities. CSR practice is relatively immature as most companies fail to understand the community needs and the method to satiate these needs effectively. It is also believed that the social work profession shares common values that CSR attempts to address. The present study is a pioneer attempt to understand the gap in CSR delivery through the lens of its recipients by investigating current practices and perceptions on CSR function and the potential involvement of social workers in this field. In-depth interviews were conducted with eight CSR recipient communities in Pulau Pinang. The finding

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provides fresh evidence that has broadened the understanding of how efficient CSR specialists can optimize their roles, providing a basis for establishing an appropriate curriculum.

Keywords: Community needs, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Malaysia, Educational implications, Curriculum

Abstrak: Walaupun tanggungjawab sosial korporat (CSR) telah meningkatkan keuntungan dan nilai syarikat, perhatian yang diberikan dalam memahami kesan tanggungjawab sosial terhadap masyarakat setempat adalah terhad. Fenomena CSR masih belum matang kerana banyak syarikat gagal memahami keperluan masyarakat dan kaedah yang paling berkesan bagi memenuhi keperluan tersebut. Profession kerja sosial dikatakan berkongsi nilai yang sama dengan CSR. Kajian ini merupakan usaha perintis dalam memahami jurang yang wujud dalam pelaksanaan tanggungjawab sosial melalui lensa penerima-penerima CSR dengan mengkaji secara khusus amalan-amalan tersebut serta persepsi penerima manfaat terhadap fungsi CSR dan potensi penglibatan pekerja sosial dalam bidang ini. Temubual mendalam telah dilakukan bersama lapan penerima manfaat daripada program CSR di Pulau Pinang. Kajian ini memberikan dapatan baru dengan memperluaskan pemahaman tentang bagaimana pengamal-pengamal CSR dapat mengoptimumkan peranan masing-masing dengan efisien sekaligus membentuk asas yang kukuh dalam pembangunan kurikulum.

Kata Kunci: Keperluan masyarakat, Tanggungjawab sosial korporat, Malaysia, Implikasi pendidikan, Kurikulum

Introduction

There have been indications of CSR movement in Malaysia having peaked over the past few decades, making CSR a standard practice. CSR has become increasingly prevalent and visible in all industries and business institutions, as they have openly embraced CSR strategies for mass appeal and tax reductions. However, common perception views CSR practices as unfocused and just as an afterthought (Abdulrazak and Amran, 2018) while its impact on communities remained dismally low (Ismail et al., 2015). The perception might lend the perception to be an essentially contested concept that permits continuous disputes on its definition (Sheehy, 2015). These social initiatives may not reflect the

needs and demands of communities, and they are perceived as passive
recipients who strongly rely on corporate assistance. Not only do these
initiatives fail to respond to the needs of the affected, but also they are
highly likely to be piecemeal and on a festive-season basis.

Despite its proliferation, the common issues on CSR are a lack of
managerial or internal skills on CSR, qualified employees, and social
awareness regarding the various community programs (Zahidy et al.,
2019). Some perceive the practice as immature and still at its embryonic
stage (Abdulrazak and Amran, 2018). Thus, this fact supports the
contention that there is a chasm between the proposed CSR definition
and how it is applied and abused by CSR practitioners.

At this juncture, education is recommended as one of the critical
ways of enhancing corporate social awareness. Business schools have
also started to include CSR and its purpose as part of the curriculum to
educate future leaders and managers who will eventually experience
environmental, economic, and societal issues throughout their careers
(Azhar and Azman, 2021; Kolb et al., 2017). Interestingly, Gotea and
Rosculet (2019) claimed that having social work professionals (people
with a social work degree) in the corporate setting could help diagnose
community needs and find viable solutions more effectively since the
bottom line is not constantly money. Thus, to make CSR in business
education meaningful for the business community and students, the
awareness of students across all disciplines needed to be aligned. One
way to do that is through collaboration among educators from various
disciplines starting from the initial stages of curriculum formation
(Barber et al., 2014). A plethora of studies have been conducted by local
researchers in CSR (Apaydin et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2019; Jie and
Hasan, 2018; Radzi et al., 2018; Islam et al., 2016; Ismail et al., 2014;
Ahmad, 2012), but none of them delved into the development of a CSR
curriculum, particularly from the perspective of the recipients which is
a vacuum in this field. This paper explores the recipient's community
perspective of CSR programs since their voices are often overlooked or
underemphasized, and scant attention has been paid to understanding
the impacts of CSR activities on their lives. This study is initiated to
address the above imbalances, and the evidence obtained was used to
create a wholesome CSR curriculum that will benefit the students of
various fields and industries later.

