

The Corporate Social Responsibility in Sorsogon Private Corporations: Basis for Intervention

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Abstract - *The study looked into the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of the corporations in the province of Sorsogon, Philippines with an end view of proposing an intervention that will provide benefits to the society, particularly to the environment. Purposive sampling was used to identify the 25 respondents who are the Corporate Executive Officers (CEO) or the officers handling the CSR programs. These corporations considered by this study are all registered with the Security and Exchange Commission which are incorporated under the corporation code of the Philippines. Descriptive research design was utilized in determining the profile and the CSR of respondent-corporations. A two-part survey questionnaire is the primary source of data. Survey and unstructured interviews were undertaken to gather pertinent information from the respondents and found out that majority of the corporations are engaged in manufacturing business on food products. Most of them describe their corporation as a sole proprietorship with 16% considered themselves as a corporation with legal personality bounded by a common belief and share of capital stock. Verily, other corporations disclosed to have less than 10 full-time employees and have less than half a million annual revenues. Most of the corporations do not have CSR policy and program, and the five respondent-corporations which are implementing CSR program shows that the most common activity is additional and reinforce contribution to employees. Moreover, the primary factor that negatively influences the implementation of CSR program is the financial cost.*

Keywords: *Corporate Social Responsibility; Private Corporations; CSR programs and Activities; Intervention*

INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility is a term commonly heard in social sphere yet seldom understood by many. Asongo has traced the historical root of the concept Corporate Social Responsibility from ancient times to modern time. He looked into the etymological definition of the term “company” and found out that it was derived from two latin words, *cum and pani*, which means “**breaking bread together**”, thus the original idea of a company has communal or social connotation. Tracing the etymology of the term “company” is relevant because as the words ‘corporate’, ‘social’, and ‘responsibility’, rightly suggest that CSR covers the responsibility that companies or corporations have societies within which they are based and operate.[1] From a practical perspective, CSR involves a business identifying its stakeholder groups and incorporating their needs and values within the strategic and day-to-day decision-making process. The topic corporate responsibility has been captioned under many names, including strategic philanthropy, corporate citizenship, social responsibility and other monikers.[2] As the names

imply, each carries with it a certain perspective on the role of business in society. Regardless of the label, for now, the dominant paradigm underlying corporate social responsibility or “CSR” is centered on the idea of creating a “shared value.” The role of business, according to this model, is to create value for its shareholders but in such a way that it also creates value for society, manifesting itself as a win-win proposition [2]-[3].

On the other hand, the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), a foundation composed of hundreds of corporations, defines CSR as a business principle which proposes that the long-term sustainability of business is best served when profitability and growth are attained alongside the development of communities, the protection and sustainability of the environment, and the improvement of the people’s quality of life.[4] Similarly, the World Bank states: “CSR is the commitment of businesses to behave ethically and to contribute to sustainable economic development by working with all relevant stakeholders to improve their lives in ways that are good for business, the sustainable development agenda, and society at

large”[5]. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) coined the term corporate social responsibility as the continuing commitment of business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of its workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large. It is the ethical behavior of a company towards the society [6]. This means that the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that the society has of the organization at a given point in time [7].

At present; there is no single universally accepted definition of CSR that exists. Different authors and authorities from various countries and corporations provided their own models and definitions for the term but by the coverage of Corporate Social Responsibility as articulated from the above definitions - it leads towards the duties and responsibilities of a certain company to establish a brand most acceptable to the consuming public [4]. Corporations must also consider the impact of their activities on the other stakeholders, minimizing and compensating the negative effects and enhancing the positive ones. These considerations may garner the favor of customers and society in general and help minimize and control risks, which may lead to better profits [8]. Today the government is marred by different controversies such as but not limited to issue of corruption, the pork barrel scam and the lowly action in the recovery program over the “Yolanda” catastrophe – the citizenry is started losing its patience and trust to the government whether or not it can still provide the basic services needed by the public.

