

An assessment of corporate social responsibility of property developers in Bauchi Metropolis, Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: The study aims to assess the corporate social responsibility of property developers in Bauchi metropolis with a view to examine the importance and effects of corporate social responsibility on property development in the study area. This study is limited to Bauchi metropolis.

Research methodology: The study uses descriptive and exploratory research design using quantitative research approach. Questionnaires were administered to 20 property developers within Bauchi metropolis using purposive sampling techniques. Reliability was investigated by an overall average Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.81, the data obtained was analyzed using percentage computation, weighted mean, relative importance index (RII) and severity index (SI) were also used.

Findings: The most important corporate social responsibility (CSR) to the property developers is environmental sustainability followed by a qualitative environment, the less important is the safety of houses. Furthermore, the highest CSR provided by the developers is environmental sustainability. Among the highest effects of neglecting corporate social responsibility is causing damage to the environment while the least is developing poor neighborhoods.

Limitations: This study explored on only 20 property development firms within Bauchi metropolis, results might not necessarily apply to other firms within the metropolis.

Contribution: This study will be of significant importance to the government and professional bodies in the built environment in terms of policy formulation, these can help checkmate the property development companies in carrying out corporate social responsibilities to the immediate environment they operate thereby becoming socially responsible and allowing the general public/community to enjoy projects that will enhance their lives.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, Sustainable development, property developers

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1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility may take in different meanings in different countries or different industry sectors, depending on the legal, social and economic environment; thus, it is difficult to define the “Social Responsibility” of organization. Although the literature has not reached consensus on a specific definition, most definition emphasizes that corporate social responsibility is a balanced approach for organizations to address economic, social and environmental issues in a way that aims to benefit people, communities and society ([Von-Tunzelmann & Cullwick, 1996](#)). Hence, the definitions of corporate social responsibility cover a wide spectrum of views. There is no single, commonly accepted definition for social responsibility. It can be interpreted differently by different stakeholders in different situations ([Garriga & Melé, 2004](#)). This is supported by [Whitehouse \(2006\)](#) who claims that there exists no universally accepted definition of the term social responsibility. [Van-Marrewijk \(2003\)](#) partially explains this fact by stating that vagueness and inconsistency of social responsibility are to some extent because of language problems. Corporate social responsibility can be discerned from the three words contained within its phrase ‘corporate,’ ‘social,’ and ‘responsibility.’ According to the Oxford dictionary, ‘Corporate’ means a group of individuals acting as a whole, as in one business; ‘Social’ means ‘of or relating to human society and its modes of organization’; and, ‘Responsibility’ means an act or course of action that allows one ‘to make moral or rational decisions on one’s own and therefore answerable/accountable for one’s behavior’. Therefore, in broad terms, it covers the responsibilities that corporations (or other not-for-profit organizations) have to the communities or societies in which they operate.

In recent decades, public awareness of corporate social responsibility continues to increase over the years. Today’s consumers anticipate businesses/investments to go beyond the agenda of profit and be socially responsible ([Lee & Maziah, 2009](#)). Though the practice of social responsibility by Nigerian companies/firms is still in its infant stage, they do recognize social responsibility as a business priority. Social responsibility practices may have different ways on its application depending on its culture and political background, social responsibility is an organization’s responsibility to participate in vital activities needed to protect and contribute to the welfare of a society (community); this involves the general communities, customers (Marketplace), shareholders, the environment, and employees (Workplace). Hence, this group of people are closer to the organization and has a higher expectation than their normal products and services ([Adeyanju, 2012](#)). Corporate social responsibility simply refers to strategies companies or firms conduct their business in a way that is ethical and society friendly, social responsibility can involve a range of activities such as working in partnership with local communities, socially sensitive investment, developing relationships with employees, customers, and their families, developmental activities and also involving in activities for environmental conservation and sustainability.