The study follows a qualitative strategy that aims to fill the void in the literature by posing two research objectives: (a) to understand the issues and current patterns of CSR activities for meaningful corporate contributions sought by the recipient communities seek and (b) to analyze perceptions, and opinions held by the recipients regarding current CSR functions and the potential involvement of social workers in this field.

Exploring the reasons behind their responses would be fruitful for this research. The results would provide favorable recommendations to the educators, particularly for possible addition in the future curriculum in business management and social work, ultimately leading to a more comprehensive, value-laden, action-oriented, capable of bringing meaningful societal change. This study also provides rich qualitative evidence for companies and industry professionals towards prospective hiring decisions on graduating students with relevant CSR knowledge (students with business management or social work degrees). These graduates would lead humanitarian initiatives for vulnerable groups and better understand the recipient communities and their needs.

Significance of Study

While much has been written about the need for CSR education, far less attention has been paid to exploring the CSR values at the stakeholder's level. For example, several studies have investigated how CSR and sustainability can be integrated into management curriculum (Thomas, 2018; Figuerio and Raufflet, 2015), while some authors conducted literature reviews explaining the role of universities as agents to drive CSR initiatives in their surrounding environment (Karatzoglou, 2013). This study extends previous work by offering an overview and reflection on the stakeholders' responses that facilitate in developing social responsibility curriculum.

This study is critical for at least two reasons, especially for educational institutions, to the best of our knowledge. First, curriculum content and delivery should acknowledge and incorporate stakeholders' views and opinions to increase their relevance and meaning, eventually enhancing the courses' ability to address social responsibility demands from the organizations and wider community. Second, business education has long been criticized for being geared towards the ethics of personal advantage. Therefore, the CSR curriculum will focus on

social values, empathy, and humanities, enhancing the educators' ability to frame future curriculum in the business/management or social work school.

This study can be viewed as an urgent call to modify business education in light of changing the ideas on CSR and providing a framework suited for the business or management education in the new post-crisis realities of curriculum and pedagogy. The study offers a unique insight into the CSR values of millennial business students vis-a-vis humanities and social science students. The findings are critical for designing an effective integrative and interdisciplinary learning curriculum and shaping the social responsibility behaviours of the next generation of managers and leaders.

Theoretical Framework

Stakeholder Theory and CSR

The stakeholder theory emerged in the theory of ethics in business and management, which promotes practical, ethical, and effective strategies in diverse environmental conditions (Harrison et al., 2015). This theory is known for its efficiency as it responds to positive attitudes and behaviours towards organizations and communities such as shareholders, customers, communities, and employees. The rising popularity of CSR has compelled companies to place greater emphasis on their business obligation in pursuing profit, nurturing their business, and embedding ethical values. Furthermore, companies with an active CSR background would benefit from sharing practice as part of their responsibilities to society. According to the stakeholder value creation interpretation, CSR activities consume valuable effects on shareholders' interest. This notion is based on the idea that when stakeholders support a particular activity, it is founded on stakeholders' best interests (Baron, 2008; Brown and Forster, 2012); for instance, it facilitates a high-performing workforce and retention of customers. CSR emphasizes value creation, accountability, and moral perspectives despite the financial commitments and loads of responsibilities.

Social Capital Theory and CSR

Social Capital Theory posits that individuals who work together in groups benefit themselves and the group they belong to (Teik-Aun and Bustami, 2019). Based on Putnam's (1995) definition and description,

there are two types of social capital: bonding social capital between people who share social and cultural traits (family, neighbors, friends) and bridging social capital between individuals who are of differing backgrounds (workmates, acquaintances). Anand and James (2015) found that a company from a region with a high social capital has a higher CSR. This study suggests that the company's CSR should not be solely driven by the self-interest of shareholders or managers but rather by the altruistic inclination of the region. Social capital should be considered when evaluating CSR initiatives, as it has been used to explain both broad social problem solving and business success. This practice usually refers to the operations of a business offsetting its social costs and other positive effects.