But, what makes it gratifying despite several calamities that struck the country together with the unending political struggle over misuse of funds – private sectors, non-government organizations, as well as big corporations and foundations, are taking their share and performing the volume of works to cover the social responsibility that the government has over the entire populace. Most of the time, these private corporations and organizations are unheralded, as they remain silent in performing social activities for the benefit of the public, though only few of them are religious in complying the concept of corporate social responsibilities – at least this is a welcome development for the community. Once private corporations recognize the duty of developing a nation as a shared responsibility and not only by the government – social and economic growth is not far to achieve since these corporations can serve as effective partner in social improvement

specially so in enhancing the basic needs of the community. It is in this aspect that the researcher found significance in looking into the potential contribution that the private corporations in Sorsogon can provide in terms of social development of the community and the environment.

At present, there are 25 private corporations operating in the entire province of Sorsogon which are listed in the book of registry of the Security and Exchange Commission purposely chosen as the respondents of this study since they are mandated under the corporation code to undergo CSR program. Other business establishments operating in the province of Sorsogon with juridical personality but not registered under the Security and Exchange Commission are not covered by this study.

The Sorsogon State College, being a government-run higher educational institution in the Province that is mandated to take research initiatives for community development. Hence, the researchers were prompted to delve and capture the CSR programs of the 25 private corporations in the province of Sorsogon to further identify the benefits that it could bring to the public particularly to the environment. Furthermore, if these corporations are remiss in CSR aspect, an intervention will be offered to achieve the very purpose of corporate social responsibility concept.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research aims to determine the profile and the CSR programs of the corporations in the Province of Sorsogon as a basis for an intervention designed to answer the social needs of the community and care for the environment. Specifically, it aims to: (1) determine the profile of private corporations operating in Sorsogon; (2) determine the different CSR programs implemented by these corporations in the province, and (3) propose an intervention based on the result of the study.

METHODS

The study utilized the descriptive research design to determine the profile and the CSR programs of the corporations in the Province of Sorsogon with an end-view of proposing an intervention intended to answer the social needs of the community and care for the environment. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or the CSR representative or in-charge of the 25 corporations serves as the respondents of the study. Purposive sampling was utilized to determine the subjects included in the study. The study includes only the corporations listed by the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC). This guarantees

that they are presently and legally operating in the province of Sorsogon. The identified corporations are those that qualified to have been incorporated under the corporation code of the Philippines which are mandated by law to conduct CSR program. The researcher formulated a questionnaire which serves as the primary source of data. Part 1 includes questions on corporation's profile in terms of nature of the business, primary services or products produced, structure, number of employees and annual revenues. Part 2 includes questions on corporate social responsibility policy and programs implemented and factors that influence the implementation of CSR programs. The questionnaire was presented to the panel of experts in the graduate school for content validation. A dry-run conducted to ten (10) CSR representatives from other province in the region established the face validity of the instrument. The survey was also supplemented by unstructured interviews conducted by the researchers to clarify responses provided by the respondents. To get authentic information, the researchers personally handed the questionnaire to every CEO or the personnel handling the CSR program of the identified corporations. It was clearly explained to them the purpose of the study and guided them in answering the survey questionnaire. Right after collecting the survey instrument, a one on one interview was conducted to validate the data and generate additional information as well as personal views and experiences necessary to carry out the main objective of the study. The gathered data was treated using frequency count, percentages, and ranking.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers obtained the approval from the SEC to conduct the study on the identified corporations in the Province. In like manner, they

also sought approval from the target corporations as participants of the study. The target respondents were informed of the intention of the study and the data that will be generated from the questionnaire will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be discussed in general terms. From the thirty-three (33) listed corporations, only twenty-five signify their participation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of corporations in the province of Sorsogon

Nature of Business of Corporations in the Province of Sorsogon. The figure below shows that majority or 20% of the corporations operating in the Province of Sorsogon are engaged in manufacturing business. 12% are engaged in Commercial Trade, Agro-processing, and Energy. 8% are engaged in Construction, Financial and Business Services and Transport and Storage. 4% are involved in consultancy, medical and dental and diagnostic laboratory services. However, 4% of the respondents did not indicate their main business activity. These are the respondents, which are reluctant in giving information regarding their business. They showed sarcastic approach expressing unequivocally that the process being conducted is an act of prying to their business interest. This instance did not conform the study that responsible leaders are concerned with reconciling and aligning the demands, needs, interests, and values of employees, customers, suppliers, communities, shareholders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the environment, and society at large, and that corporate leaders are responsible for their corporations' impact on society and the natural environment beyond legal compliance and the liability of individuals.[9]

