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THE ROLE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACTIVITIES ON EGERTON UNIVERSITY'S PUBLIC IMAGE: A CASE OF NJORO DIVISION COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a business strategy contributes to sustainable economic development which contributes to the way organizations integrate with the society. This would lead organizations to achieve visibility as good community citizen, gain the good will of the community in which they operate, better relations and subsequently improved public image. There has been an increasing importance in corporate social responsibility activities in organizations in recent years. However, this has mostly been in the private sectors. As a parastatal, Egerton University has undertaken some CSR activities such as education, health and environmental activities to help the local communities. However, there is little documentation on how these activities affect the University's public image. This study aimed at determining the role of corporate social responsibility activities on enhancing Egerton University's public image. The research employed a descriptive survey design. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 77 stakeholders comprising representatives from 31 public schools, 3 public hospitals, 12 Local area administrators (the chiefs and their assistants), and 3 leaders from community based organizations. Questionnaires were used to collect primary data. Descriptive statistics, Friedman's ranking test and chi-square were used to analyze the specific objectives with the aid of SPSS computer software. The results show that Egerton university had put much effort in environmental conservation, education and health. Overall, corporate social responsibility activities undertaken by Egerton University had positive impact on the University's public image.

KEYWORDS

Corporate Social Responsibility Activities, Public image.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become increasingly important to businesses over the last few years. In recent years the business strategy field has experienced the renaissance of CSR as a major topic of interest (Utting, 2005). CSR had already shown considerable interest in the 1960s and 70s, spawning a broad range of scholarly contributions (Cheit, 1964; Heald, 1970; Ackermann and Bauer, 1976; Carroll, 1999), and a veritable industry of social auditors and consultants. However, the topic all but vanished from most managers' minds in the 1980s (Dierkes and Antal, 1986; Vogel, 1986).

The economic impact of corporate social responsibility can be broken down into direct and indirect effects. The direct effects may be derived from a better working environment, which leads to a more committed and productive workforce or from more efficient use of natural resources. In addition, indirect effects result from the growing attention of consumers and investors, which will increase corporate opportunities on the markets.

Many corporations undertake CSR activities in order to protect their public image and the 'good name' of the corporation and its associates. Many corporations value their public image and good name even if they are relatively non-responsive to consumer pressures. A good public image is very hard to create and relatively fragile and a single high profile incident can create lasting negative sentiments in a community or the public at large (Haywood 1994; Ali, 2003).

Public image also operates synergistically with other drivers, and having a good public image (as an industry or as an individual company) is beneficial when attempting to influence public policy, when faced with liability law suits, for investor confidence, when attempting to attract, motivate, and retain employees, when dealing with NGOs and other civil groups, and when a corporation is seeking necessary permissions and accommodations from local communities (Haywood 1994; Burke 1999; Brady, 2005). In addition, a good public image is very important in forging long term business associations and in trust building with business and non-business partners (Haywood 1994; Myles and Schoening-Thiessen, 2003). Image is a perceptual measure of a public's degree of satisfaction with the activities and performance of an organization. Image surveys are developed to measure the attitudes of people towards an organization, how well they understand it, and what they like and dislike about it (Moore, 1981). Image assessment and its application are crucial to an organizations longterm survival and well being. Image management acts as a powerful public support vehicle (Elbeck and Buchanan, 1987).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature shows that corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been researched in various countries. A part from the private sector, universities around the world have conducted studies on the same. Altman(1999) did a study on the link between Corporate Social Responsibility, environmental performance and corporate financial performance where he used multiple regression model to analyze the collected data the findings of the study was that there is a positive association on environmental performance and financial performance.

Maimunah (2009) studied the impact of corporate social responsibility on the society. She acknowledges that there is a close link between corporate and community development. Furthermore, a research funded by European Commission (EU 2007) on understanding and responding to societal demands, aimed to develop knowledge and understanding on the degree of alignment between companies and their stakeholders about what CSR involves within their specific

context. The finding of the study was that there is a wide gap between managers and stakeholders understanding of what constitutes the companies social responsibilities.

According to a number of scholars, CSR requires the firms to commit to balancing and improving environmental and social impacts without damaging economic performance. This in turn, leads to a move from the conventional view of the firm, where the main responsibility of the firm is to provide goods and services to society (Chamberlain, 1973; Friedman, 1968, 1970, cited in Williamson et al., 2006), to one which sees firms as contributing to the welfare of society (Carroll, 1979; Steiner and Steiner, 1997, cited in Williamson et al., 2006). This is specifically so true for universities where contribution to knowledge and well-being of society is of great importance.