Literature Review

As the research is scant and CSR is still developing and crystallizing, it is time to review previous studies on CSR practices and identify the possible gaps in the literature. Thus, guided by stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) and social capital theory (Putnam, 1995), this study attempts to (a) to understand the issues and current patterns of CSR activities for meaningful corporate contributions sought by the recipient communities seek and (b) to analyze perceptions, and opinions held by the recipients regarding current CSR functions and the potential involvement of social workers in this field.

Issues and Current Patterns of CSR Activities in Malaysia

Malaysia is a peaceful, multiracial, multicultural country with Islam as its most professed religion. Nevertheless, CSR practices in Malaysia is perceived and shaped by different culture, religions, and diverse socio-economic conditions. Derived from divine commandments in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith, the concept of social responsibility in Islam, for instance, heavily emphasized reform and social solidarity. Mohammed (2013) posited that the main purpose of the Islamic social system is to enhance the good life (Hayat tayyibah) and to achieve success or falah (human well-being). Giving zakat and sadaqah to the poor is an emblem of Islam. Guiding this principle, Islam established a way of conduct, obligations, and relationship for the communities to respect the rights of others, safeguard various interests, and harmonize different interests, both individually and collectively. Interestingly, Nor et al. (2019) believed that the main reason Malaysian companies embrace CSR is

religiosity. Be it the Bible, Sutras or Vedas, all the religious scriptures influence day-to-day life and morals among their adherents.

Malaysian companies are increasingly ramping up their focus on social responsibility. However, social evils such as education, poverty, health, and disease still pose a serious hazard, affecting society's livelihood (Gupta and Kumar, 2007). Undoubtedly, current awareness of CSR has increased dramatically among Malaysian companies as society becomes more educated and better at assessing CSR practices. The Malaysian Government has increased efforts to embrace CSR practices by establishing the National Vision Policy, National Transformation Plan, and the 9th Malaysian Development Plan (9MP), outlined in the national budget. With the nonstop support from the Malaysian government and massive pressures from stakeholders, social problems, economic and environmental issues are still cliché in this phenomenon. A study by Hatta and Ali (2013) claimed that while Malaysia proudly announced its success story in alleviating poverty, fragile, poor communities still existed, struggling in the face of globalization and liberalization, experiencing poverty for some geographical and societal reasons. It is one of the unchallenged successes that have been highly criticized. The above phenomenon demonstrates the importance of having genuine CSR to gain long-term success in any business venture.

The trends of CSR performed by Malaysian companies are more seasonal and focused on the programs that benefitted the benefactor. The poor communities, elderly, disabled, marginalized, companies will only notice female-headed households and orphans during the festive seasons (Apaydin et al., 2021; Mansor et al., 2021). Approaching the issue from this angle shows that most Malaysian companies have a narrow understanding of social responsibility and fail to take CSR down the line. As CSR is steadfastly rooted in business, many companies struggle with barriers to CSR implementation and shifting their theoretical assumptions to practical execution.

Notably, all business practitioners must commit to developing the best strategy to improve human life quality by embracing the correct sustainable cause. While philanthropy is commendable, it should not be considered the best or the only option because of its practicality in the current complex situation (Delbard, 2020). Although a rising number of companies have integrated the CSR concept within their business

processes, it is obvious that awareness of social responsibility is merely superficial. A shallow conception of corporate's role in society needs to broaden its scope, and sporadic, ad hoc interventions must become a more systematic and sustained effort. The advantages of CSR implementation in the local community are self-evident. Overall, a genuine commitment to CSR is demonstrated by achieving long-lasting results, maintaining a business continuity plan, and, most critically, helping shape a more sustainable community (Fordham and Robinson, 2019).

Many business schools have now introduced CSR into their curricula to resolve the aforementioned conundrum. Incorporating CSR into management education could play an essential role in addressing remarkably complex societal issues while fixing the tarnished social contract between business and community relations (Setó-Pamies & Papaoikonomou, 2016; Sherman & Hansen, 2010). A paradigm shift for business education is needed to prepare the students for the changing complexities of the business environment. The gap between business education and the skills and knowledge demanded by industry has been well documented by academicians. They agreed that educational systems need to change to enhance students' attitudes and worldviews, contributing to more profound social change (Haski-Leventhal, 2020; Person, 2020; Setó-Pamies & Papaoikonomou, 2020; Hughes et al., 2018; Leveson & Joiner, 2014). Storey et al. (2017) dictate that education can produce people highly equipped to meet community needs. Clearly, genuine CSR practices cannot be achieved without proper notion embedment in all levels and across educational system disciplines. Given the never-ending societal issues throughout the world, Hughes et al. (2018) suggested the business school curricula start adopting integrative learning, equipping the graduates with multi-disciplinary perspectives and enhancing their learning and professionalism.

