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Factors Influencing Implementation of Sustainable Corporate Social Responsibility Practices in the Energy Sector in Kenya: A Case Study of Kenya Electricity Generating Company

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***Abstract*: In the last decade, the issue of sustainability has become very critical worldwide for governments and business alike. This has seen an increased uptake of CSR activities by many organizations in the areas of environmental, social and economics as marked by increased expenditure in implementation of CSR programs in an effort to contribute to the sustainability agenda. However, most of the CSR programs adopted by organizations are not sustainable.This study therefore aimed at providing a predictive mechanism of the various influences namely, decision drivers, internal inhibitors, foundational enablers and external influences of implementation of sustainable CSR practices in organizations through a case study approach of KenGen one of the key players in the energy sector of Kenya. Data was collected through use of questionnairs and interviews and analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings of this study established a correlation value of 0.775 which indicates that there exists a positive relationship between the various influences and implementation of sustainable CSR practices which depicts that the regression model that was used was significant at 95% confidence level. It was further found out that negative influences such as internal inhibitors sap out the power of positive forces on implementation of sustainable CSR practices. It was recommended that the selection, adoption and implementation of CSR projects should be guided by the need to implement highly impactful projects through consideration of how the various factors influence their implementation. Future research should extend the findings of this study and provide more pointed, practical advice to managers on how to implement sustainable CSR practices, given its vital importance to the welfare of both business and society in other comparitive studies on organizations in the same industry as well as other industries.**

***Keywords:* Sustainable practices, Corporate Social Responsibility, decision drivers, foundational enablers, inhibitors, external influences.**

I. INTROUCTION

Corporate social responsibility relates to businesses operating in a manner that meets or exceeds the ethical, legal and public expectations that society lays on them. According to Zadek (2002), CSR relates to the responsibility of business on their impact on the environment. This responsibility results from the way businesses behave which boils down to the decisions and acts of individuals and groups within a business. If a business is to have a deliberate positive and consistent impact on society, then its purpose and values should be shared by all those who may influence and be influenced, affect or get affected by its actions. As such, the practice of CSR has been taken to mean more than the collection of practices, gestures or occasional charitable initiatives motivated by marketing, public relations management and guarding business reputation in the eyes of society. This understanding has seen CSR become an integral component of governance including a comprehensive set of policies that are supported by management aimed at lessening the real and potential negative impact on the environment, public health and employment opportunities (Ayele, 2003).

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development explains CSR in a corporate context as the continued commitment by an organization to act legally and morally and also contribute to the economic development of society while improving the quality of life of the present generation without compromising that of the upcoming generation (Mickels, 2009). Hill and Jones (2010) propose the need to incorporate a new dimension of CSR that entails integrating a sustainability component in the implementation of CSR programs. The concept implies that when companies evaluate decision from an ethical perspective, there should be a presumption in favor of adopting course of action that enhances the welfare of society at large (Millon, 2011). This has resulted to more companies seeing the need to move beyond traditional concerns of running a business focused only on immediate profit and have begun to deal with factors in the greater world vital to their medium to long-term success.

Reflecting the holistic and multi-dimensional nature of sustainability, a rapidly growing literature documents that a wide range of specific sustainability practices are being implemented by organizations (Blackburn, 2007; Esty &Winston, 2006). Many practices relate to improving eco-efficiency and reducing environmental encroachment through energy conservation, renewable energy sources, local sourcing, and reduction of emissions, pollutants and waste initiatives. An example of a sustainable approach to CSR practices is the commitment by Google Inc, to donate billion dollars in stock as well as share profits to combat global poverty and to protect the environment (Millon,2011).Spector (2012) reports that a 2009 study by the Business Roundtable and conference board found that most CEOs who were respondents reported that sustainability has become a mainstream concern for business. Another study by the Institute for Business Value conducted on various companies across the Globe in 2013 affirms that sustainability is a strategic imperative and therefore is no longer about legal compliance or philanthropic generosity when it comes to CSR implementation. The United Nations also has adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established sustainable reporting guidelines and has published CSR assessment reports for various organizations.

These sustainable-led initiatives have resulted to advancement of models such as the Business Sustainability Continuum which provides focus areas that will help organizations meet the good of both business and society (Spector, 2012; Harish, 2012). This study will therefore contribute to the sustainable CSR literature by attempting to predict a model on the linkages between and among the drivers, foundational enablers and inhibitors of sustainable CSR practices. This will facilitate better management and ensure improved livelihood for the target beneficiaries of these corporate social initiatives.