CORPORATIONS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PUBLIC IMAGE

A great deal of empirical work has been focused on attempting to quantify the relationship between profitability and corporate public image. It has been found that the public image damage from CSR related disasters can exceed the direct costs of the disaster. As Haywood (1994) explains, trust is a vital component of business operation and stakeholders who work with a corporation care about its public image as this is what they perceive most strongly. For these reasons managing public image is a vital part of corporate management and many executives spend a great deal of effort addressing this aspect of their businesses (Porter & Kramer 2006). As Ongkrutraksa (2007) states, "It is obvious (from numerous high profile examples) that corporate giants deem it a must to promote corporate images that reflect their environmental awareness and involvement".

CSR IN UNIVERSITIES

In the context of universities, previous research shows that higher education institutions can cause "significant environmental impacts" (Jabbour, 2010). As argued by Alshuwaikhat and Abubakar (2008), many of them as a result of their large size, expressive movement of people and vehicles, high consumption of materials, and strong development of complex activities, these institutions may even be considered as "small towns". Therefore it is inferred that universities should be responsible toward society and their stakeholders since the stakeholders provide organizations with a range of resources such as capital, customers, employees, materials and legitimacy (Deegan, 2002).

There are a number of studies which have tackled the issue of sustainability in higher education. A recent study by Wright (2010), examined how a cohort of University presidents and vice-presidents in Canadian universities conceptualize sustainable development, sustainable universities, the role that universities play in achieving a sustainable future, key issues facing the University, and the barriers to implementing sustainability initiatives on campus. The study showed that although the majority of participants were well versed in the concept of sustainable development, they were less familiar with the concept of a sustainable University. The participants also listed financial predicaments, lack of understanding and awareness of sustainability issues amongst the University population, and resistance to change as the main barriers in the path of sustainability. This view is reiterated by Pollock et al. (2009) who points out that "complex and ineffective governance, traditional disciplinary boundaries, and the lack of a shared vision at academic institutions often hinder University's progress toward leading the world to a more sustainable and desirable future"

Consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about the ethics of the companies they deal with, corporate social responsibility is no longer for large corporations only. Through their market activities, firms contribute to social well-being by serving consumer demands, providing jobs, innovating and paying taxes that fund public programs. Through their non-market activities firms act to shape their market environment by supporting free trade and socially efficient approaches to environmental protection, product and employee safety (Baron, 2000).

According to Godfrey (2005), stakeholders are likely to impute moral values to organizational actions. Goffman (1997) suggests that when individuals evaluate actions, they tend to treat them as claims and promises implicitly made, and claims and promises tend to have a moral character. During the evaluation process, individuals tend to judge not only tangible facts at hand, but also assign motivations to the other party (Jones et al., 1965). In the context of this study, CSR actions are likely to be treated by stakeholders as implicit claims and promises that the company brings ethical values in its exchanges with its stakeholders. In this respect, CSR activities will likely generate positive reputation and subsequent positive moral capital, since "...good and beneficent acts that go beyond the call of duty should result in approbation rather than condemnation" (Godfrey, 2005). Building on these perspectives, it is likely that companies use CSR actions as a way to generate positive moral capital among external and internal constituencies.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Organizations' involvement in CSR activities has some financial implication and thus it is imperative to keep track of such activities. The study identified the role of CSR activities on Egerton University's public image and therefore contributes positively to the knowledge relative to which activities are more effective. The findings of the study would be very useful to give a general picture of what the perception of the stakeholders would be when Egerton University undertakes CSR activities. The study would be a basis of reference and would activate more research in the study area by academicians and the business community in Kenya and the world.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the recent past, there has been an increasing importance in corporate social responsibility activities in private and public organizations (Utting, 2005). Little is known on how CSR activities affect the University's public image. Therefore, this study seeks to establish the role of CSR activities on Egerton University's public image.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The broad objective of this study was to establish the role of CSR activities on Egerton University's public image.

1. To establish the community's level of awareness of the University's participation in CSR activities.
2. To establish the perception of different community stakeholders on Egerton University's CSR activities.
3. To determine if Egerton University's participation in CSR activities enhances its public image in the surrounding community.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the level of awareness of different stakeholders on the role of the University in CSR activities?
2. What is the perception of the different community stakeholders on Egerton University's participation in CSR activities?
3. Does Egerton University's participation in CSR activities enhance its public image in the surrounding community?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted a survey design. The design was chosen because it was an efficient method of collecting descriptive data regarding characteristic of a sample of a population, current practices, conditions or needs. The design was also used because it allowed the researcher to gather information regarding the respondents' opinions, perceptions and attitudes in a highly economical way.