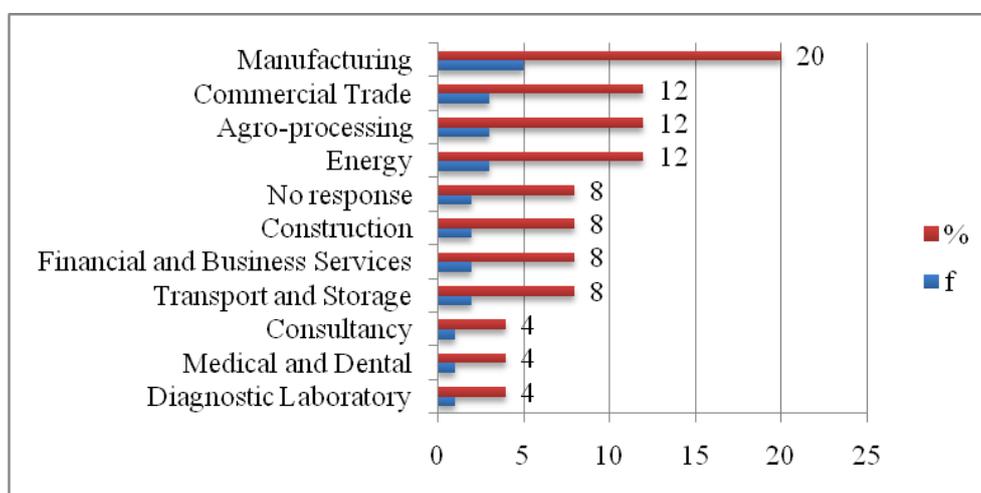


Figure 1. Nature of Business

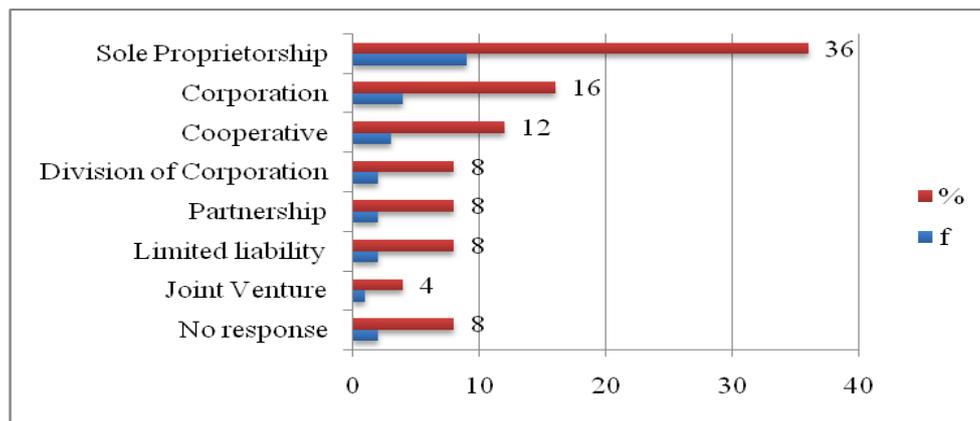


Figure 2. Business Structure

Primary Products or Services of Corporations in the Province of Sorsogon. Data revealed that the main products of these manufacturing corporations are food products. For corporations engaging in commercial trade, the main products are hardware. The agro-processing corporations have meat and dairy as their main products while the corporations engaged in energy supplied gas and electricity. On the other hand, construction, financial and business, transport and storage, consultancy, medical and dental, and diagnostic laboratory corporations all provided services to the community. Other corporations did not indicate their primary products or services.

Business Structure. Figure 2 shows that majority or 36% of these corporations describe their corporation as a sole proprietorship, 16% as a corporation bounded by a common belief and share of capital stock, 12% as a cooperative, 8% as limited liability, partnership, division of a corporation and finally 4% as a joint venture. On the other hand, 8% of the corporations did not indicate their business structure. These are the corporations operating without CSR program and the CEO's/managers were cynical and delegated the filling up of the questionnaire to his/her personal secretary with limited knowledge about the entire structure of the corporation. This instance was congruent with Rangan's finding that CSR programs are often initiated and run in an uncoordinated way by a variety of internal managers, frequently without the active engagement of the CEO.[3]