KenGen is a limited liability company, registered under the Company Act Cap 486 of the Laws of Kenya. It was incorporated in 1954 as Kenya Power Company Limited and renamed KenGen in 1997 following implementation of the reforms in the energy sector. The core business is to develop, manage and operate power generation plants to supply electric power to the Kenyan market, and in future, to supply power to the Eastern Africa region (KenGen, 2014). Other key industry players in the energy sector include the MOE, ERC, IPPs and Kenya Power. KenGen has been involved in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities since its inception in 1997. In order to upscale KenGen's CSR activities and support the sustainability agenda, the Company established a Foundation with an aim of transforming its CSR initiatives to Corporate Social Investment (CSI) thus attain a greater impact in improving the wellbeing of communities neighboring its installations and other stakeholders. The Foundation is to achieve this by: focusing on and investing in high impact programs that will bring direct and long-term benefits (sustainable) to the communities; and mobilize the required resources (Kiraison, 2015).

In the past 10 years, KenGen has invested highly in CSR activities in the areas of education, water and sanitation, environment, health, culture, sports, humanitarian intervention and economic empowerment. To finance the CSR activities, KenGen has made it a policy to allocate 1% of its profit after tax to CSR However, the company is still unable to yield highly impactful and sustainable CSR initiatives.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Global issues relating to poverty, environmental encroachment, education, climate and health among others are threatening societal well being. As such, many entities are integrating CSR activities such as environmental, social and economic integrity to their organizational strategies as seen by the increased uptake of CSR activities in the recent past in an aim to contain the negative effect of their operations on the environment and society (Mirchandani&Ikerd, 2008).

In Kenya, the rate of CSR uptake has increased greatly as companies from various industries such as Nation Media Group, East African Breweries, Mabati Rolling Mills, Equity Foundation, Safaricom Foundation, British American Tobacco among others are increasing their expenditure in CSR programs aimed at achieving greater mutuality between their own and society's strategic needs (Cavico & Mujtaba,2012). It is also evident that most entities are searching for ways to achieve business excellence on a broader and more balanced array of outcomes with organizations adopting new CSR programs and increasing their scope of implemented projects. This is owing to the fact that a large body of evidence has accumulated from survey and case study research documenting the benefits that organizations are achieving from implementing CSR practices (Blackburn, 2007; Esty & Winston, 2006; Harsih 2012). The benefits include improved business reputation, employee loyalty, productivity and improved financial performance (Cohen, 2006; Ambec & Lanoie,2008).

On a local scale, most organizations have made steps aimed at improving their CSR foot prints through various efforts such as integration of CSR activities to organizational strategies (Ominde, 2014). However, despite these efforts aimed at improving CSR implementation and huge spends on implementing these projects, the issue relating to sustainable CSR implementation has not been adequately handled. Moreover, limited amount of prior empirical literature provides for the factors that constitute management of CSR programs from a sustainability standpoint (Schidmpeter, 2014). This study therefore is an attempt to predict a mechanism of how the specific factors drive, enable or inhibit implementation of sustainable CSR practices to facilitate their better management through a case study of KenGen.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

i. To determine the decisions driving implementation of sustainable CSR practices in KenGen.

ii. To determine the effect of internal inhibitors on the implementation of sustainable CSR practices in KenGen.

iii. To assess how foundational enablers affect implementation of sustainable CSR practices in KenGen.

iv. To assess the degree to which external influences affect implementation of sustainable CSR practices in KenGen.