As social responsibility expands and makes its impact across the globe, every stakeholder must keep abreast of the key developments and trends. Much has changed in the past few years, Information technology (IT) and communications have been steadily advancing, energy crises have affected business dealings, the energy efficiency of a building is assuming a key and strategic importance, sustainability is becoming ever more prominent, security issues have leaped high up the corporate agenda, many companies have started to review how they define ‘core’ activities in the wake of some high profile publicity over outsourcing contracts. Avoiding these corporate social responsibilities will lead to tarnishing the developer’s reputation, inadequate social amenities in the environment, etc.

There has been a paucity of literature or a lack of in-depth studies on corporate social responsibility in the Nigerian context of the property industry. Therefore, the study seeks to investigate and assess the corporate social responsibility of residential property developers in Bauchi metropolis and the extent of the problem encountered when these social responsibilities are neglected by property developers during construction or development.

Objectives of the study:

- i. To identify the corporate social responsibility of property developers in housing development in Bauchi metropolis.

- ii. To assess the level of corporate social responsibility provision by property developers in Bauchi metropolis.
- iii. To examine the severity of problems that may arise when corporate social responsibility is neglected in the study area.

2. Literature review

The notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is rapidly expanding among businesses and corporations due to the significant impact of their operations on our immediate environment. [Moir \(2001\)](#) suggests that businesses owe society both ethical and economic obligations. Besides pursuing financial objectives, there is a growing demand from various stakeholders expecting organizations to be ethical and socially responsible. Predominantly, the adverse impact the property industry exerted on the environment has called on property companies to be more environmentally and socially responsible ([UNEPFI, 2008](#)). Literature shows that buildings contribute up to 50 percent of energy consumption, 16 percent of water usage; 50 percent of CO₂ emissions, 40 percent of solid waste, and 40 percent of raw material used ([Boyd, 2006](#); [Newell & Manaf, 2008](#); [Von-Paumgarten, 2003](#); [Wilkinson & Reed, 2008](#)). All these have made a significant impact on property players including property developers, investors, owners, and tenants. ([Chapple & Moon, 2005](#); [Ellen et al., 2000](#); [McWilliams & Siegel, 2001](#)).

Corporate social responsibility is categorized into two general schools of thought. First, are those theorists who argue that a business is obliged to maximize profits within the boundaries of the law and minimal ethical constraints ([Friedman, 1970](#); [Levitt 1958](#)); and second, are those that advocate a broader range of obligations towards society ([Carroll, 1991](#); [Drucker, 1993](#)). It would appear from the literature that society generally expects businesses to move away from their limited economic focus and be more socially responsible, organizations are expected to take explicitly into account all aspects of their performance, that is, not just their financial results (profit), but also their social and environmental performance. The changing role of businesses in society has led to the development of different frameworks to help organizations to improve their ‘corporate citizenship’, ‘corporate governance’, ‘accountability’ and so on. As indicated by [Heald \(1970\)](#), the history of corporate philanthropy stretched back into the 19th century, and was accompanied by a growing belief that business and society were linked together organically; and so there is an obligation to provide “service” beyond profits ([Frederick, 1994](#)). At that time, business representatives and executives started to speak of the needs of corporate directors to act as trustees for the interest of all stakeholders. From the outset, social issues scholars have recognized that corporations are not merely economic instrumentalities for the production of goods and services; in fact, they are dominant forces that affect the entire society in diverse and complex ways ([Epstein, 1999](#)).

[Lantos \(2001\)](#) distinguished three types of corporate social responsibility, i.e. ethical, altruistic and strategic. He argued that for any organization, ethical social responsibility (avoiding societal harms) is obligatory; for a publicly-held business, altruistic social responsibility (doing good works at possible expense to stakeholders) is not legitimate, and therefore companies should limit their philanthropy to strategic social responsibility (good works that are also good for business). Strategic social responsibility is admirable by firms owing to its ability to create a win-win situation in which both the corporation and stakeholder groups will benefit from it. As suggested by [Carroll \(2009a\)](#), strategic social responsibility is done to accomplish a strategic business goal, good deeds are believed to be good for business as well as for society.

