

# Corporate Social Responsibility: Dimension Of Small and Medium Enterprise Sustainability in Ile-Ife, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) balances and strengthens the relationship between people, environment and business organisations in the spatial system. Business establishments often have impacts on the environment; this condition however must be sustainably handled for saner and healthy living environment. Questionnaire administration technique was conducted on 215 respondents across the study area. Information were drawn based on convenience and purposive sampling methods in selecting study population: customer, people, business owners and stakeholders involved in the business orientation. Descriptive method of data analysis was adopted to present the opinions of the respondents on CSR in the study area. The study established that majority of the respondents were males who were well educated. There were characterised by young adults and youths. It was revealed the monthly income of the respondents were low. The head offices of the business organisations were majorly located in Ife, Osogbo and Lagos. These business organisations were identified as restaurants, grocery stores, hairdressing salon, car wash and supermarkets, among others. Based on findings, it was revealed that humanitarian activities and cash donations to schools, old people's home, orphanage homes and hospitals; these represent the major services rendered by the business organisations in the study area. It was equally observed that many small and medium sized businesses have no defined CSR policy framework for their business; which has frustrated the level of importance attached with CSR intents in the study area. It was recommended that public awareness is needed both on the business owners and the people towards understanding the essence of CSR in community development.

**Keywords:** Social Responsibility, business organisations and environment.

## INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a concept began as an avenue to deliberately meet the social, environmental needs and various responsibilities; after which companies have assessed the effect of their activities in the society. CSR has grown to a natural business strategy for promoting business values, core mandates and policies implementation technique in business environment. It helps to make businesses trustworthy and dependable, not just financially but also in social and environmental standpoint. In the United States of America (USA), CSR can also be seen from a philanthropic sense to improve the society and make the world a better place (Angela et al., 2021; Rao et al., 2021). CSR further entails the involvement of companies, firms, corporations, businesses in the socioeconomic development of their host communities and society, this entails deploying their resources to enhance the welfare of the society. CSR also means using enhanced business

techniques and methods to reduce the harm contributed by the business operations to the environment. CSR focuses on solving social and environmental challenges in the society in which businesses operate. The concept of CSR has been in existence for decades. Many businesses over the world have profit maximisation as their main objective so as to satisfy investors and shareholders. However, many businesses in Nigeria, often fail to meet the needs of their communities in protecting and securing the environment and developing the communities in which they operate. Business owners however are hesitant in implementing CSR policies due to factors such as ignorance, land policies, lack of CSR laws and policies (Eze & Bello, 2016; Fitriasari, 2020).

The goals of CSR have evolved over time in the business world; before CSR was used to market a business in order to increase its visibility and legality. Today, CSR is pivotal in the sustainability of businesses through the society's approval for the business operations, cordial relationship between the society and the business and its stakeholders, ensuring long-lasting peace and sustainability in dealing with socio-economic and environmental challenges. In some climes, businesses have taken CSR to change many lives for the better and bring social advancement to the extent that the people have mentally shifted from much expectation from government agencies, ministries and departments to believe so much in these businesses as hope for better environment. This has made CSR to earn popularity over the years owing to government's inability to secure growth, Information Technology (IT) development, activism and business awareness in the community (Angela et al., 2021).

CSR displays the responsibility that businesses exhibit to their host communities, as it is impossible for businesses to operate without interacting with the society. Thus, business responsibility goes beyond increasing shareholder's value, they also have to be answerable to their employees, clients, government, environment and the society at large. In developed environments, businesses have been made to be proactive by handling CSR seriously due to actions from pressure groups and existing laws, failure to do such could lead to sanctions, court cases and community agitations. Businesses have shown concerns and actions for the needs of the society, socioeconomically and environmentally using CSR (Rao et al., 2021; Osemeke et al., 2016).

Sustainable business entails being able to meet the need of this present generation without negatively affecting the unborn generations of the ability to meet their own needs. Sustainable businesses take the responsibility for their impact on the natural environment. It is necessary to inculcate the principles of sustainability in the day-to-day business operations in order to make environment safe and healthy for all (Ayozie & Bawa, 2021). Currently, businesses are saddled with the new responsibility to be sustainable by recycling, reuse materials to protect the environment, this requires changes in business rules, strategies, concepts, frameworks and ways of doing business in a bid to meet their economic, social and environmental objectives. Thus, concurrently reducing negative environmental impact from their operations in the environment. Moreover, business sustainability practices are analysed against environmental, social and governance (ESG) metrics, when corporate establishment are not forthcoming in their basic responsibility. It is a win-win for all parties (business, society, environment) involved when a business is sustainable for inclusive environmental development (Folorunsho, 2011; Fitriasari 2020).

Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) are vital in shaping the socioeconomic growth of a nation. It stimulates the economy through job creation, SME make up a larger share of businesses in Nigeria. Staphanie (2021) averred that almost 40 million SME's provided for over 80% of jobs in the nation and that SME's played the roles of generating income, job creation and economic activities. SME can be likened to the spine of the economy, a nursery for skills, entrepreneurship and innovations. Nations like Japan, China and Taiwan have seen increased industrial growth due to their active SMEs. In Nigeria, SMEs have contributed to the Nigerian economy by providing local resources, raw materials, income redistribution and equality, reducing migration to urban areas, making and keeping foreign exchange, promoting growth and development, acquisition of technical know-how, capacity building and improving people quality of life (Rao et al., 2021; Stephanie, 2021).

Both the developed and developing economies need SMEs to maintain economic growth and development as SMEs play a important roles in national economic development (Effiong et al., 2013). SMEs are also key in solving developmental issues especially in a developing economies, reduction of poverty and unemployment as SMEs employs more than 30% of workers in developing economies. SMEs have immensely contributed to the empowering and employing youths and women and as well increasing the capacity of various sectors in the

industry, promoting innovation, boosting rural economic growth. Women have greatly empowered by SMEs as they are involved in the social and economic spheres of developing nations (Prasanna et al., 2019).

SMEs are predominant in the global economy for its survival role in the competitive economy. The developed economies are increasingly dependent on the vibrant accomplishments of the SME's. Furthermore, SMEs constitutes about 90% of the global economy and creates almost 70% of jobs worldwide. Despite the milestones achieved by SMEs around the globe, SMEs are facing many challenges which includes; lack of access to finance and mentorship; these have systematically set hindrances to SME's growth (Prasanna et al., 2019; Fitriasari 2020).

### **Basic Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility**

Contemporarily, CSR represents social band that contains constellation of concepts with distinctive boundaries. The boundaries in this context revolve the social responsibility of a corporate body to the people and environment; the people symbolises the relationship between business organisations and the stakeholders involved. According to Hopkins (2014), the stakeholders in the purview of CSR could be likened to customers, employees, store keepers, suppliers and the local community (people and environment). It is a sustainable package in the physical environment where business organisations thrive. The recent paradigm in CSR development is a function of given back to the society in its multidimensional scope (Ufua et al., 2020). However, there is a difference between CSR and corporate philanthropy. The latter concentrates on individual (charitable) while the former integrates many individuals towards sustainability in the community development.

The essence and importance of CSR advancement in the business and physical environment address key issues as regard the legal and ethical duties of organisations to the people and the environment. It makes business owners accountable and responsible for their respective actions to the people and the environment as well (Hopkins, 2014). For instance, in the case of company producing goods and services for the people with much environmental impacts; such an establishment owns the populace in relation to the environment, the duty of paying back to the local community for damages as a result of the environmental impacts; however, CSR is not limited to this, but also the welfare of workforce in the organisation. Thus, the importance of CSR in the spatial system development are very imperative to community growth.

According to Carroll (1991) cited in Riano and Yakovleva (2024), social responsibility is conceptualised on, economic, legal, ethical and discretionary/philanthropic. These sets of concepts are inter-related with boundaries and distinctiveness. First, economic responsibility substantiate the role of goods and services production to the consumers. Oftentimes, goods produced satisfy consumers' needs and as well incorporates profit orientation on the business owner. Second, the legal aspect of the social responsibility encapsulates compliance with Local, State or Federal regulations on the business orientation and standadisation towards people and the environment. Third, the ethicality of every CSR in a local community of a business organisation is a definition of societal norms and specific practices towards the mitigation of severe or mild environmental impacts in the host community of the business organisation. Fourth, discretionary/philanthropic captures the social services in the guise of corporate actions directed to the people and the society at large; it carters for the people's welfare and good living (Riano & Yakovleva, 2024). This tends to punctuate the aspirations and demands of the people within the ambience of the business environment. The Organisation Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2001) was of the opinion that CSR is a concept that synegisises the basic contribution of the business/organisations to urban and rural community sustainable development. It should not only base on the returns of the organisation to the stakeholders involved in the business; it must equally respond to the societal and environmental needs directed towards inclusive community development (Riano & Yakovleva, 2024).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Study Area**