CSR Functions and Potential Involvement of Social Worker in CSR

Zhang et al. (2019) cast some light on the various issues of CSR functions such as lack of corporate awareness of CSR, insufficiently qualified employees, a narrow perspective of corporate responsibility, a lack of transparency, and ignorance of the main facets of society. A few companies remained skeptical about their role in driving CSR function, believing it to be outside the scope of their existing profession. The situation becomes harder when faced with limited capacity and expertise,

resulting in low CSR performance (Loosemore, 2016; Loosemore and Lim, 2018; Zhu et al., 2011). Hamid et al. (2014) claimed that most of the time, no specific organizational unit is responsible for managing CSR as the company carries out CSR voluntarily. Lack of personnel expertise and knowledge on the CSR concept itself are also reflected in the extent to which CSR programs are implemented (Kuo et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2019).

Social workers have a long history of promoting social and economic justice. The impact of social workers on communities and the people who live in them is substantial. Their involvement has expanded to crisis management, empowerment, and advocacy responsibilities. The major aim of social work is to improve well-being and assist people in meeting their basic human needs, focusing on the needs and empowering the vulnerable, oppressed, or living in poverty (Lorenz, 2015). Social workers are familiar with dealing with distressed people, and their experiences have formed the knowledge and expertise to know what services are needed in a community and how to satisfy those needs (Gotea and Rosculet, 2019). Social workers are more politically engaged than the general public, with up to 90% of social workers citing advocacy as an essential element of their job and 60% reporting some contact with government authorities is vital (Beimers, 2015). Social workers' involvement in the disaster phase is a catalyst that manages evacuation, rescue, and advocating for the community affected. Social workers also formed a support group, facilitator for fundraising, outreach social service providers and community health workers. They often fill these tasks instinctive while encountering issues such as a shortage of workers for a big population, a lack of practice experience, or a lack of familiarity with the profession of social work (Kamrujjaman et al., 2018). Social workers who participate in a company and become a part of their corporate structure are extremely meaningful and worthful, with social responsibility straddling both.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach by analyzing the data obtained from eight in-depth interviews. The interview questions were developed and revolved around the recipient communities' perceptions of CSR practices and determined how these practices impact their social well-being. An interview is prominently used for

the data collection, and it acts as an essential function in providing an in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon (Elliott et al., 2017).

Eight respondents, including the recipients of CSR programs, were selected for the interview sessions. Among the beneficiaries' groups are relatively involved people who benefitted from the CSR programs: hospitals, social welfare institutions, B40 group, employees, and domestic clients. Given the nature of the research, data was collected using the purposive sampling technique obtained from databases of the corporations that actively performed CSR practices. Based on their responses, this study attempts to understand the gap in CSR delivery in Malaysia through the lens of CSR beneficiaries.

Each interview lasted from 30 to 40 minutes, with all the sessions being recorded and analyzed. In order to determine the reliability and validity of data gathering, a series of transcriptions and a careful selection of quotations were performed. Acknowledging that the interviews were conducted for academic purposes, the questions were asked in English. However, respondents were free to respond either in English or Malay. For data analysis purposes, thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns within an interview. Relevant quotes and themes were selected carefully to ensure reliability during the thematic analysis procedure. The data were manually analyzed using color-coding and pattern analysis techniques to assist in organizing and eliciting meaning from the data gathered and draws reasonable conclusions from it. The data analysis and procedure in this research involved four main steps: initial theme generation, creating core ideas from coded data, presenting the findings, and writing up a summary. These steps of thematic analysis are in line with the recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2006). In writing the research report and maintaining the participants' anonymity, all recipients were listed with numeric identifiers (R1 to R8). Research ethics issues such as consent letters and ensuring the respondent's identities' privacy and confidentiality were given paramount considerations.