Milton Friedman argued that the only responsibility of businesses is to make as much money for their stockholders as possible ([Boatright, 2003](#)). He reiterated that the corporation is an economic institution and thus should specialize in the economic sphere. However, several other scholars have countered these critics by arguing that there is a positive link between social responsibility and business economic performance ([Maignan & Ferrell, 2004](#); [Trevino & Nelson, 2011](#); [Balabanis, Phillips & Lyall, 2008](#); [Waddock & Grave, 1997](#); [Drucker, 2004](#); [Carroll, 2009b](#)). Extending this rationale, ([Lantos, 2001](#)) insisted that social responsibility will improve profitability because of favorable publicity, enhanced employee morale and reduced government intervention. A firm perceived as high in social

responsibility may face relatively fewer labor problems or perhaps customers may be more favorably disposed to its products ([Balabanis, Phillips & Lyall, 2008](#)). As the awareness of social responsibility is gaining its ground in the market economy, the societal marketing concept is being widely used by socially responsible corporations. According to [Kotler and Armstrong \(2005\)](#), the societal marketing concept advocates that the corporation should determine the needs, wants and interest of target markets; it should then deliver superior value products/services to customers in a way to maintain or improve the consumer's and the society's well-being. This concept has called on the market to balance the three considerations in setting their marketing policies: company profits, the customer wants and society's interests. In the housing industry, developers need to identify what the target market wants; to deliver a superior product to the customers; to anticipate the likelihood of market response and these have to be done profitably.

Today, real estate development or any aspect of redevelopment think hard about their corporate social responsibilities. To date, most discussion of corporate social responsibility focuses on what is called social responsibility. That is, what do corporations need to do to meet their social responsibilities? Social responsibility is a form of "corporate self-regulation" or "active compliance" with the "spirit of the law," "ethical standards" and "national or international norms" ([Susskind, 2016](#)). After several decades of discussion (and some serious scholarship), social responsibility advocates are prepared to make the case that corporate actors will have an easier time attracting the workers they want, enhancing their reputations and differentiating their brand, reducing regulatory scrutiny and improving relationships with their suppliers if they take environmental sustainability seriously, get involved in the communities where they operate (often through charitable giving) and avoid false advertising (and engage in what is known as ethical marketing). So, if corporations do "the right thing," engage in corporate philanthropy and behave ethically they can count themselves as socially-responsible.

Some housing developers, to be competitive in "price" choose to compromise on their quality of products by using inferior building materials, poor designs, and shoddy workmanship. However, house buyers have become more informed and discerning, therefore developers have now started adopting strategies to be more socially responsible to attract house buyers. In residential development, which house buyers who are increasingly sensitive and knowledgeable, projecting a positive brand perception can give a developer more advantages than any other asset. Market surveys revealed that other than price and location, many buyers rate a developer's reputation as the most important purchase. It was reported that a good image and reputation for performance could distinguish it from the competitors, engendering customers' loyalty and growth, allowing the company to occupy a unique position in the mind of a customer.

As defined by [Chiu \(2004\)](#), sustainable housing development is a housing development that meets the housing needs and demands of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs and demands. Housing developers should implement social responsibility by giving maximum consideration to protect the environment in carrying out development, providing social amenities for the children and senior citizens, providing sports and recreational facilities, as well as providing facilities to encourage social interaction among the residents. "Green" is the new attraction that has generated much concern amongst housing developers. It is observing that parks, gardens, and lakes have been incorporated in new housing developments to deliver not only houses but with living styles. This is evident that many housing developers have been incorporating more greens and landscaping into their projects to improve the quality of life for the past five years.

[Ijaiya \(2014\)](#) investigated on the challenges of corporate social responsibility in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, findings from the study reveal that the situation in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria indicates a variance between practice and implementation of the components of CSR, it is not only companies that have abandoned their responsibilities as governments too have failed in its responsibility to provide a legal framework within which companies can effectively meet their obligations or be made to do so. [Uadiale and Fagbemi \(2012\)](#) studied corporate social responsibility and financial performance in developing economies: The Nigerian experience, findings show that CSR has a positive and

significant relationship with financial performance measures. These results reinforce the accumulating body of empirical support for the positive impact of CSR on financial performance. [Ogri, Ani and Ogri \(2019\)](#) explored on corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies of Nigerian Agip oil company (NAOC) for members of host communities in rivers and delta states, Results of the investigation revealed that the CSR programs of the Nigerian Agip oil company are suitable in advancing the development of their host communities in Rivers and Delta States. However, the Public Relations strategies adopted by the company were adjudged unsuitable in promoting inclusive and sustainable community development, given the fact that strategies appeared to be top-down and philanthropic in approach.