Ife is a traditional city located in Osun State, Southwestern Nigeria. It is regarded as the ancestral home to all Yorubas especially in Nigeria. Ife as a city is bounded by Ibadan, Ilesa and Ondo Town. The national population census 2006 enumerated the inhabitants of Ife at 167,254. It has coordinates of latitude 7°33'N to 7°55'N and

longitude 4°32'E to 4°53'E (Figure 1.2). Ife is headed under the rulership of Oba, named Ooni of Ife (Ojaja II). The throne head (Ooni) is regarded as the number one Oba in Yoruba Land. The city contains notable higher order service such as Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Private University and Polytechnic, among others. It could be refers to as traditional and academic city with vast historical background. Administratively, Ile-Ife is situated in Ife Central and Ife East Local Government Areas in Osun State. Purposively, this study focused on Ife Central Local Government. This was necessitated owing to the nature of the study. The Ife Central area comprised more higher order services and business establishments that possesses better understanding of the corporate social responsibility in the urban system.

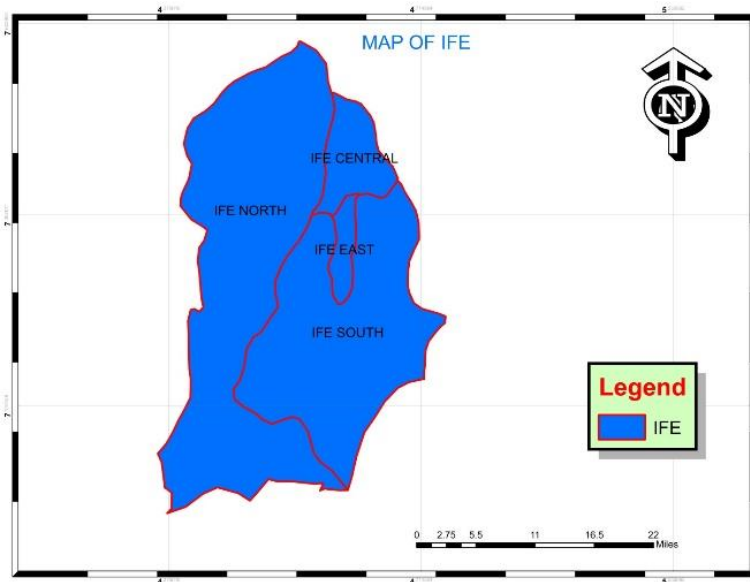


Figure 1.1: Map Showing Ile-Ife

Source: National Space Research and Development Agency (NARSDA, 2023)

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted primary and secondary means of data collection. The primary source of data collection was administration of questionnaires. The questionnaire focused on the business owners, workers, customers and the stakeholders associated with the selected small and medium scale businesses in Ife Central area. In addition, the residents of the business areas of approximately 100m were equally investigated through questionnaire concerning the functionality of the business establishments to their social responsibilities to the people. Basically, the respondents were the business owners, workers, customers, stakeholders and the people. In order to simplify the sampling procedure to a homogeneous unit, the identification and sampling of small and medium businesses were conducted based on the number of political wards in Ife-Central Local Government Area. These wards were 11 (eleven) in number (Faniran & Ojo, 2019). The population for the study were drawn through convenience and purposive means of sampling technique. These methods were adopted to locate different category of the respondents for the study. In addition, only the SME's that have been operating for more than two years were considered in the study. In total 215 respondents were sampled for the study. The issues concerning socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents were investigated such as age, income level, business experience and education, among others. Others were organisational coverage, corporate programmes and Activities, defined CSR policy and specifics of the business were probed. Consequently, SPSS version 20.0 was used to analyse the respondents' views on the CSR issues raised in the data collection instrument. Subsequently, Percentage, charts and frequency tables were used to summarise and aggregate the views of the respondents in the study area.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Gender, as presented in Table 1 shows the distribution of the male and female proportions of the total sampled population. Female accounted for more than half (33.0%) of the total population at the different business areas



in Ife. While the minority (67.0%) in business organisation were the males. In the reality of the economic and social activities of the people in the business environment, the computed gender values implied that females dominated business areas in Ife. It could also be deduced that female counterparts involves more in the business organisation (SME's) and other moderate sales jobs of lesser stress in the spatial system.