Results and Discussions

Recipient Interviews

This study was conducted in Pulau Pinang, Malaysia and eight representatives of recipient communities of the CSR program were selected to represent their associations. Three of them had five to ten

years of working experience, the other four had more than ten years of experience, while one respondent had less than five years of working experience. They were required to provide a view based on their knowledge and experience as a person in charge of dealing with the end-to-end implementation of CSR programs. Besides, their personal backgrounds were dismissed since they represented their affiliated associations rather than themselves.

Research Objective 1: Views on the Impact of CSR

CSR is still too Ad-Hoc and Treated on Occasional Basis

As CSR has become a widespread practice in Malaysia, its effect on communities is worth exploring. The discussion with the recipient communities demonstrates several noteworthy findings. The respondents were asked to explain the current CSR practices and voice their concerns on CSR performance. All the respondents explained that the CSR approach performed by most companies are highly based on an ad hoc, with such practices being employed randomly and intermittently, especially during the festive seasons. Along the same vein, Apaydin et al. (2021) and Mansor et al. (2021) observed parallels in CSR growth as a luxury add-on performed sporadically. The majority of the recipients held a similar view on this issue, and some of their responses were as follows:

> "Well, I must say that most of them will reach out to the needy during festive seasons. For me, CSR program or campaign should be for life, not only for Hari Raya or Christmas (R1)".

> "Sorry, many companies see CSR practice as a nice-to-have item. They are championing their CSR mostly during festive seasons. I understand that is how they want to spread the festive cheer, but CSR should be beyond the holiday season, isn't it?" (R3).

> "My point is that they are not consistent with their practices. When it comes to CSR, they have no strategic plan for that. You know, CSR is a hot topic during festive seasons, but how about the rest of the year? Issues like poverty, hunger and homeless do not take a break between holidays". (R5)

> "Companies need to practice their CSR more consistently, not only during the holiday seasons. Performing CSR during

> Christmas, for instance, is only part of CSR…CSR is a year-round responsibility" (R7).

This insightful finding supported the evidence provided by Singh and Misra (2021), which showed a great disappointment among the recipients that CSR practices undertaken by many companies have been highly sporadic, with most engaged in a wide range of philanthropic gestures. It was a disheartening experience for the vulnerable recipient communities to receive passive funding, where the cash is given without a record of community development expenditure. According to Respondent 2, the touch-and-go approach for CSR is no longer significant in the world that embraces sustainability value.

Passive Philanthropic Element is No Longer Relevant.

Community perceptions and expectations are considered essential for effective CSR implementation. This notion is supported by Carroll (2021) and Williams (2014), who suggested that the success of CSR is primarily dependent on satisfying the community needs. Communities who have experienced the consequences of unsustainable practices will start to recognize that something has gone fundamentally wrong and will emphasize their true needs. In this study, recipients raised their concerns on the importance of companies having an active approach to philanthropy and deeper involvement in community development initiatives, showing that passive philanthropy is no longer relevant. With the recent COVID-19 pandemic, companies should navigate and revisit their purpose, commitments, and CSR initiatives towards contributing to the beauty of the community by meeting their ever-growing expectations. Given the unprecedented situation, it is time for companies to shine, react swiftly to the issues, and embrace agility, adaptability, and innovation in their programs since the outbreak has left some communities far more vulnerable with inadequate support. Here are some excerpts from the recipient interviews, where pertinent remarks on the issue were put forth:

> "We still benefit from this kind of passive philanthropy like how they issuing to us a one-time cheque, donation, or engaging in one-off volunteer programs. But what is ultimately more valuable, of course from everyone's perspective, is a program that left no one behind…a program of greater depth (R2)."

"Most companies have long practiced some form of CSR, for example, donation, the most popular approach. But what they missed out was empowering individuals and communities to achieve their ultimate goals…like through education or sharing meaningful knowledge and skills to our disabled communities…These are among the programs that all companies must seriously invest in. I think that is more genuine rather than just being generous (R6)."

"You give out money, provide us food and continue to do so for an unknown period. And we are going to stay like this forever, waiting to be spoon-fed. Well, it is an endless thing you see. Honestly, I think they misunderstood the concept. We really hope these companies can invest more in long-term causes like education enrichment or skills that can bring ongoing positive change to our community members. That is all I have to say (R8)".

In order to elicit more important information, the recipients were specifically queried about their feelings on CSR and its effect on communities. The purpose was to measure the happiness of all recipients to find out if all the deliverables were achieved and a significant impact on the community was realized.

