

## Dynamics of Corporate Social Responsibility in Developing Countries: One Size doesn't Fit All

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<p><b>Article History:</b></p> <p><b>Received:</b> 28 Jun, 2018</p> <p><b>Revised:</b> 08 Sep, 2018</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> 09 Sep, 2018</p>	<p><b>Abstract:</b></p> <p><i>CSR concept has gained increased attention in mainstream business ethics and management literature in recent years. However, extant literature delineates that there is a dearth on CSR topic, particularly in developing countries as well as in relation to small and medium business enterprises (SMEs). This review therefore aims to highlight the depth and breadth of empirical literature on the area of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in developing countries. Secondly, the review also draws attention to idiosyncratic nature of small and medium business enterprises (SMEs) that distinguish them from its larger counterparts from a perspective of CSR particularly in the context of developing countries and thus provides new avenues that may broaden the existing knowledge on CSR and SMEs in developing countries. Finally, seventy (70) articles were selected for the review of the current study. The study found that majority studies pertaining CSR has been investigated primarily in the developed countries context however, there is a room for exploring institutional logics that shape CSR orientation in developing countries. It has also highlighted the peculiar nature of SMEs that yield varying characteristics which need to be investigated in the developing world context from a CSR perspective. This article will be helpful for academicians as well for the key stakeholders that provide new insights into the area of CSR and SMEs.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> CSR, Developing countries, Small and medium</p>
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## **1. Introduction**

Global disparities are increasing with industrial and technological growth (Raynard & Forstater, 2002) whereby offering societies to face a variety of challenges such as financial crises, environmental issues, social issues, uncertainties, which seek instantaneous a way out (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). In realizing the crucial part that companies may play in eradicating broad and deep-seated social and environmental problems, it has brought changes in society expectations which increasingly demands companies to provide innovative solutions (Ibrahim, Jamali, & KaratasOzkan, 2012; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Wang, Tong, Takeuchi, & George, 2016). Thus, business entities have been facing intensive pressure to engage in activities which fulfill the society expectations. These activities are summed up into a broader construct described as Corporate Social Responsibility (Jenkins, 2009; Sen, 2011).

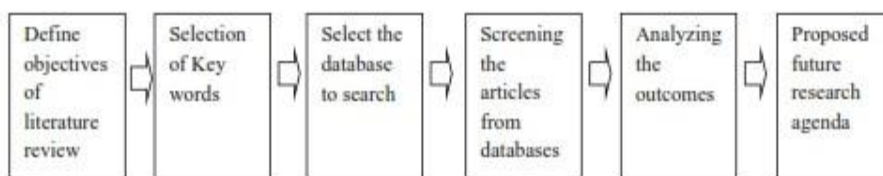
The CSR concept is not a novel. It has been characterized as contested concept (Jamali, Zanhour, & Keshishian, 2009; Matten & Moon, 2008; Okoye, 2009) and has deep-rooted history (Raza & Majid, 2016; Sajjad & Eweje, 2014). It lacks consensus on single definition as to what the phenomenon truly stands for (Adapa & Rindfleish, 2013; Carroll, 1979; Chakraborty, 2015; Ibrahim et al., 2012; Panapanaan, Linnanen, Karvonen, & Phan, 2003; Raza & Majid, 2016) and conceptualized through interchangeable terms (Adapa & Rindfleish, 2013) such as corporate social performance (Carroll, 1979; Wartick & Cochran, 1985; Wood, 1991) social behaviors, social practices (Carroll, 1999) and corporate citizenship (Matten & Crane, 2005; Mehtap & Kokalan, 2013; Oberseder, Schlegelmilch, & Murphy, 2013). Therefore it has a propensity to show a discrepancy according to country, organization, and researcher (Carroll, 2016; Masoud, 2017).

However, World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBSCD) (2000) defines CSR as “the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life”. This definition embraces multifaceted view of CSR thereby encouraging firms to consider their broader obligations towards the key stakeholders in order to incorporate socio-economic and environmental concerns into their core strategies (Adapa & Rindfleish, 2013).