Table 1: Number of Employees of the Corporations

| Number of Employees | Full-time | | Part-time | |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | F | % | F | % |
| 251 – 500 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 26-50 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 12 |
| 10-25 | 7 | 28 | 4 | 16 |
| Less than 10 | 12 | 48 | 3 | 12 |
| No response | 3 | 12 | 15 | 60 |
| | 25 | 100 | 25 | 100 |

Table 1 shows that majority or 48% of the corporations disclosed to have less than 10 full-time employees however 12% of them choose not to give responses. On the other hand, 16% of the respondents disclosed to have 10-15 part-time employees while the majority or 60% of the respondents choose not to give responses. The result validates that corporation in Sorsogon province tends to limit its regular employees to ten as this situation gives security to the corporation to free themselves from violating labor laws most especially on wages and privileges of employees as the Labor Code of the Philippines exempts private employers venturing to retail/service establishment with less than ten regular employees from the obligations covered under the code. Equally, they prefer a small organization, as it is easy to engage and manage. This situation is an affirmation that the smaller the company, the likelier employees are to know and interact directly with company leaders. That's a big advantage when it comes to employee engagement. Smaller companies are also likelier to have a single product, or purpose, making their missions and values easier to articulate. Its one reason large corporations have such a hard time getting their mission statements right [10].

Table 2. Annual Revenue

| Annual Revenue | F | % |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| More than 5M | 1 | 4 |
| 1M-2M | 4 | 16 |
| 500,000 -999,999 | 7 | 28 |
| Less than 500,000 | 10 | 40 |
| No response | 3 | 12 |
| TOTAL | 25 | 100 |

The Revenues of the Corporations. Table 2 shows that most or forty percent of these corporations have less than half a million annual revenues. This gives an emphasis that corporations in the province of Sorsogon are into a medium scale of operation so that expected revenue cannot hit the

high scale level. As pointed out by one of the respondents that high cost of business forced-expenses such as advertisements; transport and freight, and the demands of employee's benefits make it difficult for them to raise high revenue output. In a business environment, one objective must be to deliver services, which meet customer requirements and needs. In the current economic climate cost is obviously a big factor; so reducing the cost of delivering service is often the main driver for improving operational efficiency [11]. This is the unfortunate reality of doing business that the corporations in the province of Sorsogon must hurdle.

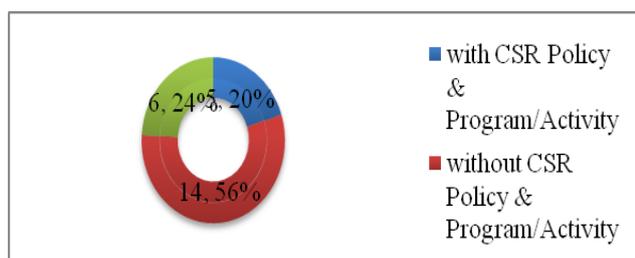


Figure 3. Corporations with CSR Policy & Program/Activity

Corporations with CSR Policy and Program/Activity. Figure 3 shows that most or 56% of the corporations in the province of Sorsogon do not have CSR policy and program or activity. Only 20% have CSR policies and programs or activities being implemented in the area while the remaining 24% admitted that they are not aware if they have CSR program. This finding implies that CSR concept is not familiar among corporations in the province of Sorsogon. It is in consonance with Friedman arguments that the only responsibility of firms was profit maximization and that public preferences combined with democratic empowerment implied that governments, and not the firm, should manage externalities and provide public goods [5]. Likewise, executives are hired to maximize a profit; that is their responsibility to their company's shareholders. That's one reason so many companies talk a great deal about social responsibility but do nothing—a tactic known as green washing [12]. This explains why there is an only small percentage of corporations that directly implement CSR programs and activities. But, only if these corporations make CSR as business strategy, it certainly will provide direct as well as indirect benefits to them as presented by Asian Institute of Management RVR Center for Corporate Responsibility that the integration of CSR into the overall business operations of a company offers the promise of gaining for it financial and social benefits via new business opportunities, the

strengthening of brands and corporate reputation, a highly reliable workforce, and public trust and acceptance [13].