[Barthorpe \(2010\)](#) investigated on implementing corporate social responsibility in the UK construction industry, findings show that the UK construction industry organizations add significant value to local and national communities by implementing CSR., moreover, [Sardinha, Reijnders, and Antunes \(2011\)](#) explored on using corporate social responsibility benchmarking framework to identify and assess corporate social responsibility trends of real estate companies owning and developing shopping centers, their findings show that the highest-ranked real estate companies applied sustainable or environmental buildings standards and did show a commitment to transparency and CSR disclosure. The positive evolution of CSR practices in the 23 companies studied in 2004 and 2010 may reflect efforts to improve competitiveness and the reputation of the companies with shopping centers through CSR initiatives. [Yam \(2012\)](#) researched corporate social responsibility and the Malaysian property industry, the results found that the area that received the most attention was philanthropic activities, followed by human resource initiatives. Although environmental practices were reported by the majority of property companies, only the leading developers took the effort to have their projects certified by sustainability rating agencies. [Campus \(2008\)](#) investigated corporate social responsibility in Malaysia housing developments house-buyers' perspectives, research result showed that most house-buyers expect a socially responsible developer to provide more CSR features in their housing projects regardless of the type of property developed.

3. Research methodology

The descriptive and exploratory research design was adopted using a survey strategy in this study. A well-structured close-ended questionnaire was designed and administered to the target population to extract the required data for the study. The study is aimed to assess the social responsibilities of housing developers in Bauchi metropolis, Nigeria. The target population is private housing developers in Bauchi metropolis. A total of 24 private housing developers were identified and used as the sample frame. Purposive sampling technique was employed, 24 questionnaires were administered out of which 20 were returned and found adequate for analysis, the questionnaire was validated by professionals, all inputs and observations were effected before administration. Reliability analysis was conducted to check the constructs reliability to meet the standard level of consistency, the internal consistency of the measurement items was investigated by Cronbach's Alpha with an overall average value of 0.81 which depicts good internal consistency of the variables measured. The private housing/property developers were used because they are believed to be in the best position to give a candid assessment of the social responsibilities provided in the study area. The close-ended questionnaire was segmented into four sections. The first section questions about the demographic information of the respondents, the second section is about the types of social responsibilities provided, the third section is asking rating the level of social responsibilities provision in the study area and the fourth section is talking about the consequences of ignoring the social responsibilities. The questions have five response options (five-point Likert scale response). The data collected from the field survey was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the use of a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The choice of weighted mean is popular in most assessment studies as applied in [Zarita et al. \(2009\)](#) and [Is'haq et al. \(2013\)](#). For illustration, the weighted mean of a five-point Likert scale response with 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 denoting very high, high, moderate, low and very low respectively. The Weighted Mean can be calculated using the formula as follows;

$$WM = \frac{5n_5 + 4n_4 + 3n_3 + 2n_2 + n_1}{N}$$

Where, n_5 the frequency of very High; n_4 the frequency of high; n_3 the frequency of moderate; n_2 the frequency of low and n_1 frequency of very low while N is the total population of the respondents.

Relative importance index (RII) and severity index (SI) was also used for the analysis, according to [Johnson and LeBreton, \(2004\)](#), RII aids in finding the contribution a particular variable made to the prediction of a criterion variable both by itself and in combination with other predictor variables. In the calculation of the Relative Importance Index (RII) and Severity Index (SI), the formula below was used;

$$RII/SI = \frac{\sum W}{A * N}$$

where, W —weighting given to each statement by the respondents and ranges from 1 to 5; A —Higher response integer (5); and N —total number of respondents.

