Extent of the Commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Private Schools of Beirut (Lebanon)

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Abstract—Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an approach that focuses on the beneficence of not only the shareholder, but also the stakeholder. There is also a keen focus on resolving environmental and social problems that arise in the corporation. This is a newly emerging concept in Lebanon, especially in the field of education. This study investigates one of the CSR policies and the implementation of its practices in private schools of Beirut. To achieve this purpose, a sample of three private schools of different socioeconomic status were chosen to conduct a four-part questionnaire that covers four major aspects of CSR practices, which are philanthropic, legal, ethical and environmental. The teachers and administrative personnel of each school filled the data asked by the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were implemented to check the extent of commitment of CSR practices exhibited towards teachers, students, parents and the natural environment. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were performed to check the effect of school socioeconomic status and location on CSR activities. Results showed that CSR targeting employees, parents and students are taken into consideration and applied in the chosen schools. In addition, results showed discrepancies in applying practices of CSR targeting the society and natural environment among the three schools based on school location and status. As a conclusion, the commitment to CSR practices seems to be still in its emerging phase in most schools in Beirut, and this necessitates more efforts to ensure a continuous improvement of CSR implementation in education. More ideas about the topic need to be extensively researched in Lebanon as well to ameliorate CSR in Lebanese educational policies and practices.

Keywords-CSR; education; Lebanon.

I. INTRODUCTION

Being socially responsible adds value to organizations. With social responsibility comes a level of self-monitoring which guarantees an organization's sustainable development and maintains its public image, including its internal and external relations [1]. Lebanon's past performance regarding the implementation of CSR was mixed, with the country still facing development challenges, including poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. According to the United Nation's Voluntary Review in 2018, it is stated that "the situation was highly exacerbated by the impact and spill-overs of the Syria crisis. While Lebanon has shown exceptional solidarity by temporarily hosting 1.5 million displaced from Syria, this has come at a high cost, compounding pre-existing development challenges, and stretching Lebanon beyond its limits." [2].

However, promising progress still emerges as the Voluntary National Report on CSR in Lebanon states that out of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is covering 7-8 of these goals, which is a promising number. Moreover, for each SDG, there are indicators [2]. Supporting this notion is the report of the Global Compact Network of Lebanon (GCNL) that shows that 167 companies in Lebanon have currently adopted one of the principles, and this is according to the United Nations Global Compact Organization's recent report in 2018. Some of these companies comprise the academic sector. Example of a school that adopts the principles of CSR is the International School of Choueifet, and such example extends to universities such as the American University of Beirut (AUB), the Lebanese American University (LAU), the Beirut Arab University (BAU), the Lebanese International University (LIU), and Notre Dame University (NDU) [2]. This serves to show that the educational sector is implementing CSR principles in Lebanon and they are taking accreditation (e.g., the New England Association of Schools and Colleges [NEASC]), which stems from previous awareness. Hence, the role of CSR in Lebanon is important and emerging in the educational sector. This is because the accreditation of these institutions seek to attain is partly linked to whether or not they comply with CSR policies and practices. The national economic and social council forces them to adopt these policies and practices as a group; however, the scope and degree of implementation differs according to considerations of the region and country.

This paper aims to underscore the origins of CSR and the effect of its implementation in educational institutions, namely Lebanese schools. It also aims to analyze and evaluate the extent of commitment of CSR practices in a representative sample of private schools in the Beirut area. More importantly, the main objective of this study is to show the relationship between CSR and the ability of private schools to achieve high organizational performance.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 gives a background of the topic. Section 3 describes the methodology used in the study. Section 4 addresses the key

findings. Section V discusses the results. We conclude the paper in Section 6.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

A.   Definition

CSR is widespread in the business world. Corporations produce an annual report concerning their activities, whether or not these activities are considered to be socially responsible [3]. The European Commission states that this concept is active when the enterprises take into consideration the social and environmental issues in their business, in addition to staying in contact with their stakeholders [4]. Caroll defines it as, "a multidimensional construct, encompassing a company's efforts to fulfill multiple responsibilities – economic, legal, philanthropic [and] ethical" [5].

B.   CSR Policies vs. Practices

CSR policies are the norms a certain organization chooses to follow that can be taken from different accrediting institutions or guidelines approaches, such as NEASC, and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). Practices, however, are how we work on one of these policies and choose some of their indicated components to implement them. For example, by taking one of the Sustainable Development Goals and adhering to its indicators, that is when we can say that an organization or an educational entity is practicing CSR [6].