'Bolt-on' to 'Built-in' Social Responsibility

The findings revealed a reasonable view of the CSR performance from the recipients' perspectives. All recipients were requested to score their experience on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 representing negative effect (extremely dissatisfied), 5 representing pleasurable experiences and 10 representing life satisfaction (extremely satisfied). No recipients ranked their feelings as a 10 out of 10. Five of them were quite pleased with how they benefited from CSR activities, with a score of 6 and three recipients rated their experience as a 7. All respondents agreed that CSR should not be regarded as a program to be bolted on to business activities. Instead, it must be embedded into business strategy for a more effective and genuine approach. Some of their general answers were as follows:

"Honestly so far we are thankful and quite happy to be part of their programs. We are really grateful for their generosity and kindness. But at this point, they appeared to be 'bolted on' rather than 'built-in'. I hope CSR should be 'built-in'

and becomes critical to the business. So, I will score it at 6 (R5)."

"It is good to receive a little bit of something than nothing at all. But I still think of them as "bolt-on" tactic. They are not deeply integrated CSR into their systems. I score them at 6 (R1)"

"Majority of the companies nowadays are doing quite well, and of course we are happy with that. We really appreciate what they did especially in time of pandemic. Business will continue to prosper if they put CSR at their heart. So, I rated my feelings at 7. (R7)"

The finding highlights the gap between the needs of the communities and the current CSR initiatives. This finding also revealed the misalignment of expectations between the types of CSR initiatives carried out by most companies and communities' expectations. As such, there is a strong distinction between corporate social responsibility and communities' expectations. Also, it is important to understand that religion makes a strong imprint on Malaysia's cultural and social fabric. Guiding this study's assumption was that strong religious beliefs and personalities somehow has spurred business practitioners to become attentive to CSR and help the less fortunate. Perhaps, this is why CSR is performed sporadically, guided largely by philanthropic acts and donations to local communities. The concept of CSR has failed to take hold in Malaysia, mainly in meeting the actual needs of local communities. The insights revealed in this study might be useful for companies to identify and balance the interests of all recipients in Malaysia, which may allow for a better harmonization of CSR programs.

Research Objective 2: Current CSR functions and Potential Involvement of Social Workers

Too much extra-role involvement in CSR functions

The first dimension of the analysis poses who should be accountable for a company's CSR programs and objectives. To highlight its rationale, some probing questions were raised. The recipients were asked who is usually responsible for CSR in a company. All the recipients replied that CSR programs were normally handled and dominated by the public relations, marketing, or human resource department. This notion is supported by Mansor et al. (2021), who claimed that CSR initially

emerged as an interest of the specific departments but possessed a lack of a clear understanding of CSR function. The findings indicate that, instead of appointing a specific person (CSR manager or officer) to oversee the CSR initiatives in the company, situating CSR in an existing organizational function (corporate communication, marketing, or public relations) could dilute the motives behind CSR. Direct ties to any of these functions have caused mixed CSR messages to be delivered to stakeholders. As a result, CSR is then placed under the responsibility of that particular department or, in the worst case, detached from the lifeblood of the organization. According to Respondent 2:

> "There is no specific person or unit to handle and oversee the CSR. The person in-charge with CSR came from various backgrounds and departments such as human resource, public relations, or marketing (R2)."

Lack of Managerial Expertise and CSR Knowledge

Along a similar vein, a shortage of qualified personnel with relevant CSR knowledge and experience will also create additional challenges for making impactful social responsibility practices in the community (Osagie et al., 2016). A lack of knowledge followed by poor management skills and professional advice are the main contributing factors to why CSR has failed to meet the community's various needs. Different researchers have highlighted this issue in existing CSR literature (Kuo et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2019). As mentioned by one of the recipients:

> To tell you the truth, they are usually lacking both knowledge and skills, unable them to deal with complex social issues. Too much is squandered by incompetent CSR practitioners that ultimately fail to get the desired result(R2)."

The aforementioned scenarios lead to the emergence of another theme: the importance of hiring individuals with full CSR knowledge and an appropriate level of understanding of the company's impacts on the community. According to many, companies need to employ individuals with CSR knowledge (with degrees and backgrounds in business management or social work) to rectify the great ills committed. For example, one recipient made the following remark and postulated that:

> "This is the best time for CSR management to be professionalized as much as possible. Companies can appoint someone who really have a good knowledge of what

> CSR actually is…a good CSR specialist with a business management background or social work profession. These people can select beneficiaries, identify needs, and establish interventions. They can help diagnose and solve our issues (R5)."