Presented in Table 1 is the category of the age group of the respondents in Ife business environment. The study adopted 18 years as minimum age value for this study as contained in the table; this age value justified the level of reasoning of the respondents in the study area. For the purpose of this study, the age structure of the respondents were categorised into youths (18-21 years), young adults (22-40 years), adult (41-60 years) and aged (61 years above). In essence, less than half (45.1%) of the respondents were young adults; this age group represents the active members of the population. Followed by the youths (35.3%), adults (11.6%) and the aged (6.8%).

These computed figures implied that young adults contribute more to corporate social responsibility development in Ife. While adults contributed less to corporate social responsibility in Ife.

The marital status of the respondents in the study area was grouped into, single, married, widowed and divorced. As presented in Table 1, slightly more than half (67.0%) of the respondents in the study area were single, while more than one-quarter (26.5%) of the sampled population were married. The remaining proportions were divorced (9.3%) and widowed (6.5%). It could be inferred that majority of respondents in the business environment in Ife were singles; this population was very agile to daily business activities in the study area. While fewer number of the divorced and widowed in the population were small in the business organisation of the study area.

Based on the erstwhile minimum wage (₦30,000) category of the government civil servants in the nation (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2020); this study however sectionalise the income earner category of the respondents into very low (< 30,000), low (30,001-50,000), medium (50,001-70,000), high (70,001-90,000) and very high (90,001-110,000 >) (Table 4.4 a). The study revealed that the highest proportion (33.5%) of the population accounted for ₦≤30,000 (high) income earners, while 22.8% of the respondents showed the medium income earners (₦ 30,001-50,000) in Ife. The remaining proportions, 21.9% (medium income earners), 14.0% (high income earners) and 7.9% (very high income earners) of the sampled respondents accounted for ₦50,001-70,000, ₦70,001-90,000 and ₦90,001-110,000 in the total population respectively. It could be deduced that majority of the Ife residents in the business environment earns less than ₦30,000. On the table, very small (7.9%) population in Ife business environment earns satisfactorily, above ₦110,000.

The working experiences of the residents in a particular geographical business environment is very important to the social behaviour and seemingly attitudinal change of the people in business organisation towards better corporate social responsibilities development (Fitriasari 2020). It enhances individuals performance in the business environment embracing the responsibilities of whatever that happen in their vicinity. The opinion of the respondents were gathered quantitatively and consequently categorised into 5-15, 16-25 and 25 years above. The dataset presented in Table 4.5 represented the opinions of the respondents in regards to sustainable business orientation in the guise of corporate social responsibilities advancement. The table revealed that the 41.9% of the respondents in the business environment have worked for 5-15 years, in the business organisation; this accounted for 41.9% of the total population; followed by 41.4% of 16-25 years. While the least percentage value (16.7%) of the population in Ife indicated 25 > years. It was discovered in the table that fewer number of the respondents have high level of experience in the business organisation in Ife.

The educational background of the people is very important to the advancement of the sustainable business in the guise of fair deeds and good customer relations. This condition of life and situational understanding among the people is highly needed for corporate social responsibility development in a business environment such as Ile-Ife. Presented in Table 4.8 (a) is the educational background of the respondents in Ile-Ife. Considering the importance of education in the society, one-quarter (25.6%) of the total population accounted for HND/B.Sc graduates. It was also discovered that 23.3% of the respondents attested for Ordinary National Diploma of the sampled population in the study area. It was accounted by the respondents that 17.2% of the population indicated secondary school level. While more than one-tenth of the respondents accounted for no formal and primary

education level in the total sampled respondents. Just small fraction (10.2%) of the respondents indicated postgraduate degree school level. The dataset revealed that majority of the respondents in the business environment of Ile-Ife are educated.