On the other hand, 20% or 5 corporations have CSR policies and programs, and that 4 out of 25 corporations have established a department responsible for CSR. The other corporation disclosed that the general managers and the board of trustee managers are the responsible persons who decide, manages and coordinates their CSR activities. It is in harmony with the result that those at the highest levels in the organization have the most positive impressions of their companies' CSR initiatives, hence, the higher you are in the organization the more committed you are in general and the more positive you are about the organization's CSR efforts [14]. The five corporations who have CSR policy are very entertaining and open to new development and ideas concerning CSR program. They completely understand and recognized the importance of CSR both for their business as well as for the community and the environment. The positive effect of CSR is clearly identified in the report of AIM Center of Corporate Responsibility that "the integration of CSR into the overall business operations of a company offers the promise of gaining for it financial and social benefits via new business opportunities, the strengthening of brands and corporate reputation, a highly reliable workforce, and public trust and acceptance".[13] Corollary, by advocating for policies that promote CSR, companies can help a country or region develop a comparative advantage as a socially and environmentally responsible country. This advantage can help ensure the long-term success of an industry's operations within the country—which would benefit both sectors [15].

Figure 4 shows the common CSR activities initiated by the five corporations operating within the province of Sorsogon. Additional and reinforced contribution to employees is the most common CSR activities among them. Volunteerism actions follow and the rest is an awareness campaign, additional social security to employees, charity activities, scholarship, sponsorship and donations. It could be noted that the corporations prioritized the well being or benefits of their workforce compared with the welfare of the society where they operate. This implies that most corporations with CSR policy and program are more particular with the impact on internal dimension of CSR rather than the impact on its external dimensions. It is consistent with Carrol's finding that the common reasons for implementing CSR is employees' interest and regulatory compliance.[16]

CSR Programs Implemented by Corporations in the Province of Sorsogon

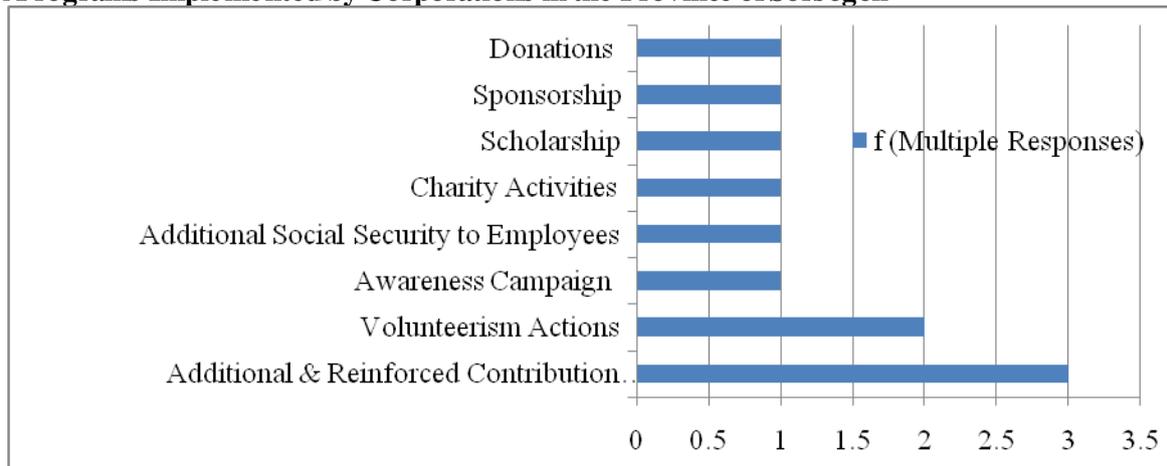


Figure 4. Common CSR Activities

In contrast, Kitzmueller stated that improving production and business operation, customers’ environmental concern, improving competitive advantage and gaining the support of community and market are among the reasons for CSR implementation. This reflects the Maslow pyramid of needs that only when basic needs are fulfilled do people start worrying about more indirect ones such as environmental and ethical firm behavior.[5] The corporation in the province of Sorsogon deemed to resolve first the pressing demands that have an immediate effect on its operation – the employees’ interest and regulatory policy. Less they consider that when a business improves working conditions in its factories and provides healthcare for its workers, productivity will likely increase.[2] Moreover, when asked about the benefits of CSR implementation, the corporations said that indirect increase of sale and improved working environment are its top benefits. Although, some believed that positive contribution to society, indirect financial benefit, and optimization of the corporate image are among the benefits of CSR implementation. This result validated that CSR activities may help a firm strengthen its legitimacy and reputation by demonstrating that it can meet the

competing needs of its stakeholders and at the same time operate profitably.[16] Furthermore, half of these corporations yearly conduct their CSR activities while the other half only conducts their CSR activities as the need arises. Two of the corporations have annual allocation for their CSR program while others source out funds from their profit percentage and ad hoc funding. This is an indication that despite financial hardships in implementing CSR programs, these corporations are trying to fulfill the corporate social responsibility. This upshot supports the declaration that even for companies that find themselves struggling to do more during lean times, there are things that can be done to make the most of whatever resources are available to devote to CSR.[14]