Purposive sampling was used to select the study area. Multistage sampling technique was used to arrive at the desired sample size from the study area. Further, stratified sampling was used to arrive at the subgroups which were schools, medical units, local area administration, district environmental office and community based organization from the population since it ensured that the five sub-groups of community stakeholders are proportionally represented and that

the difference in the sub-group characteristics is accounted for. This technique was used to ensure that the target population is divided into different homogenous strata and each stratum is represented in the sample in a proportion equivalent to its size in the population.

There are 31 public schools in the Division, 3 public medical units (Njoro, Naisuit, and Kihingo), 12 Local Area administrators from (Njoro, Kihingo, Mukungugu and Piave), 3 leaders of the community based organizations who dealt directly with the University (MUNES, Eastern Mau and Njokerio youth group), the District environmental officer who works with NEMA and the University. The study targeted 62 representatives who were purposively chosen from the schools that is the head teachers and their deputies or senior teachers, 3 medical officers from the medical units, 8 administrators who included the chiefs and their assistants, the District Environmental Officer and 3 leaders from the Community Based Organizations directly sponsored by Egerton.

TABLE 1 :SAMPLE SIZE FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY

No. 1	Category/Stratum	Sample Size
1	Schools	62
2	Medical Units	3
3	District Environmental Office	1
4	Local Area Administration	8
5	Community Based Organizations	3
	Total	77

DATA COLLECTION

Questionnaires targeting the various categories of community members were used to collect primary data. Secondary data was obtained from records and documents (e.g., University reports on community development activities implemented, University budget reports, Egerton University strategic plan, Njoro municipality education and health ministry and Environmental Office). To ensure reliability cronbach alpha was used which gave a result of 0.67 hence ensuring that the methods used were reliable.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics and Friedman rank test was used to find out the community's level of awareness of the University's participation in CSR activities. Data was analyzed using Chi-square to test the perception of different community stakeholders on Egerton University's CSR activities and to assess if Egerton University's participation in CSR activities enhances its public image in the surrounding community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Table 2 below shows the respondents response rate on gender where 61.1% represented the male gender and 38.9% female gender.

TABLE 2: GENDER FOR THE RESPONDENTS

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	44	61.1
Female	28	38.9
Total	72	100.0

Source: Field Data

Table 3 shows the mean average for the ages and education level of the respondents. The mean average was 42.47 for the ages while the mean for education level was 15.49. The results indicated that most of the respondents were considerably elderly and had college level of education. Auger *et al.*, (2003) suggests that higher levels of knowledge about social issues would lead to higher knowledge about CSR activities.

TABLE 3: RESULTS OF AGE AND EDUCATION LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	72	25	55	42.47	9.399
Education	72	3	21	15.49	2.501

Source: Field Data

LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON CSR ACTIVITIES BY GENDER

Table 4 presents the respondents level of awareness on the different CSR activities undertaken by the University by gender. On the environmental activities, majority of the male who were highly aware were 65.2% while the female response rate was 34.8%, those who were largely aware were 50% for both genders. Health activity also registered a high level of awareness on the male gender with a response rate of 61.1% contrary to 38.9% ,64.7% of the respondents were largely aware contrary to the female who had a percentage of 35.3% and finally 56% and 44% respectively on both genders.

TABLE 4: LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON CSR ACTIVITIES BY GENDER

CSR activity	Environment		Health		Education		Total
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Males (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	
not aware	100	0	100	0	71.4	28.6	100
low level of awareness	83.3	16.7	46.7	53.3	60	40	100
moderately aware	58.3	41.7	69.2	30.8	61.5	38.5	100
largely aware	50	50	47.1	52.9	56	44	100
high level of awareness	65.2	34.8	66.7	33.3	64.7	35.3	100
Total	61.1	38.9	61.1	38.9	61.1	38.9	100

Source: Field Data

LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON CSR ACTIVITIES BY EDUCATION

Table 5 shows the respondents' response rate on the level of awareness by education. On the environmental activity, 65% of the respondents had a high level of awareness. For the education activity, 70% had a high level of awareness. Finally, on health activities, 50% of the respondents had a high level of awareness.