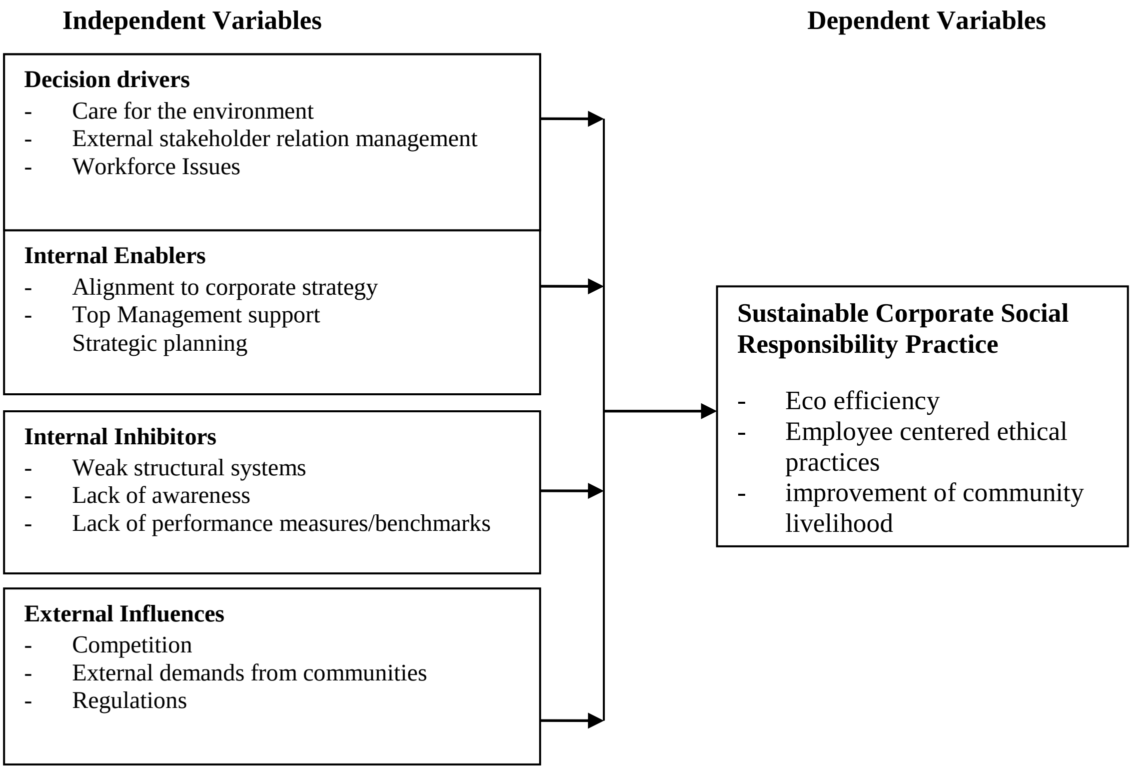
IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

The legitimacy theory has the role of explaining the behavior of organizations in implementing their CSR initiatives in order to fulfill their social contract that enables the recognition of their corporate objectives and relation with society. The theory further provides that the CSR activities of organizations are carried out in accordance with the expectations of society (Deegan, 2000). Organizational legitimacy is variable and its variability is spatial across stakeholders and cultural groups of various entities. Therefore, organizations tend to employ legitimization strategies depending on the perception of their state or level of legitimacy. Critics of the legitimacy theory however argue that the theory can be demonstrated or rebutted depending on the degree of association found between an organization's CSR practices and changes in societal opinions (Campbel et al, 2003).

The stakeholder theory of the firm is used as a basis to analyze those groups to whom the firm should be responsible. Clarkson (1995) defines a stakeholder group as "one without whose continuing participation the corporation cannot survive, who influence or affect, or are influenced or affected by the corporation.Having established the importance of stakeholder management, Mitchell et al (1997) expounded on the stakeholder theory in answering the question as to which stakeholder is most significant based on three main attributes (power to influence the company, legitimacy of the relationship with the company and urgency of the claim on the company). The stakeholder's interests thus form the foundation of transactions that are the ultimate source of a company's wealth hence should be used as the basis of all objectives being pursued by management such as growth (Matten et al, 2003) and social initiative investments.

This study's' perspective of the stakeholder theory is that stakeholders can foster a company's image and reputation or be potential risk bearers hence have sufficient power to influence its performance (Rodriguez, 2012). As such organizations should try to understand the concerns of their stakeholders as well as provide them with a feedback about their strategies and performance. Stakeholder engagement should further be used as a tool for monitoring the contributions and satisfaction levels of a company's stakeholders.

The resource based view of the firm suggests that for an organization to achieve its objectives, it needs to structure its internal capabilities to match the conditions of the external environment. By developing unique and sustainable resources and capabilities, the organization can instigate the development of its unique strategy dimension (Galan, 2006). In regard to this study, the theory implies that the right mix of factors influencing CSR initiatives should be assessed and managed if the kind of intended performance is to be achieved. As such, sustainable CSR will result from an integration and reconfiguration of internal competencies in order to attain competitive advantage. Therefore, organizations should plan and implement their CSR initiatives and translate and integrate the social and environmental concerns of its stakeholders to the overall corporate strategy. By doing this, then organization will thus be able to shape the organizational response mechanism towards sustainability.