Factors negatively influencing CSR implementation

Figure 5 shows the primary factor that negatively influences the implementation of CSR among the corporations in Sorsogon province is a financial cost. The fact that majority of these corporations have less than half million revenues in a year suggests that financial capability to implement CSR is burdensome.

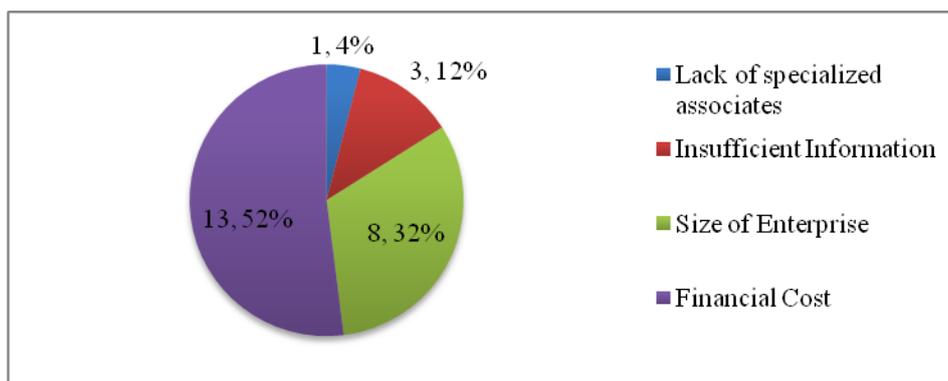


Figure 5: Factors Influencing CSR Implementation

Corporations do not have the financial status to implement its CSR programs as it entails funding. The majority of the corporations have small annual revenue and in sole proprietorship structure, the size of its enterprise is expected to be small. This is also an issue that hampers the implementation of CSR programs. Corporations with big revenues are more likely to implement CSR activities unless they do not have sufficient background on CSR concept and lacks specialized associates that could help them in putting up CSR policy and program. The larger a corporation's size and revenues, the greater the diversity of decision makers and the more fragmented its philanthropic activity may become. Whether privately or publicly held, as a business grows and expands into national and global markets, its organizational structure tends to become more complex [2]. In general, the majority of the corporations in the province of Sorsogon including those without CSR policy and program believed that the most important actions are those that serve and contribute to the welfare of the larger society. And yet, for the five (5) corporations implementing CSR activities, the employees' welfare happened to be the most important for them. The belief of these five corporations on the employees' welfare to be the high priority area in the CSR program was an established credo in the business world. Today, the public believes that, in addition to its pursuits of profits, business should be responsible to their workers, communities and other stakeholders, even if making things better for them requires companies to sacrifice some profits [16]. Companies have to see CSR as an investment that pays beautifully for itself. It posits that CSR is about building brand

reputation and trust, which will lead on to economic benefits [17].

Proposed intervention

Anent the above result, the researchers proposed to launch an awareness campaign and seminars in promoting CSR concepts and practices as an intervention to improve the CSR implementation in the entire province of Sorsogon. The hereunder identified programs, projects and activities which are doable maybe considered and can be introduced during the intervention activities which are clustered into four social responsibility categories; 1) economic responsibility, 2) legal responsibility, 3) ethical responsibility and 4) philanthropic responsibility [18] will serve as their model in implementing CSR programs that would ultimately be the answer in establishing their company's character and branding.

CONCLUSION

Results of the study revealed that majority of the corporations operating in the Province of Sorsogon are engaged in manufacturing business with food as its main product. Most of them have sole proprietorship structure. Corporations other than sole proprietorship structure, have less than 10 full-time employees. These findings indicate that Corporations in Sorsogon are into medium scale operation and still far from the level of multinational corporations operating in the metropolis. Most of the corporation does not have CSR policy and program and those with CSR implementation preferred activities with the impact on internal dimension rather than its impact on the larger society. Finally, the factor that affects the implementation of CSR program is a financial cost.