4. Results and discussions

Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents (housing developers). It can be seen from the table that most of the developers have 10-20 years of experience represented by 7 (35%), followed by 5-10 years with 6 (30%), while 20 years and above has 5 (25%), the least is 1-5 years having 2 (10% respectively). Under the type of property development carried out by the developers, commercial development is the highest type of property provided with 9 responses represented by (45%), followed by institutional with 7 responses (35) while the least is others with 4 (20%) respectively. 65% represented by 13 responses have obtained building permission before embarking on the development while 7 (35%) do not obtain building permission when carrying out development. Under the source of finance for development both equity, the loan has 8 (40%) each while the combination of loan and equity has 4 (20%) respectively. 13 (65%) have fully developed their projects, 5 (25%) under construction while 2 (10%) have their plots undeveloped.

Table 1; Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
Years of experience		
1-5yrs	2	10.0
5-10yrs	6	30.0
10-20yrs	7	35.0
20yrs and above	5	25.0
Total	20	100
Type of property development		
Residential	4	20.0
Commercial	9	45.0
Others	7	35.0
Total	20	100
Building permission obtained		
Yes	13	65.0
No	7	35.0
Total	20	100
Source of fund for the development		
Loan	8	40.0
Loan and Equity	4	20.0
Equity	8	40.0

Total	20	100
Levels of residential property development		
Fully developed	13	65.0
Under construction	5	25.0
Undeveloped plots	2	10.0
Total	20	100

Table 2 highlights the social responsibility of property developers in Bauchi metropolis, from the table, it can be seen that environmental sustainability has the highest mean of 4.2 and is ranked 1st followed by qualitative environment with a mean of 4.05 is ranked 2nd, quality of housing is ranked 3rd with a corresponding mean of 3.80, pipe born water is ranked 4th with a mean of 4.75, the road is ranked 5th with a mean of 3.70, sound infrastructure and accessibility are ranked 6th with a corresponding mean of 3.65 respectively. At the bottom electricity and safety of houses and surrounds were ranked 7th and 8th with a weighted mean of 3.5 and 3.2 respectively. This clearly shows that almost all the developers have agreed that environmental sustainability and quality of the environment are the two corporate social responsibilities that are most important to them, while electricity and safety of houses and surrounds are the social responsibilities they consider without giving much priority.

Table 2; Corporate Social Responsibility of developers

Corporate Social Responsibilities	Very important (5)	Important (4)	Moderate (3)	Not Important (2)	Totally Not important (1)	RII	Rank
Environmental sustainability	6	12	2	-	-	0.84	1 st
Qualitative environment	4	13	3	-	-	0.81	2 nd
Safety of houses	6	7	4	3	-	0.76	3 rd
Pipe bone water	4	9	7	-	-	0.77	4 th
Road	4	9	4	3	-	0.74	5 th
Sound infrastructure	5	8	3	4	-	0.74	6 th
Accessibility	4	8	5	3	-	0.73	6 th
Electricity	6	4	6	4	-	0.72	7 th
Safety of houses	2	8	5	5	-	0.67	8 th

Table 3 presents the level of provision of corporate social responsibility of property developers in Bauchi metropolis, from the table, the highest corporate social responsibility provided by developers is environmental sustainability which is ranked 1st with a mean of 3.85, followed by qualitative environment which is ranked 2nd with a corresponding mean of 3.55, safety of houses and surrounds is ranked 3rd with a mean of 3.50, accessibility is ranked 4th with a mean of 3.30, while sound infrastructure is ranked 5th with a corresponding mean of 3.25. corporate social responsibility with the lowest mean include pipe born water, roads, and electricity which were ranked 6th, 7th and 8th with a corresponding mean of 3.20, 2.90 and 2.50 respectively.