## 2. Methodology

The review of this article is primarily twofold: firstly, it will critically review and recapitulate the key pattern in current research and secondly to recognize the gaps in the existing literature. In addition, the review will also put forward a future research agenda. The article reviews an extant literature on CSR in the context of developing country and also in relation to SMEs. It is due to the underlying fact that very limited research has been done in the context of developing countries focusing on SMEs. A relevant body of literature on CSR and SMEs in developing countries context began to appear in publications after the year 2000.

However, the year 2009 saw a considerable uptick in CSR and SMEs in developing world context (Va'zquez-Carrasco & Lo'pez-P'erez, 2013). The key research themes have been identified through a systematic process of search by considering past literature indexed in Web of Science, Scopus and Science Direct with key words “corporate social responsibility”, “small and medium enterprises (SMEs)” and “developing countries context”. Then the articles related to these key words were classified and analyzed on the basis of time and context (developed and developing). However, finally (70) articles were selected for review based on relevancy after eliminating those which are not directly related to mentioned key words. The researchers have adopted six steps process as suggested by (Fatma & Rahman, 2015).



**Fig. 1 Flow diagram of Research Process**

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 A Glance on Historical Background of CSR

The CSR concept stemmed from Western academic institutions in the early 1950s. The first substantial work on the topic of CSR published in the seminal book by Bowen (Bowen & Johnson, 1953) titled “Social Responsibilities of Businessman” who put forth the basis of modern CSR

era. According to Carroll (2008) the concept began to expand and proliferate significantly during the early 1960s and 1970s. However in the ensuing 80's and 90's periods, the CSR concept paved the way for recasting the CSR concept into complementary themes, such as business ethics, corporate citizenship corporate social performance and stakeholder theory, rather than defining the basic concerns of CSR (Arikan, Kantur, Maden, & Telci, 2016; Berk, 2016; Carroll, 2008; 1999). Consequently, with the beginning of millennium, worldwide CSR applications were advanced with CSR empirical measurements and theoretical developments with the aim of reconciliation of theory with practice (Ibe, Min, Ling, & Yii, 2015; Va'zquez-Carrasco & Lo'pez-P'erez, 2013).

### 3.2 Contextual Sensitivity: A Shift from Developed to Developing World

The advent of new millennium led to the emergence of CSR as global phenomenon (Carroll, 2008, 1999) both for academics and managers (Perrini, 2005; Windsor, 2001). As (Lee, 2008) stated that the field of CSR has evolved to become "almost universally sanctioned and promoted by all constituents in society from governments and corporations to non-governmental organizations and individual consumers". While a few critics persist, CSR has proven to be a legitimate and enduring practice influencing businesses today (Berk, 2016). This phase was characterized of corporate contributions as 'diversification and globalization' (Carroll, 2008). Almost all the international organizations such as United Nations, World Bank and International Labour Organization (ILO) have endorsed not only CSR, instead also ascertained principles to uphold CSR agenda (Lee, 2008). Moreover, the technological advancements and the intensified global pressures have dictated the businesses to foster CSR activities during the late-90s (Boli & Hartsuiker, 2001; Sharma, Sharma, & Devi, 2009).

Given the increased interest in CSR globally, its local orientations are as varied as clear both in developing and developed world (Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Jeppesen, 2017). Much of the CSR literature is captured in the context of developed world but has fallen scanty in terms of nuanced analysis that how CSR expresses itself in the context of developing countries. Since CSR is a dynamic and context-dependent concept therefore the phenomenon needs to be scrutinized in the historically grown institutional structure and national business systems (NBS) (Campbell, 2007; Carroll, 2016; Jamali & Karam, 2018; Jamali, Karam, Yin, & Soundararajan, 2017; Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Jeppesen, 2017; Jamali & Neville, 2011; Matten & Moon, 2008). Consequently, a growing body of knowledge (Carroll, 2016; Ibrahim, 2014; Jamali & Karam, 2018; Jamali, Karam, et al., 2017; Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Jeppesen, 2017; Jamali & Neville, 2011) call for understanding

the more context-specific realities and the meaningful application of CSR within developing countries.