Table 1.1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents in Ile-Ife

	Socioeconomic ttributes	Frequency	Percentages (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	144	67.0
	Female	71	33.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age (years)</b>	18-21 (youth)	76	35.30
	22-40(young adults)	97	45.1
	41-60 (adults)	25	25
	61 years > (aged)	15	6.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	124	57.7
	Married	57	26.5
	Widowed	14	6.5
	Divorced	20	9.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Income (monthly)</b>	Very low (< 30,000)	72	33.5
	Low (30,001-50,000)	49	22.8
	Medium (50,001-70,000)	47	21.9
	Very high (90,001-110,000>)	17	7.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Business(years)</b>	5-15	90	41.9
	> 25	36	16.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education</b>	No formal education	26	12.1
	Primary	24	11.2
	Secondary	37	17.2
	Ordinary Nat. Diploma	50	23.3
	HND/B. Sc.	55	25.6
	Postgraduate degree	23	10.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 4.1 documents the various business organisations that was identified in the study area. The outcomes of the investigation showed 13 different business organisation in the study area. They were characterised of different proportions in the total sampled population of the dataset. However, it was observed that majority of the business organisation were restaurants (86%) and retail/grocery stores (81%). These business areas basically centred on edibles and daily basic utilities that helps to support daily activities. In essence, hairdressing salon and car wash respectively accounted for 79% and 77% of the total sampled population in Ife. In addition, supermarkets (75%) and malls (66%) in the study area were also accounted for in the population sampled. Cooking gas and butcheries were equally indicated accordingly in the study; it was noted that the duo business organisation have 67% and 59% in sampled respondents in Ife. Moreover, the respondents were of the opinion that hardwares stores and hotels were common in the study area; it was indicated that slightly more than half of the respondents accounted for 58% and 57% of the business organisation in the study area. Notedly, 51% of the respondents indicated the presence of pharmaceutical stores in Ife. This business organisation basically deals with drug administration and prescriptions to the people. While less than half of the population indicated clothing stores (49%) and motels (43%) in the study area. The aforementioned business organisation were receptively the identified business organisation in the study. In the order of their percentage value; they are: restaurants, grocery stores, hairdressing salon, car wash, supermarkets, cooking gas, malls, butcheries, hard ware stores, hotels, pharmaceutical stores, clothing stores and motels in the Ife.