There is heightened attention to enhancing CSR awareness at all levels in Malaysia. Evidence has suggested that education and training are two important components to strengthen managerial skills and foster a strategic CSR implementation. Battaglia et al. (2014) supported the logic as their study found that a lack of education and training is the primary reason CSR has been poorly understood by many companies, causing hurdles for CSR practitioners. CSR specialists who drive and oversee CSR operations should be educated and qualified to be well-versed in dealing with complex societal problems. A similar finding was reported by Prabawati et al. (2017) that persons who engage in CSR must possess specific skills and competencies to determine the real needs of communities, and such competencies can be developed through education.

'CSR specialist' with a specialization in the field of Social Sciences (such as Social Work) is required

Nevertheless, the recipient communities have voiced the same concern regarding the potential involvement of social work professionals in CSR. Based on the findings, questions on their thoughts about the benefits of a CSR specialist specializing in Social Sciences (such as Social Work) to promote social change are worth studying. Here are excerpts of the discussion.

> "Regardless of what professions you held, in order to stand out in a positive light, it is vital for a CSR specialist to have more affective empathy. And as we know, social workers often have great empathy for the feelings of another. This is where a sense of unity is created (R1)".

> "Individuals that can promote wellness and social consciousness…who really can understand us and have moral sense, civic sprit, tolerance, willingness to help vulnerable groups. I believe social workers are an ideal math for this position because they are able to step into our shoes and understand our needs (R2)".

> "A good CSR specialist should have safeguarding well-
> being skill, social marketing and social work knowledge to
> produce better social projects, be it for corporate image and
> for combating the existing social problems in the community
> (R4)".

> "Social work professionals are able to understand the needs
> of the recipients with more and more humanitarian programs
> likely to be developed for vulnerable groups. They can
> develop a good rapport with the affected communities. Each
> community has its own needs. This will help make decisions
> on prioritization for programs that leave a greater positive
> impact on community (R6)".

> "A good specialist in CSR is ideally positioned to identify,
> manage, and assist those affected to claim their rights. Social
> workers are the "tip of the spear" for community improvement
> programs and make communities better because they have
> the experience in dealing with distressed populations (R7)".

Industrial Social Work as One Option for CSR to Take

In this context, a good CSR specialist should maintain constant contact
with recipient communities and help in innovation and problem solving.
There is no other option but to train the CSR professionals to possess
the sufficient knowledge and skills relating to human development and
behavior, social policy, and industrial law. Industrial social workers
who possess a foundational understanding of social dynamics and skills
with special reference to industrial organizations will be a great asset
for any company. Industrial social work, for example, is a great fit for
the aforementioned position since they operate in a range of settings and
help improve problem-solving skills, which will help the community
reach its most important goal of development in the long term (Cheeran
and Renjith, 2015). Presently, companies that patron a certain social
cause could benefit from having a social work professional as part of
their corporate structure. Therefore, the findings established that the link
between CSR and social work would create a significant interconnection
and act as a fundamental element in solving various social problems.

Educational Implications and Recommendation

The past decade has been marked by the increasing development of
educational curriculums that envision a sustainable future, including

CSR and ethics (Haski-Leventhal, 2020). The function of the universities' role in this new era is to provide society with experts and intellectual capacity and create current and future 'CSR implementers'. Hughes et al. (2018) reinforced the importance of universities to foster greater interdisciplinary and integrative learning in their curricula design and education. The curriculum is designed for teaching different disciplines by integrating knowledge and methodologies from different fields to solve various issues. In other words, the business school needs to explore the interlink between CSR and management and find new ways to collaborate across disciplines, particularly the social sciences. This realization implied the role of higher education in propagating CSR not only as part of their university programs but also into numerous disciplines of study, such as business management and social work courses (social sciences). As Gotea and Rosculet (2019) postulate, the social work profession shares similar ideals that CSR aims to address; hence the relationship and interconnection between the two disciplines are worth exploring.