### 3.3 CSR and Developing Countries

The extant literature suggests that the institutional constellations invariably affect and shaping CSR orientations and practices in developing countries (Ibe et al., 2015). Unlike developed world, the socio-economic condition in developing countries is unstable, the regulatory framework and accountability system is unclear and state institutions are relatively weak in developing countries and thus provide an unfavorable environment for business operations (Azmat & Samaratunge, 2007; Tilt, 2016; Yunis, 2012). This is due to the reason that CSR in a developing country is found to be fragmented, deeply engrained in cultural/religious values and politically less rooted than developed world (Jamali, 2014; Jamali & Neville, 2011; Jamali et al., 2009; Possenti, 2012; Bondy, Moon, & Matten, 2012).

To date, very few authors have highlighted the illustrations from developing countries that delineate context-dependence of CSR. The groundbreaking contributions of (Campbell, 2007; Matten & Moon, 2008) made an effort in leveraging the institutional lens and highlighted the significance of context in terms of CSR. (Jamali & Neville, 2011) investigated CSR phenomenon in the Lebanese context while capitalizing on an institutional perspective. (Jamali, 2014) also highlighted the peculiar institutional constellations that may shape the CSR expressions in developing countries. (Jamali et al., 2017) concluded that the future writings should dwell on analyzing that how the institutional constellations affect the CSR engagement in the developing countries. More recently, (Jamali et al., 2017) conducted a study pertaining to four developing countries: China, India, Nigeria and Lebanon in order to comprehend the meaning and applications of CSR which draw attention to institutional peculiarities and also captured the local nuances within each country context.

The existing literature nevertheless, recognizes the significance of context dependence of CSR in the developing countries but yet CSR literature failed to effectively address the nuances of institutional logics of developing countries. It is due to the reason that traditionally the CSR literature largely focus on developed world while overshadowing the contextual peculiarities of developing countries (Idemudia, 2011; Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Jeppesen, 2017; Jamali & Mirshak, 2007; Tilt, 2016). This seems context is important while understanding the complexities of CSR phenomenon. However, it is worth noting that understanding CSR applications in developing countries context is particularly more relevant in

SMEs. As (Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Jeppesen, 2017) argued that extant literature highlights the very two different sides (positive/negative) of SMEs engagement in CSR in developing country world and that of prevailing institutional logics are particular useful in understanding the SMEs engagement in CSR.

### 3.4 CSR and SMEs Literature: A Forgotten Debate

Whereby seeking attention to CSR in developing countries, one particular area has relatively received little attention is SMEs in relation to CSR research in developing countries context (Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Jeppesen, 2017). It is due to the fact that traditionally most of the CSR literature has been largely driven by large multinational enterprises (Demuijnck & Ngnodjom, 2013; Ibrahim, 2014; Inyang, 2013; Kechiche & Soparnot, 2012). The initiatives undertaken by some of the world's major companies have made them leaders in the field.

Researchers (Davis, 1967, 1973; Walton, 1967) argued that large corporations have power to a large extent and their power entails obligations, therefore responsibilities beyond the economic and legal must be addressed by the MNCs (Baumann-Pauly, Wickert, Spence, & Scherer, 2013; Carroll, 2004; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011; Scherer & Smid, 2000). MNCs have received greater attention in the past from business and management researchers due to their visibility and prominence (Bondy et al., 2012; Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2013; Garvey & Newell, 2005; Matten & Crane, 2005; Moon, Crane, & Matten, 2006; MouraLeite & Padgett, 2011; Palazzo & Scherer, 2008; Spence, Schmidpeter, & Habisch, 2003).

However, SMEs engagement in CSR has emerged recently as an academic mainstream research due to its significant contributions to both national and international economic development (Adapa & Rindfleish, 2013; Ibrahim et al., 2012; Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Jeppesen, 2017; Raza & Majid, 2016; Vives, 2006). SMEs contribute 90% of the world's enterprises and 50-60 per cent of employment. The SMEs role in world's economic development is well-recognized as they are considered as drivers in ensuring a more balanced and equitable growth distribution in regional economies (Morsing & Perrini, 2009).