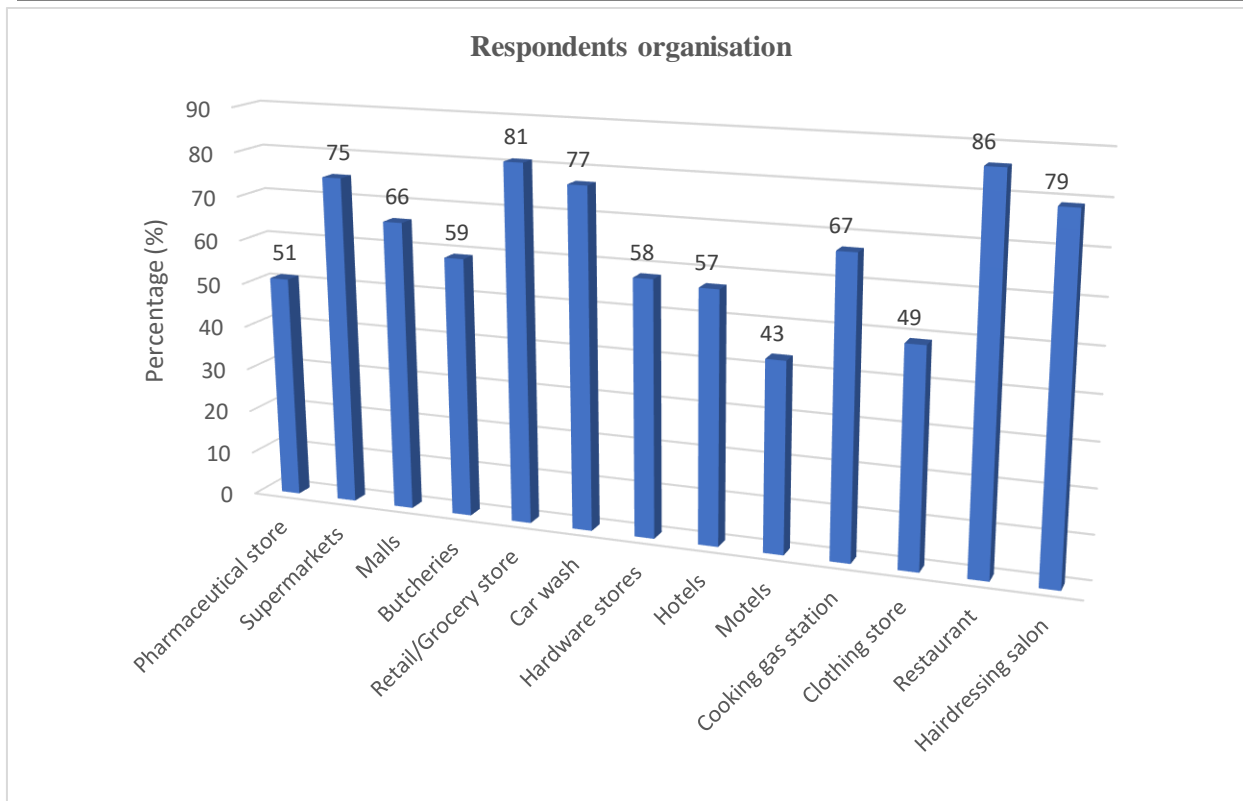


Figure 4.1: Respondents Organisation in the Study Area

The organisational coverage of the business in Ile-Ife measures the location of the business organisation. In the study area, the identified organisation coverage of the business were adequately indicated by the respondents. In this guise, Figure 4.2 revealed the coverage level of the various business organisations in the study area. In essence, majority of business organisation were in Ife (84%). It was equally revealed that 64% of the respondents accounted Osun State in general. In the whole of the Southwest Region, respondents accounted for 45% of the sampled population. In the other regions apart from Southwestern Nigeria; the respondents accounted for 31% organisational coverage. At international scene, respondents accounted for 2% of the total sampled population. The computed outcomes of the study indicated that many of the business organisation that were sampled take cradle in Ife and Osun State at large.



Figure 4.2: Organisation Coverage of the Business in the Study Area.

Figure 4.3 showed the result of the defined CSR policy of business organisations and the importance attached with business organisations in Ife-Ife. It was observed that majority (65.3%) of the respondents in the study area has no defined CSR policy guarding the activities of the business organisation in relation to the people and the business environment. The remaining percentage value (34.7%) of the respondents accounted the population of the business organisations that possess defined CSR policy guarding CSR implementation in the environment. Moreover, half (52.60%) of the total sampled respondents has no knowledge of the relative importance attached with CSR to the sustainable business organisation in the study area. Further analysis showed that less than half (47.4%) of the respondents has understanding of CSR importance to the sustainability of the business organisations in the study area. The outcomes of the respondents investigation implied that many have no defined plan for CSR implementation and standardisation in Ile- Ife; coupled with the fact that majority of the population in the business organisations has no knowledge on the importance of CSR to business sustainability in the study area.