Voigt (2009) asserts that if the main driver for undertaking CSR is ingrained on sustainable CSR practices, then a solution to the ailing problems of society can be achieved. Schmidpter et al (2014) points out that having an integrated drive for sustainable CSR can result to creation of added value to society unlike the current focus of playing the various drivers of CSR off against each other as isolated issues. A study conducted by Wirtenberg et al (2007) on nine of the World's most sustainable companies identified seven factors which are considered as enablers of implementation of sustainable CSR. These factors include an organization's culture, top management support and placement of CSR central to organizational strategy, employee engagement, alignment of formal and informal systems and stakeholder engagements (Goldman Sachs Group,2007). However, the study further reported that organizations are highly struggling with the implementation of these key facets to their CSR practices. This is due to a lack of understanding of the interrelationships and pathways among these factors (Cohen,2006). In order to achieve sustainable CSR practices, there is need for a high integration of organizational systems, people and corporate strategy to CSR practices.

Researches by Roome and Bergin (2006) shows that top management have a crucial role in the initiation and development of CSR projects within an organization. An empirical study by Olsen (2009) which sought to examine the barriers that precluded implementation of sustainability strategies reported that conflicting values and indecisiveness greatly impair implementation of sustainable CSR programs.

Sustainable CSR implementation is challenging to all firms according to Sarkis et al, 2011.Some of the challenges according to a study conducted on SMES in Chile include lack of compliance to CSR standards, lack of awareness and cost of audits among others. In the case of mandatory CSR compliance, firms may merely aim to meet the minimum standards as laid out by law (Acutt et al., 2004). A study by Bain (2010) found out that organizations demonstrate avoidance behaviors to compliance by shifting responsibility for provision of sustainable CSR to other organizational stakeholders.Fox (2005) therefore suggests that there is need to inculcate deeper awareness of the importance of sustainability of CSR practices through capacity building. Galbreath (2010) argues that when different functions interact with various stakeholders, they get information on different needs. Since CSR is multifunctional in nature, it is important that integral and broad sustainable CSR is undertaken. This will help in the quest to develop transformational and sustainable CSR practices. As such, training should be done through internal and external orientation, functional coverage, developing controls and subsequent communication.

According to the findings of a study by Rothman and Friedman (2011), pressure from local communities and competition determine the CSR strategies that are adopted by management. Similar sentiments were echoed by Ho (2005) who notes that good governance practices enhance organizational competitiveness and CSR performance. Therefore, an assessment of how external issues influence implementation of CSR programs will assist in developing strategies and practices that increase the chance of sustainability. Galbreath (2010) concurs that since CSR is multifunctional in nature, integration of external factors influencing its implementation such as market trends will help in establishing appropriate response mechanisms hence meet sustainability. Moreover, since organizations operate in competitive environments, creating a winning mechanism is not a one-off event but everyday activity.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology that was adopted in this study was of a descriptive nature. According to Mugenda and Mugenda, (1999), descriptive design enables the researchers collect comprehensive data and thus provide relevant and specific information relevant to draw conclusion on the population under study. Stratified sampling method was used to draw samples from the KenGen staff population in Nairobi generating a sample size for the respondents. The method that was used for data collection was mainly through questionnaires administered to the respondents. The collected data was analyzed using Regression and ANOVA in the SPSS package, in an aim to establish the extent and kind of relationship between the dependent variable (Sustainable practices and the independent variables; decision drivers, internal enablers, inhibitors and exernal influences.

VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The sampled respondents initially stood at 86 respondents who comprised the top management team i.e. the chief officers, assistant managers, the managers and finally divisional directors officers who are involved in the corporate planning and execution of overall organizational mandate. The findings indicate the study was able to gather data from 62 usable surveys which were submitted, with all respondents answering all the questions as the survey did not allow for partial response.The findings indicate that response rate was dimmed sufficient for analysis and conclusion drawing all standing at 72.1%. The reliability test had a combined scale of 0.773 which is above 0.6 thus showing a high level of instrument reliability. The distribution of the period in which the respondents have been in the organization was crucial to the study since it reflected on their experience with CSR practices.

VII. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

A regression analysis was used to determine the influence of decision drivers, internal enablers, internal inhibitors and external influences on the implementation of sustainable CSR.The following equation was established:

The regression equation:

Sustainable CSR= $1.338 + 0.181X_1 + 0.664X_2 + 0.231X_3 + 0.336 p < 0.003$

Table 4.1: Model Goodness of Fit

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.696[a]	.775	.701	.23484	1.781

a. Predictors: (Constant), influence of decision drivers, internal enablers, internal inhibitors and external influences

The study established a correlation value of 0.775. This depicts a very good linear dependence between dependent and independent variables. An R-square value of 0.775 was established and adjusted to 0.701. The coefficient of determination depicts that influence of decision drivers, internal enablers, internal inhibitors and external influences brings about 77.5% variations on Sustainable CSR; 22.5.6% of variations are brought about by factors not captured in the study objectives. This implies that the variables studied are very significant and should be considered in any effort aimed at improving implementation of sustainable CSR practices in the energy sector in Kenya. The Durbin Watson value of 1.781 was established illustrating lack of autocorrelation in the model residuals hence identifies the variables as critical determinants of sustainable CSR practices.