SMEs also facilitate both developed and developing countries to improve their innovation and entrepreneurship, local productive capacities and increased foreign direct investment that help in uplifting the societies in which they operate (Possenti, 2012; Raynard & Forstater, 2002; Morsing & Perrini, 2009).

### 3.5 Idiosyncrasies of SMEs from a CSR perspective

Traditionally it has been assumed that SMEs are merely miniaturized versions of large organizations and that CSR theory which is particularly developed for large organizations is applicable to all size of organizations. Since SMEs are ‘not little big firms’ (Tilley, 2000) and that the traditional CSR applications of large organizations cannot be scaled down to ‘fit’ SMEs (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013; Davies & Crane, 2010; Fassin, 2008; Fassin, Van Rossem, & Buelens, 2011; Jenkins, 2006, 2009; Va’zquez-Carrasco & Lo’pez-P’erez, 2013; Morsing & Perrini, 2009). Pioneering contributions by authors (Jenkins, 2004, 2006, 2009; Murillo & Lozano, 2006, 2009; Perrini, 2006; Morsing & Perrini, 2009) also delineated the peculiarities of SMEs that influence firm’s approach to CSR. (Fassin, 2008) also noted the fallacy of assuming solutions for large organizations can be transposed to SMEs. He concluded that CSR in SMEs call for a meticulous approach which can be adapted to the informal nature of SMEs. Similarly, (Wickert, 2016) argued that large-sizefits-all approach rather have overshadowed the idea of tailoring the discourse that how businesses may translate socially responsible practices and procedures into the size and distinctiveness of SMEs.

Since SMEs are smaller in size and rarely attract media therefore traditionally it has been assumed that SMEs are less likely to participate in socially responsible initiatives (Demuijnck & Ngnodjom, 2013; Jenkins, 2009; Lepoutre & Heene, 2006; Nejati & Amran, 2009; Nejati, Amran, & Ahmad, 2014; Spence et al., 2003; Udayasankar, 2008; Vives, 2006; Wickert, 2016). Although CSR is a universal term and the value embodied in the term is applicable to all organizations (from public to private, from SMEs to large enterprises (MNEs), from industrialized to service organizations) regardless of type and size (Carroll, 2016; Jenkins, 2006, 2009; Tilt, 2016; Morsing & Perrini, 2009) but still the predominant CSR literature has been remained limited in the context of SMEs due to its smaller firm size. However, there are several prominent researchers who have recognized the potential implications of SMEs firm size on CSR (Demuijnck & Ngnodjom, 2013; Fassin, 2008; Fuller & Tian, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Lepoutre & Heene, 2006; Orlitzky, 2001; Tilley, 2000).

SMEs are also tending to vary in their management style as well as the overall organizational structure from its larger counterparts (Jenkins, 2009; Spence & Lozano, 2000; Tilley, 2000). They are heterogeneous in size (Battaglia, Bianchi, Frey, & Iraldo, 2010; Fassin et al., 2011; Lepoutre & Heene, 2006) therefore tend to vary from being micro enterprises with either less employees or medium-sized entities above 200 workforce (Murillo & Lozano, 2006). Unlike large organizations, they are generally owner-

managed, have a personalized management style (Jenkins, 2009; Lepoutre & Heene, 2006) and relatively have a small number of stakeholders with whom they interact on daily basis (Preuss & Perschke, 2010). Such close interaction of SMEs' owners/managers with employees increases the chance of knowing each other and be well-known to management, which may in turn, facilitate SMEs owners/managers to treat their employees better than those of large organizations (Turyakira, Venter, & Smith, 2014). They are rather simple and characterized by an informal organizational structure (Amaeshi et al., 2016; Jenkins, 2006; Spence, 2007). Furthermore, they have relaxed control system which requires minimum documentation, thus have less administrative burden and fewer procedural hurdles unlike large organizations (Fassin, 2008; Spence, 1999). Such personalized managerial style and informal structure of SMEs makes considerable affect on their approach towards socially responsible initiatives (Demuijnck & Ngnodjom, 2013).