C.   Previous Studies

To study CSR implementation effectively, one has to demonstrate case studies of countries where CSR is being implemented. One of the important Lebanese studies done on policy analysis of CSR in Lebanese private university asked on the balanced school card tool, which is based on four initial indicators. The four indicators that were used and analyzed were the following: customer perspective, financial perspective, learning, growth, and internal business process perspective. This study was also compiled at the very end into a book score aimed at conveying the results to other universities so overall recommendations aimed at enhancing the level of Universities to reach the international levels are scribed. This aim helped define the process of this study and its aim as well [7].

D.   CSR and the Scoreboard

David Norton and Robert Kaplan introduced the concept of the scoreboard in 1992. In their Harvard Business Review article, they stated that if a company needed to improve its intangible assets, i.e. nonphysical or perceived assets, they would need to use a tool in order to measure those assets. This is through the Balanced Scorecard approach. "The value from intangible assets is indirect" [8]. With the Balanced Scoreboard approach, a corporation should invest to prepare its employees for developments in service quality, which would satisfy customers, eventually gain for the corporation its customers' loyalty, and thus, produce more revenues and margins [8].

In order for an organization to measure its performance from several aspects, it follows the strategic performance scorecard system where it uses "strategic planning, management, and the measurement system" [9]. People working at the corporation apply this strategy from within, and then communicate it to interested stakeholders.

To accomplish sustainability, an organization must follow the following strategy [9]:

1. From a financial viewpoint, it means for the organization to remain in business and provide the right return for the investors.
2. From a customer and stakeholder viewpoint, it means for the organization to provide value and satisfaction for sustainability- conscious consumers.
3. From a process viewpoint, it means handling materials, energy, and waste following an eco-efficient method.
4. From an organizational capacity viewpoint, it means working for a culture that honors sustainability, which is shown in the daily choices employees make.

A good CSR approach falls in the category of organization capacity performance. As an objective, it should improve the culture and information technology. It should measure the employee culture score and IT maturity score. As an initiative, it should grow a life cycle assessment system and start sustainability training. To build this scorecard system effectively, a nine-step framework is adopted and applied in the following order: assessment, strategy, objectives, strategy map, measures and targets, strategic initiatives, automation, cascading, and finally evaluation.

In order to apply the principles of Balanced Scorecard, a company should go on a journey where there are motivations along the road and a few bumps as well. However, this approach results with "self-inquiry" and "in-depth analysis" and self-criticism which is "at the heart of all successful strategic planning and performance management systems" [9]. This is what private schools should adopt in order to successfully follow the CSR approach and work for the benefit of the institution itself along with that of the learners.

III.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A.   Data Collection Technique

We have adopted the quantitative approach. The aim is to examine the validity of the proposed research hypotheses on a large sample of subjects. The quantitative approach requires collecting data. The data collection tool for the present research is the questionnaire. Indeed, a questionnaire was elaborated especially for the needs of this research and inspired from various previous studies [10]-[14], which tackled similar topics. Consulting previous studies for the preparation of the questionnaire was helpful in setting up the components of the selected variables. In practice, the questionnaire comprises nine main variables of different types, as indicated in Table 1.

TABLE I. THE MAIN VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

Variable Name and Type	
Variable name	Variable type
Age	Control variable
Gender	Control variable
Educational level	Control variable
Job position	Control variable
Work experience	Control variable
Tenure with current employer	Control variable
Annual income level	Control variable
CSR activities	Dependent variable for H1 Independent variable for H2
Employee engagement	Dependent variable for H2

B. Data Analysis

The Balanced Scorecard approach was adopted, which is a method utilized in a similar study [7]. The Balanced Scorecard approach balances internal and external factors that include profit and nonprofit aspects. The research questions of the study were developed and to answer them, a questionnaire was designed. Based on that, a clear set of questions for the questionnaire were derived underneath the categories of the balanced approach; hence, an assessment of CSR in these three sample schools was analyzed. In order to ensure a scalable assessment across all three schools, the four prominent aspects were taken into consideration, which are: philanthropic legal, ethical and environmental. Descriptive statistics were implemented to check the extent of commitment of CSR practices the sample schools exhibited towards teachers, students, parents and the natural environment. ANOVA tests were performed to check the effect of school socioeconomic status and location on CSR activities.