Among the variables, internal foundational enablers were inferred to be the most significant influences on sustainable CSR practices, followed by external influences, internal inhibitors and decision drivers respectively. This strongly indicate that any management intervention measures aimed at improving organizational achievement of their intended objectives should have an inside-out approach that aims at maximizing own capabilities before factors outside the control of the organization are taken into consideration. The results conform to Osemene (2012) and Elizaveta (2010) who found out that the success of CSR in organizations largely depends on the internal process and best workers attract more impactful prgorams. They further went ahead to add that demands for CSR mostly emanate from competitive pressure and other pressure groups as found out in this study.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Integration of sustainability in the way organizations are doing business in Kenya has seen a widespread increase in the adoption of CSR programs by many entities. Implementing sustainable CSR practices can be viewed as a strategic transformation intervention that involves management of complex issues as well as integration of stakeholder management efforts. From this study, which sought to determine the factors influencing implementation of sustainable CSR practices, it can be concluded that organizations are no longer muddling through their CSR initiatives. There has been a shift from CSR being just an ideology to what can be termed as a reality and avenue through which organizations can define their role in society. This is as indicated by the result of an evaluation of the decisions driving the CSR initiatives to internal enablers and inhibitors such as lack of awareness of stakeholder engagement, top management support and lack of standardized benchmarks to track performance of implemented projects. Moreover, factors outside the control of these organizations also significantly hinder or influence implementation of sustainable CSR practices. From the foregoing, it can be concluded that is possible to implement sustainable CSR practices that are likely to improve livelihood of target beneficiaries and lead to increased eco-efficiency and better management of stakeholder relations. However, there are still various practices by the organization that are not in line with sustainability leading to very slow developments in terms of implementation.

Through proper adoption and development of enabling foundational factors and management of internal inhibiting factors, organizations will be on the right track towards effective implementation of sustainable-led CSR practices. Further, the study finds that external factors influencing organizational process cannot be overlooked. Although they are outside the control of management, their effective management through interventions such as benchmarking will go a long way in enabling organizations achieve their CSR related corporate objectives.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings of this study provide more pointed, practical advice to managers on how to implement sustainable CSR practices, given its vital importance to the welfare of both business and society. This study therefore further recommends that: Decisions driving the adoption and implementation of CSR acitivities should be guided by the need to implement highly impactful projects. As such, organizations should develop partnership strategies with stakeholders in project identification, implementation and operation. External stakeholders such as communities should also be engaged in the project need prioritization process to ensure that the implemented projects are those that are necessary and essential to the target beneficiaries and spur a sense of ownership in them. Technical partnerships should also be formed to ensure identification and implementation of impactful and sustainable programs being undertaken.

In addition, organizations should manage foundational enablers to ensure they facilitate implementation of sustainable CSR programs. As such, organizations should develop a CSR strategy that will ensure their board, management and staff are aware and are actively involved in identifying and implementing projects through contributing (funds, skills and time).

CSR implementation committees should also ensure the buy-in by top management of CSR programs and work with them to ensure launch of key projects in dealing with internal foundational enablers to implementation of sustainable CSR practices.

Furthermore, internal inhibiting factors such as lack of systems to measure the impact of CSR projects and lack of strategies of developing success stories of the projects implemented and integrating this with an organization's marketing and publicity strategies should be managed to show case the companies as a good corporate citizen and enhance their visibility. Organizations should also develop project implementation frameworks to enable them assess how implemented projects are improving the livelihoods of the communities and develop a communication strategy which is integrated with marketing and publicity strategies of organizations. Organizations should also promote employee awareness of, and compliance with, company policies through appropriate dissemination of these policies, including through training programmes

Areas for Further Research:

This study is important for future research in this area, particularly in Kenya. The findings emphasize how various factors studied affect sustainable CSR practices of which there is little research in. However, the study does not cover the area of the strategies that can be adopted for impactful CSR implementation. Further researchin this area will therefore necessitate the need to assess how firms can measure the impact of the various factors influencing sustainbale CSR and the strategies that can be used to manage them. It is also recommended that further in-depth research should be done on other variables not considered in this study to determine wether similar results will be found.

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