The extant literature suggests that SMEs are subject to numerous unique characteristics that differentiate them from large organizations (Demuijnck & Ngnodjom, 2013), and thus provide meaningful basis for SMEs to be socially responsible organizations (Ibrahim, 2014). They are inherently different and distinct entities from its larger and thus there is a need to develop CSR theoretical approaches particularly relevant to SMEs (Demuijnck & Ngnodjom, 2013; Lepoutre & Heene, 2006; Nejati et al., 2014; Stoian & Gilman, 2017).

#### **4. Conclusion and Future Research Implications**

The critical review of this article articulates a number of significant contributions that may pave a way for the future research agenda in the SMEs and CSR areas particularly in the context of developing country. Firstly, the review highlights the CSR dynamics in general and its manifestation outside the developed countries. The review draws attention to the institutional logics for analyzing the CSR in developing countries. It is pertinent to note there are compelling arguments which are evident in the studies by (Campbell, 2007; Jamali & Karam, 2018; Jamali & Neville, 2011; Matten & Moon, 2008) that the frameworks and conclusion drawn in developed world cannot be replicated in the developing countries.

Secondly, this review article argues that extant literature has largely been focused on large organizations (Frynas, 2009; Garvey & Newell, 2005; Hamann & Kapelus, 2004; Idemudia, 2011; Jamali, 2010; Jamali & Neville, 2011; Jenkins & Newell, 2013; Lund-Thomsen, 2009; Tran, 2011; Barrientos & Smith, 2007) while overshadowing the significance of CSR in the area of



SMEs (Fassin et al., 2011; Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Jeppesen, 2017; Jamali et al., 2009; Jenkins, 2004). This review while taking opportunity highlights how SMEs operate and the key characteristics of SMEs can help them be socially responsible.

The literature delineates the idiosyncrasies of SMEs are evidenced in terms of size, personalized management style, informal organizational structure and contextual characteristics that differentiate them from its larger counterparts. Since SMEs are not just small version of large organizations therefore there is a need to develop CSR theory and applications tailored accordingly to the needs of SMEs. Such idiosyncrasies may also affect the SMEs' approach to socially responsible practices and the motivations behind these social practices (Ibrahim et al., 2012; Nejati et al., 2014). In this view, it validates the need to broaden the extant literature by understanding the socially responsible practices and also motivations of SMEs owners/managers and employees for their social engagement (Ibrahim, 2014; Ibrahim et al., 2012; Nejati & Amran, 2012; Possenti, 2012; Sen, 2011). This view is further strengthened by other scholars who claimed that there is no such research into responsible business practices that has been well-addressed in the area of SMEs (Moore & Spence, 2006).

Finally, the review argues that the need for CSR research in developing countries context is more enunciated in terms of social and environmental challenges i.e. fight against corruption, poverty alleviation and employment generation, therefore these adverse conditions demand SMEs to come forward in order to fill these gaps. Consequently, recent studies (Delchet-Cochet & Vo, 2012; Ibrahim, 2014; Jamali et al., 2017; Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Jeppesen, 2017; Mayr, 2015; Perrini, 2006; Possenti, 2012) call for future research by providing a more holistic view of understanding context-specific CSR, SMEs role as to increase their knowledge about potential benefits of socially responsible practices, SMEs owners/managers and other stakeholders' views and involvement in CSR and how to improve CSR engagement in SMEs, strategic implementation of CSR at SMEs and overall impact on society and business relationships in a developing countries.

While taking all empirical and theoretical contributions into consideration, this review article concludes that future research agenda on CSR needs to investigate how institutional logics mold the CSR expressions in the developing countries context. Secondly, there is a room for exploring the relationship between CSR and SMEs that help in differentiating theoretical approaches of SMEs from its larger counterparts in relation to CSR particularly in the developing countries.

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