Recognizing this inadequacy, evidence from the recipients provides a meaningful, complete, and nuanced picture of CSR impacts on themselves. Based on the findings, this study developed a CSR curriculum (see Table 1) that can be used as part of the institution's efforts in designing an effective business curriculum, aiming to enhance the social responsibility values for the next generation of managers and leaders. It is argued that educating the future business community will help to promote a better tomorrow for future generations. Those who have been equipped with adequate knowledge and skills, be it in the field of business or social work (social sciences), can be an essential element in shaping corporate policies centered on the idea of respecting and fulfilling community needs. This leads to the desirable professional attributes in enhancing business acumen and the community. This appears to be the logic, considering that professionals from different disciplines work together in the real world outside of the universities.

Table 1 Curriculum outline

Week	Course
Week 1	The meaning and importance of corporate social responsibility.

Week 2	Corporate social responsibility and social legitimacy.
Week 3	Understand the characteristics of vulnerable groups. Identify what the psychosocial consequences of vulnerable groups are.
Week 4	Define what social vulnerability means
	Recognize some concepts and theories related to social vulnerability
Week 5	Understanding the diversity issues (race, religion, age, gender, social orientation, social class)
Week 6	Ethical responsibilities to practice settings
Week 7	Ethical responsibilities as professionals
Week 8	Ethical responsibilities to the broader society
Week 9	Community service learning
Week 10	Strategic corporate social responsibility and sustainability
Week 11	Sustainability challenge
Week 12	Systematic thinking and problem-solving approaches
Week 13	Demonstrate how knowledge, values, and skills in qualitative interventions enhance the social well being of individuals, groups, families, and communities who are vulnerable.
Week 14	Case studies in organizational, economic, and societal issues

Armed with stakeholder and social capital theory, universities in the twenty-first century are not only preparing corporate managers for the realities of business life, given that addressing the complex community needs of the world today will be remarkably different. Thus, the 14 weeks course program educates, trains, and exposes candidates to the theories and best practices to various social issues in the context, concept, and theme in identifying, planning, and managing CSR practices. As articulated in the Millennium Development Goals and Agenda 21, this program's strength lies in the specialization to produce candidates

who can apply business theory, social competence, and practices to assess local needs and resources more effectively. As a result, cases on community issues will be better managed, more humanitarian efforts for vulnerable groups will likely be formed, and, most significantly, the requirements of recipients will be better understood.

Conclusion

The initiatives of CSR, even in the year 2021, are mostly associated with inconsistent activities to support the community and avoid a total breakdown. A lack of CSR knowledge and expertise has led a majority of companies to ignore the true meaning of CSR. It is now more than just simply donating to a good cause. The purpose of CSR is to have a year-round commitment to serving the community more consistently. In this context, low interest in addressing community needs among the CSR specialists demonstrate a superficial understanding of social issues.

Concerning the focus on community, gauging the views of these recipients is important. As far as they are concerned, this can be identified as a crucial assessment in establishing a more fruitful approach towards genuine CSR. A poor degree of CSR understanding and lack of social consciousness, particularly among the companies, raised the essential question of educating and spreading awareness on this matter.

A lack of CSR knowledge is a contributing factor that hinders many companies from practising CSR initiatives. Zou et al. (2021) suggested that this situation could somehow be improved through intensive education programs, aiming to develop CSR knowledge of the CSR specialist and employees working in different sectors in Malaysia. More importantly, without upgrading the knowledge, companies are still uncertain about the devastating effects they may cause from their actions towards the community.

Changes are happening. Universities of the twenty-first century, unlike their predecessors, act as a center of knowledge generation and dissemination and are expected to be actively addressing the world's societal and environmental issues by promoting sustainable solutions. As the education on CSR is far from the mainstream to business or social work programs in Malaysia, CSR should be made compulsory at business and social work schools to sensitize students about sustainability issues. Students graduating from such programs

will develop into sustainability-driven individuals, cultivating a global outlook which is a prerequisite for a sustainable world.

This study faces some limitations, especially concerning the sample size and opens up a new horizon for upcoming research in the same field. Future research may expand the strength of this study with a larger sample of affiliations and more diverse in terms of geographical area, which may also include different states. Again, it is important to highlight that this is an exploratory study aimed to understand the perceptions of the CSR recipients. Nevertheless, we hope this study can serve as a kick-starter to even more comprehensive future studies with careful interpretations of the valuable insights obtained.

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