TABLE 5: LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON CSR ACTIVITIES BY EDUCATION

CSR activity	Environmental (%)	Educational (%)	Health (%)
not aware	0	2	0
Low level of awareness	0	5	8
moderately aware	12	11	17
largely aware	23	12	25
high level of awareness	65	70	50

Source: Field Data

LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON CSR ACTIVITIES BY STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY

The results in Table 6 show the respondents level of awareness by stakeholder category. From the Table majority of the respondents from the public schools, (48%) said that they were largely aware that Egerton participated in environmental activities. From the District Environmental office 100% the respondents said that they were largely aware that Egerton had undertaken environmental activities claiming that its department had an input in the same. In the hospitals 27% of the respondents were aware that the participation was moderate. Table 6 further shows the responses on the level of awareness on health activities participated by Egerton University by category. The results show that, 48% of the stakeholders from the public schools were largely aware that Egerton University participated in health activities, 16% had a lower level of awareness and 19% were moderately aware. District Environmental officers were largely aware that Egerton University was involved in health activities. In the hospitals, 40% of the respondents said that their level of awareness on the health participation was low, 20% were moderately aware, and 27% were largely aware and 13% had a high level of awareness. From the administration category 41% of the respondents were moderately aware that Egerton University participated in health activities, 53% largely aware, and 6% had a high level of awareness. From the community based organizations, 25% of the respondents had a lower level of awareness; 50% were moderately aware and 13% were largely aware. Stakeholder category representing the schools benefited from services like vaccinations for children's, many respondents claimed that, the health services offered by Egerton University, University employees were given priority over the community. As a result, majority of the community members preferred to visit the Government hospitals located in the district. Very few went for the services at the University especially those who lived in the immediate environs. The results in Table 6 further show the responses on the level of awareness on education activities as participated by Egerton University in general. From the results, majority of the respondents in the public schools (58%), District environmental office (100%) and administration (53%) were largely aware that Egerton University have participated in educational activities. Contrary, majority of the respondents from the Hospital (40%) and Community Based Organization (38%) had a lower and moderate level of awareness on the University participation in the educational activities. The respondents believe it is mandatory for Universities to offer educational activities because it is one of its key function and also role model especially to public secondary schools in the division.

TABLE 6: DIFFERENT COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF THE UNIVERSITY'S PARTICIPATION IN CSR ACTIVITIES

	Stakeholders	Not Aware(%)	Low level of awareness(%)	Moderately aware (%)	Largely aware(%)	High level of awareness (%)
Description on Environmental activities by Institution/Category	Public Schools	0	10	10	32	48
	DEO	0	0	0	100	0
	Hospital	0	0	27	33	40
	Local Area Administration	0	18	18	53	12
	CBO	0	25	25	0	50
Description on Education activities by Institution/Category	Public Schools	0	16	19	48	16
	DEO	0	0	0	100	0
	Hospital	0	40	20	27	13
	Local Area Administration	0	0	41	53	6
	CBO	0	25	50	13	13
Description on Health activities by Institution/Category	Public Schools	7	12	23	58	0
	DEO	0	0	0	100	0
	Hospital	7	40	20	33	0
	Local Area Administration	2	12	27	53	6
	CBO	25	25	38	12	0

AWARENESS OF CSR ACTIVITIES BY STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY

According to Table 7, on the category of public schools, Egerton university had put more effort in environmental conservation (mean rank 2.23) followed by education (mean rank 2.19) and lastly health (mean rank 1.58). The hospitals were of the same opinion that environment (mean rank 2.50) was more improved CSR activity undertaken by the University as compared with education (mean rank 1.82) and health (mean rank 1.68). On the other hand, CBOs, Local area administration and District Environmental office was of the same opinion that Egerton University impacted positively and equally on the environmental conservation, health and education CSR activities.

TABLE 7: MEAN RANKS ON THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF CSR ACTIVITIES BY STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY

Group	Environmental		Health		Education	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Public schools	2.23	4	1.58	4	2.19	1
DEO	2.75	1	1.25	5	2.00	2
Hospitals	2.50	2	1.68	2	1.82	4
Local Area Administration	2.08	5	1.77	1	1.82	4
CBOs	2.43	3	1.64	3	1.93	5

Source: Field Data

The level of awareness on the CSR activities was further assessed among different categories/ groups representing the stakeholders as shown in Table 8. Respondents from the public schools and hospitals agree that, Egerton University impacted positively and differently on the environment, health and education activities (Table 8).

TABLE 8: FRIEDMAN TEST RESULTS ON THE STAKEHOLDERS' LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON CSR ACTIVITIES

	Public Schools	DEO	Hospital	Local Administration	CBO
N	39	2	11	13	7
χ^2	16.059	3.00	6.643	1.436	4.769
Df	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig	0.000	0.223	0.036	0.488	0.092

Source: Field Data

THE PERCEPTION OF DIFFERENT COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS ON EGERTON UNIVERSITY'S CSR ACTIVITIES

Table 9 shows the Chi-square test results on the perception of stakeholders on the different environmental activities as undertaken by the University. These environmental activities include protection of water catchment areas, environmental awareness campaign, tree planting, waste collection and disposal, efficient use of resources and recycling and re-use of resources. The results showed that the different environmental activities undertaken by Egerton University significantly and positively influenced the perception of different community stakeholders as indicated by the Chi square results $\chi^2 = 106.841$, $df = 5$, $p = 0.000$ respectively.