Table 3. Proposed Intervention

| Economic Responsibility | Legal Responsibility | Ethical Responsibility | Philanthropic Responsibility |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Incentives to employees for the increase in sales/profit. | 1. Establishing proper work environment. | 1. Environmental care (e.g. Tree planting, Artificial rift augmentation in Sorsogon bay) | 1. Establishment of a foundation to cater the social needs of the community. |
| 2. Scholarship to employee's children. | 2. Promotion of welfare of workers through unionism. | 2. Medical Mission and housing projects for employees. | 2. Donations and volunteerism |
| 3. Awards and incentives for best performance. | 3. Updated licenses to operate and payment of tax obligation. | 3. Character branding of company and employees' thru team building workshop. | 3. Assistance to community projects |
| 4. Skills training to be gainfully employed for the immediate members of the family of employees. | 4. Proper waste disposal & utilization of non-hazardous materials in production. | 4. Fair operating practices. | 4. Relief assistance to victims of Calamity |
| 5. Financial Loan & grants. | 5. Establishment of health clinics & children nursery. | 5. Customer care. | 5. Funds for the development & revitalization of culture and Arts. |

In conclusion, the implementation of CSR in Sorsogon province is way too far in reaching the platform of the business principle that suggests that the long-term sustainability of business is best served when profitability and growth are attained alongside the development of communities, the protection and sustainability of the environment, and the improvement of the people's quality of life.[4] The fact that most of the corporations have not implemented CSR programs and activities indicates that the corporations have yet to learn and understand the principles and benefits of pursuing their social responsibilities. To positively transform the business conditions to sustainable economic development, these corporations have to be guided rightfully that CSR is an investment that pays beautifully for itself. It posits that CSR is about building brand reputation and trust, which will lead on to economic benefits [17].

To realize this end, members of the community in the entire province of Sorsogon should be active campaigners and partners of these corporations in advocating CSR compliance. Today, the public believes that, in addition to its pursuits of profits, business companies should be responsible to their workers, communities and other stakeholders, even if it will require them to sacrifice some profits.[16] This belief has to be carried out by the respondent corporations but community organizations, media practitioners and other professional organization must likewise be very careful in addressing the issue. They should not only stand as critique but an active partner of these corporations in order to deliver the needed Corporate Social Responsibility programs. The success of implementing CSR program does not rest alone in the hands of business corporations but to the concerted efforts of all the members of the community. First, there must be a local government support through ordinances, which are not restrictive in nature but business friendly. Second, members of the community must be critical but involved and third, supposed beneficiaries of the CSR program of these corporations have to show utmost gratitude by not only supporting and campaigning for their products but most importantly by creating value and uplifting their economic and social well being.

RECOMMENDATION

In light of the above findings and conclusions, the researchers recommended the following; a) the existing corporations in the province of Sorsogon may form an association or federation in order to address common problems and issues affecting their operation. This is a way of consolidating their respective manpower and capabilities to resolve

funding problems in implementing CSR programs, projects and activities. b.) all higher educational institutions in the province may serve as the lead agencies in spearheading CSR implementation through awareness campaign and seminars. This could serve as part of their extension program with greater emphasis on identified programs, projects and activities covering the four social responsibility categories: 1) economic responsibility; 2) legal responsibility; 3) ethical responsibility, and 4) discretionary/philanthropic responsibility. c) the local government unit may require as part of regulation the attendance to CSR training/seminars to be conducted by the HEI's in the province serving as partner agency in CSR awareness campaign before issuance of a license permit to operate the business, and d) a legislative enactment can be proposed that certain part of the business income of private corporations and companies be allocated for the CSR programs, projects and activities more particularly in programs that protect the environment.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study focuses only to business enterprise incorporated under the corporation code of the Philippines. It does not include other business entities operating within the province that are not classified as corporations and those that are not listed by the Security and Exchange Commission. The study does not cover the impact of the implemented CSR programs to its beneficiaries; hence it is relevant to conduct an impact assessment study of these CSR programs. Moreover, future study on assessing whether other business enterprises in Sorsogon province practiced the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility may be conducted.

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