Table 3: level of social responsibilities provision by developers

Social Responsibilities	Very High (5)	High (4)	Moderate (3)	Low (2)	Very Low (1)	WM	Rank
Environmental sustainability	7	5	6	2	-	3.85	1 st
Qualitative environment	2	8	9	1	-	3.55	2 nd
Safety of houses and surrounds	5	5	6	3	1	3.50	3 rd
Accessibility	7	3	5	2	-	3.30	4 th
Sound infrastructure	3	5	6	6	-	3.25	5 th

Pipe born water	2	5	9	3	1	3.20	6 th
Roads	1	7	3	7	2	2.90	7 th
Electricity	2	4	2	6	6	2.50	8 th

Table 4 highlights the effects of neglecting corporate social responsibility by property developers in Bauchi metropolis, the variable with the highest effect is damage to the environment, with a severity index of 0.922 (92.2%) which was ranked 1st, followed by damage the developer's reputation with a severity index of 0.913 (91.3) was ranked 2nd, lack of basic amenities was ranked 3rd, with a severity index of 0.912 (91.2%) respectively, affects property values, low demand of property and poor neighborhoods were ranked 4th, 5th, and 6th, with a corresponding severity index of 0.884 (88.4), 0.826 (82.6) and 0.765 (76.5) respectively.

Table 4; Effects of neglecting corporate social responsibility

Effects	Severity index	Percentage (%)	Rank
Damaging the environment	0.922	92.2	1 st
Damaging developers reputation	0.913	91.3	2 nd
Lack of basic amenities	0.912	91.2	3 nd
Affects property values	0.884	88.4	4 th
low demand of property	0.826	82.6	5 th
Poor neighbourhoods	0.765	76.5	6 th

Discussion

From the research findings, it is seen that the three most important corporate social responsibility identified by the developers are environmental sustainability, quality of environment, and safety of houses, these findings were similar to the findings of [Yam \(2013\)](#), who found out that although environmental practices were reported by the majority of property companies, this also corresponds with [Yam, Ismail & Tan's \(2008\)](#), findings revealed that developers in the study area are committed to providing corporate social responsibility features in their housing projects regardless of the type of property developed. Moreover, only the leading developers took the effort to have their projects certified by sustainability rating agencies. Unlike property developers in the UK. UK companies tend to dwell more on environmental issues, particularly in creating environmentally sustainable buildings and controlling energy usage ([Adair and Lim, 2003](#)). This also agrees with the results of [Sardinha, et. al. \(2011\)](#), according to their findings, the highest-ranked real estate companies applied sustainable or environmental buildings standards and did show a commitment to transparency and CSR disclosure.

Although most of the property developers from the results highlighted environmental sustainability as the responsibility with the highest priority in Bauchi metropolis, they hardly execute or practice it a reality. The property developers can incorporate more CSR elements into their projects and implement them thereby improving the company's competitive advantage. This is in line with the argument that to be competitive in today's market economy, businesses need to be socially responsible and sensitive to the interest of the various stakeholders which include caring about the environment, sustainable development and society in general ([Idowu, 2005](#)). The study was limited to 20 property developers within the Bauchi metropolis. Therefore, the findings do not reflect how other organizations and companies operate concerning CSR in their business activities. Thus, a more detailed investigation of the property development companies will be very useful to develop a robust understanding of CSR practice. Nevertheless, this research revealed valuable findings regarding the magnitude of CSR initiatives, particularly on the environmental perspective.

5. Conclusion

The study is aimed at assessing the corporate social responsibility of property developers in Bauchi metropolis, particularly from the social-ecological perspective. Most of the property development

companies take corporate social responsibility an important issue, this is seen through the response of the firms/companies which show the importance of corporate social responsibility. The approach of corporate social responsibility is new in Nigeria, more especially in the property sector compared to other countries such as the UK and the US and Australia. The government should compel property development companies to carry out corporate social responsibilities to the immediate environment they operate, thereby becoming socially responsible and allowing the general public/community to enjoy projects that will enhance their lives, particularly in addressing environmental concerns in the interests of future generations.

This study will be of significant importance to the government and professional bodies in the built environment, especially the property developers in terms of policy formulation and design, these can help checkmate the property development companies in carrying out corporate social responsibilities to the immediate environment they operate which will add more to their reputation. This study will also add significantly to existing literature which will be used for further research by scholars.

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