Furthermore, table 9 shows the Chi-square test results on the perception of different community stakeholders on education activities that contributed to the positive perception of the stakeholders on the University. These activities include building of schools (primary, secondary and expansion of the University), giving of bursary funds for needy learners, provision of library services, sponsoring of girl children to attend school and offering of educational opportunities for visiting learners.

Moreover, table 9 are the Chi-square test results on health activities which positively affected the perception of the stakeholders on the University. The university provides such health activities as access to its medical centre, HIV/AIDS awareness, family planning, community immunization, and response to emergencies prevention, subsequently, these were followed by community health and nutritional awareness campaigns and open and free medical clinics.

TABLE9: CHI-SQUARE TEST ON THE STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTION ON CSR ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY EGERTON UNIVERSITY

	N	Chi-Square	Df	Asymp.Sig.
Environment	72	106.841	5	0.000
Education	72	83.266	4	0.000
Health	72	62.186	6	0.000

Source: Field Data

THE EFFECT OF CSR ACTIVITIES ON THE UNIVERSITY'S PUBLIC IMAGE

Table 10 gives the results on the effect of CSR activities on the university's public image. 40.7% of the community stakeholders were aware of the existence of the University to a very large extent, 39% to a larger extent, 12.7% to a moderate extent, 3.4% to a small extent while 4.2% of the community stakeholders were to no extent aware of the University. With regard to the preference of the University goods and services, 28.2% had a very large extent, 29.9% large extent, 14.5% moderate extent, 17.1% small extent while 10.3% of the community stakeholders gave no extent. Table 10, also shows that, 26.5% were to a very large extent, 36.8% large extent, 20.5% moderate extent, 8.5% small extent and 7.7% to no extent utilization of the university's goods and services.

With the results above, it is clear that the public image of the University is good. According to Elbeck and Buchanan, (1987) an image program stresses on public awareness, preference and utilization of the hospitals services. Further, Moore, (1981) says that image surveys are developed to measure the attitudes of people towards the organization, how well the stakeholders understand it, and what they like and dislike about it.

TABLE 10: DIFFERENT INDICATORS OF PUBLIC IMAGE

Activity	No Extent (%)	Small Extent (%)	Moderate Extent (%)	Large Extent (%)	Very Large Extent (%)	Total (Percentage) 100%
Existence of the University	4.2	3.4	12.7	39	40.7	100
Preference of the University goods and services	10.3	10.3	10.3	10.3	10.3	100
Utilization of the University' goods and services	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.7	100

Source: Field Data

Table 11 gives the degree of stakeholders satisfaction with the university other activities which reflect the public image University. On the University's teaching activities, 16.7% of the respondents were not satisfied at all with the teaching activities, 13.2% were somewhat satisfied, 18.2% were dissatisfied, 29.8% were quite satisfied and 21.9% were very satisfied. On the performance of the University, 11.7% were not satisfied at all with the same, 14.2% were somewhat satisfied, 24.2% were dissatisfied, 22.5% quite satisfied and 27.5% very satisfied. This is in line with a study conducted by Elbeck and Buchanan, (1987) who says that image is a perceptual measure of the public's satisfaction with the activities and performance of an organization.

TABLE 11: DEGREE OF STAKEHOLDRES SATISFACTION WITH OTHERUNIVERSITY CSR ACTIVITIES

Activity	Not at all satisfied (%)	Not at all satisfied (%)	Not at all satisfied (%)	Not at all satisfied (%)	Not at all satisfied (%)	Total (Percentage)
University Teaching activities	16.7	13.2	18.2	29.8	21.9	100
Perfomance of the University	11.7	14.2	24.2	22.5	27.5	100

Source: Field data

FINDINGS

The study revealed that Egerton's involvement in CSR activities has a positive effect on the institutions public image.

CONCLUSION

From the study the following conclusions were made:

- (i) Egerton University undertook CSR activities and it had a positive impact on its public image.
- (ii) The CSR activities were perceived positively by the stakeholders but they lacked information concerning these activities.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher recommends further comprehensive research on CSR investment by firm both public and private sector in order to establish its importance in a firm's public image.

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