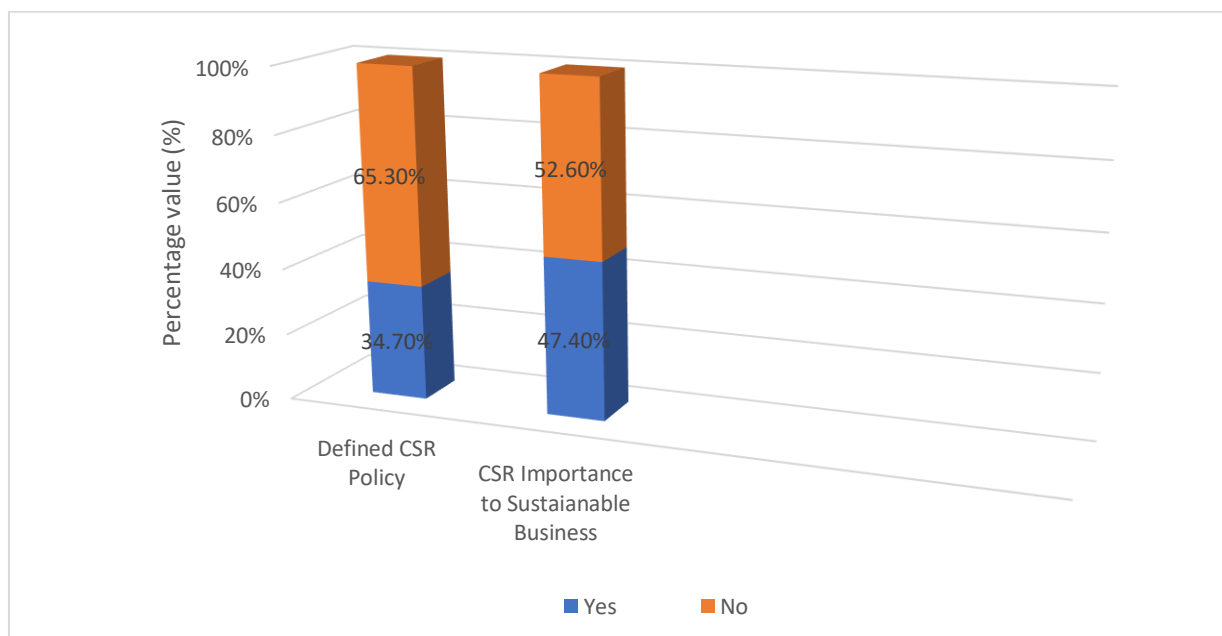


Figure 4.3: Corporate Services Responsibility and its Importance to Sustainable Business in Ile-Ife

### Corporate Services Responsibilities Programmes and Activities in the Study Area

The essence of CSR is primarily aimed at improving the relationship between business owners, people and the environment. It seeks to compensate commensurably the hazards which may arise from the presence of an establishment in a geographical confine. This sub-section investigates and documents the various business organisations' activities and programmes in the study area. These include, wastes facilities provision; hospitals and clinical incentives; road development; educational incentives; environmental protection techniques and entrepreneurship programmes, among others.

Presented in Figure 4.5 is the various programmes being carried out by the business organisations in the study area. It was observed in the figure that majority (86.4%) of the business organisations CSR activities were donations to the orphanages. Similarly, charity works and waste facilities provision dominate the CSR activities in the study area, these respectively accounted for 78% and 77% of the total sampled respondents in Ile-Ife. In addition to the above are the CSR activities being conducted in the hospitals and distribution of the educational incentives to the people. Another aspect of the CSR activities being indicated by the respondents in the study area was entrepreneurship skill programmes for the development of the people for grassroot development; these accounted for 57.9% of the respondents in the area. Moreover, it was equally observed that 56.1% and 55.4% of the respondents were of the views that donations to prisons; schools and hospitals have being experienced among the CSR activities being engaged by the business organisations in the study area. It was revealed that less than half of the sampled respondents in business organisations indicated environmental protection (44.5%) and water supply to the communities (39.3%). While one-quarter (25.5%) of the respondents were of the opinion that business organisations engaged in road development of their local communities. Respectively, public area



renovation and building of the civic centres were indicated by the respondents with percentage values of, 19.2% and 15.2% of the total sampled respondents in Ile-Ife.

The computed views of the respondents in the various business organisations indicated that many of the CSR programmes being staged in Ile-Ife were services and cash donations to the orphanage homes, hospitals, schools, entrepreneur skills and waste facilities (waste bins) provisions in the study area. This showed the specific areas in which the business organisations were active in given back to the society in which they live.