IV.   RESULTS

The dimension of CSR targeting employees revealed that 70% of the employees surveyed answered that their school encouraged them to participate in volunteer activities in a proper and correct way, 73% answered that in their school, the administrative decisions regarding the staff were fair and equitable, 70% answered that their school administration was primarily concerned with the needs of its employees, 65% said that their school applied flexible policies to provide a balance between work and personal life of the employees, 70% indicated that their school supported staff who desire

professional development, and 93% answered that their school policies encouraged the employees to develop their skills and professions in a proper and correct way.

The dimension of CSR targeting students and their parents showed that 88% of the surveyed staff said that their school protects the rights of their students and their parents according to the law, 93% said that the school provided the students and their parents with accurate and complete information about its programs, and 96% said that the satisfaction of students and their parents was of great importance for the school in a proper and correct way.

On the dimension of CSR targeting society and natural environment, 81% of the employees surveyed said that their school contributed to the projects and campaigns that promote the well-being of the society, 67% answered that the school employed special programs to reduce their negative impact, 72% said that their school aimed to protect and improve the quality of the general natural environment, 78% said that the school was making investments to create a better life for future generations, while 81% answered that their school aimed to achieve sustainable development that took into account future generations, in a proper and correct way.

Finally, the results on the dimension of CSR targeting employee engagement revealed that 92% of the employees surveyed knew what was expected from them, 89% had the required equipment and materials to do their job properly, 77% said that at work there was a chance to do more and better on daily bases, 43% received appreciation and praise for doing a good job during the last 7 days, 73% said that the supervisor or another person at work took care of them, 77% said that someone at work encouraged their development, 74% said that their opinions were taken into consideration at work, 83% said that the mission of their organization made them feel that their job was important, 83% said that their colleagues were committed in achieving quality work, 77% had a very close friend at work, 52% said that someone at work talked to them about the progress they had achieved during the last 6 months, and 68% had opportunities to learn and develop during the last year in a proper and correct way.

V.   DISCUSSION

This study is engaging with an educational institute and using a single source or a more limited version of sources than the ones expected making it single goal focused and related to this study.

As noticed in the results above of CSR targeting employees, most of the answers were above neutral, which indicates that the CSR targeting employees are being taken into consideration in the chosen schools in different levels. On the other hand, it is noticed that some of these CSR are absent in some cases. This will help indicate the difference in dealing with CSR seriously in the targeted schools.

The absence of negative results of CSR targeting students and their parents is obvious in the results above. This is a clear indicator that despite the category or the area

of the school, the CSR targeting the students and their parents is being taken into consideration and is being applied.

In terms of schools categories and areas, there were substantial findings that gave rise to essential concepts. The results indicate that the CSR targeting society and natural environment are not applied equally at the three schools. After connecting these results to the school's categories and area, we will be able to indicate if the negative results are from a specific school while the positive ones are distributed on the other schools. If so, the negative-results school condition can be considered as an indicator to navigate or accept the null hypothesis.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The general outcome of our statistics proves that, despite the difference in the level of application of CSR at Beirut schools, it is still applied throughout schools in Beirut area.

The outcomes of the first section regarding CSR targeting employees show that CSR increases in high-paying schools, but it is only slightly affected by the geographic area. This indicates that the school category plays a role in CSR targeting employees; the higher the category (highly paid school), the more CSR targeting employees exist.

The outcome of the second section regarding CSR targeting students and their parents does not show a big difference between low, medium, and high-paying schools and it shows no difference at all between Beirut Areas 1 and 2, which indicates that neither the school category nor the school area plays a role affecting CSR targeting students and their parents.

The outcomes of the third section regarding CSR targeting society and natural environment reflect a big difference between high-paying schools and low and medium paying schools, where it is clear that the high-paying schools are much more aware of applying these CSRs than the low and medium categories. We can also notice that the area plays a role in CSR targeting society and natural environment, since these CSRs also rise in Beirut Area 2 while weak in Beirut Area 1.

Thus, the total CSR activities indicate that schools in Beirut are committed to CSR practices at different levels.

These levels increase in high-paying schools while they decrease in low and medium paying schools. In addition, CSR initiatives rise significantly in high-paying schools, and this is applicable on different target audiences: employees, students and their parents, society and the environment. This proves that adhering to CSR practices is directly related to a school's performance.

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