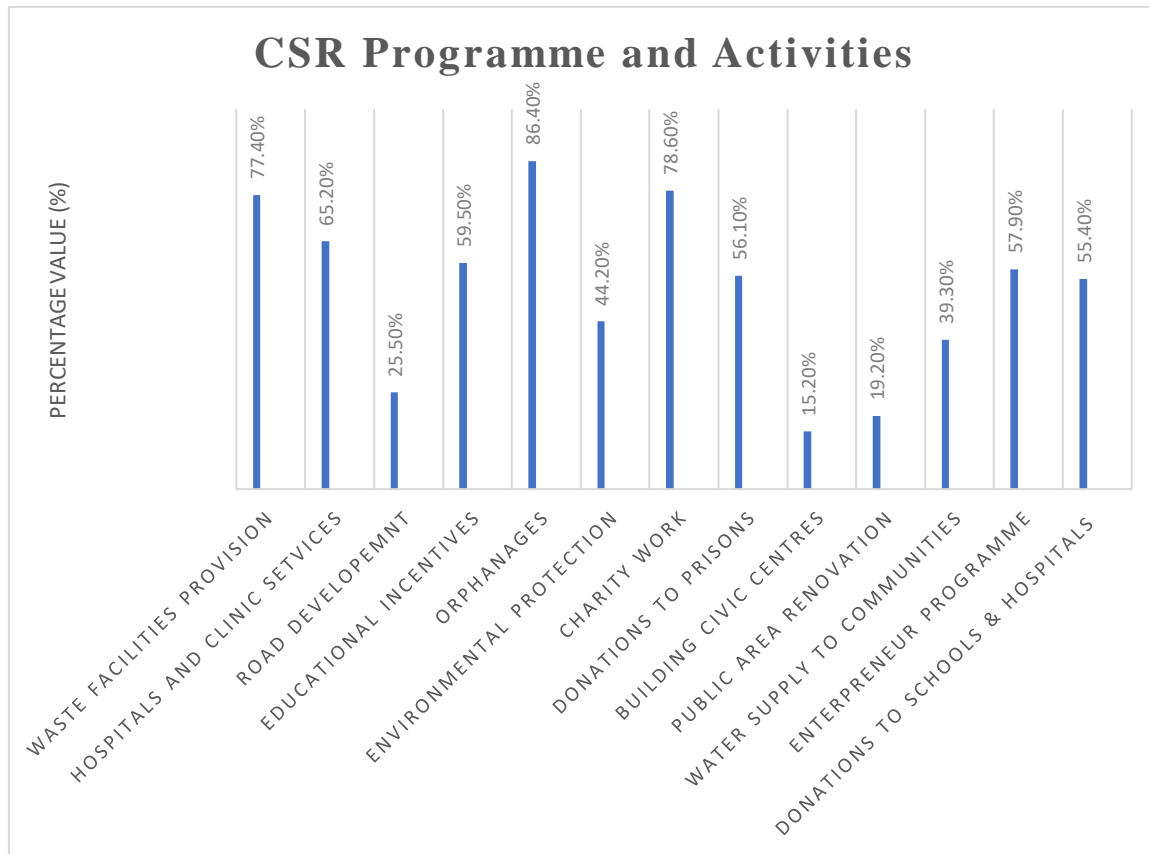


Figure 4.5: CSR Programme and Activities in the Study Area

## CONCLUSION

The study investigated SMEs Corporate Social Responsibilities on sustainable small and medium business in Ife, Osun State. It was established that males dominated the respondents of the business organisations in Ile-Ife; majority of them were educated. The sampled population was characterised by young adults and youths who were active in the nation's economy. In the study area, the income of the respondents were very low. Likewise, it was revealed that the range of the working experience of the respondents in the business organisations was between 5 to 15 years. The business organisations head offices were majorly located in Ile-Ife, Osogbo and Lagos. The further established the major business organisations sampled: restaurant, groceries store, hairdressing salon, car wash, supermarkets, cooking gas station, malls, butcheries, hard wares stores, hotels and pharmaceutical. The CSR activities involved are various humanitarian services and cash donations to the orphanage homes, hospitals and schools. Also, it was established that many of the business organisation have no defined plan for CSR implementation and standardisation in Ile- Ife; coupled with the fact that majority of the population in the business organisations have no knowledge on the importance of CSR to business sustainability in the study area.

On this basis, it is recommended that public enlightenment and education of the business owners on the importance of CSR programmes and activities to the environment, customers and business sustainability is sacrosanct to the development of SMEs in Ife. This would eventually assist the government and individual business owners on the symbiotic benefits inherent in CSR programmes. Every business organisations should develop a robust workable plans on defined CSR policies that suites their business orientation. This development

would make business owners accountable and responsible for their actions and activities as regards their business development, environment and the people. This would reawaken the consciousness of the people on the essence of CSR programmes in their vicinity. The current available CSR programmes and activities should not only be centred on humanitarian aids and cash donations; it should also be extended to capacity and manpower development through skill acquisitions and community services such as environmental sanitation of the public and dirty hotspots in Ile-Ife and its environs. This action would be useful in combating diseases outbreak through awareness programmes.

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