

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRITY**Boma-Siaminabo, Helen****Department of Office and Information Management, Faculty of Business Studies
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria****ABSTRACT**

The study theoretically examined the relationship between corporate social responsibility and administrative integrity. The objectives of the study were to determine the relationship between ethical responsibility and administrative integrity; examine the relationship between legal responsibility and administrative integrity. The concept of corporate social responsibility and its dimensions such as ethical responsibility and legal responsibility was discussed followed by the concept of administrated integrity. Relevant theories such as social exchange theory and Stakeholders theory were adopted as the theoretical foundation of the study. Models of corporate social responsibility were also presented. Following the major benefits of corporate social responsibility in enhancing business productivity, it was linked that corporate social responsibility (ethical responsibility and legal responsibility) has a positive impact on administrative integrity. It was concluded that organizations can, with a moderate level of faith and trust, apply the tool of corporate social responsibility such as ethical responsibility and legal responsibility to enhance their administrative integrity. Consequently, the study recommends that ethical responsibility should not be done with some economic mindset, but rather with the mindset of helping every stakeholder of the business; organizations should ensure that their businesses are fully registered, and they should equally ensure that they operate in line with government procedures.

Keywords: Corporate Social responsibility, Ethical responsibility, Legal responsibility, and Administrative Integrity.

INTRODUCTION

Integrity is one of the most important factors of every business. This is noted on the ground that an organization with low or poor integrity will suffer poor corporate reputation. The presence of a poor corporate reputation in any business organization is capable of bringing down such an organization drastically through low market share, profitability, low demand, and employee retention among others. However, in the administrative system of any organization, [integrity](#) involves maintaining the consistency, accuracy, and trustworthiness of information content (data or message) over its entire life cycle (Keith & Jeffrey, 2017). Data or messages must not be changed in transit, and steps must be taken to ensure that data cannot be altered by unauthorized people. To this end, this study defines administrative integrity as the extent to which information content shared is genuine and free from alteration in an organization. The only way to truly improve the message integrity of information within an organization is to take a holistic approach that spans' establishment processes and considers the relevant information assets (Rouse, 2014). It is believed that the proven quality management systems of an organization can provide the necessary framework for ensuring information integrity.

One of the cardinal factors for business survival is attributed to its environment. This is because an organization does not exist in a vacuum but rather in an environment, these environments/host communities are faced with some cardinal challenges which they expect the organization to address (Ugochukwu et al., 2018). These challenges range from the provision of social amenities such as good roads, water, electricity, schools, hospitals, employment generation, and even skill acquisition programs (Nmom, 2015). Organizations that can address some of the challenges of the host community following the ethical and legal process are said to be socially responsible. However, engaging in social responsibility by organization portrays them better and boasts the love the society has for the organization. This could be predicted on the ground that they stand to

solve a particular societal problem, impacting positively the society and the environment, instead of contributing negatively to them. As asserted by Garriga and Mele (2014), organizations are expected to be good corporate citizens by avoiding illegal activities and paying taxes promptly, including exhibiting a measure of social responsibilities such as employment provision to the host community and offering skill acquisition.

Thus, as used in this study, social responsibility represents the social obligations of business encompassing economic, environmental, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time. Thus, corporate social responsibility encompasses organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). More so, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is regarded as a solution for the negative impact which the reforms and other actions in the banking industry have on society. Its uptake has been shown to trigger improvement in the financial performance of organizations (Jones, 2015). This study conceptualizes corporate social responsibility in terms of ethical responsibility and legal responsibility.

There is always business ethics in any giving organization. This is because organizations without adequate ethics stand a chance of losing in the competitive market. Therefore, it is pertinent for organizations to ensure that their products or services meet standard specifications as well as ensure that customers are treated rightly. Nevertheless, this study defines ethical responsibility as the ability of an organization to recognize, interpret and act upon multiple principles and values according to the standards within their discretion (Lii & Lee in Aslan & Demet, 2014; Garriga & Mele 2014). This embraces those activities and practices that are expected or prohibited by societal members even though they are not codified into law. Ethical responsibilities embody the range of norms, standards, and expectations that reflect a concern for what consumers, employees, shareholders, and the community regard as fair, to protect moral rights. Organizations that embrace ethical responsibility aim to achieve fair treatment of all stakeholders, including leadership, investors, employees, suppliers, and customers. Firms can embrace ethical responsibility in different ways. Thus, the ethical responsibility of an organization could manifest through compliance with standards and customers' fair treatment. Compliance to standards in this study represents organizational abilities in ensuring all ethical stipulated standards are met in the cause of production or service delivery. It is the adherence to all ethical regulatory requirements that apply to an organization's activities, services and products (Raskino, 2017). On the other hand, customers' fair treatment represents all ethical modalities such as quality service, time-saving, and redress which a firm employs in other to ensure that customers are comfortable transacting with their firm (Chakraborty, 2019).

As business is an entity itself, it must also follow laws and rules. Every business has a responsibility to operate within the boundaries set by the various commissions and agencies at every level of the [government](#). These rules and regulations are set for maintaining balance and the greater good of society (Hopkins, 2014). However, legal responsibility refers to the organizational ability to operate in line with government stipulated policies for the betterment of both the business, government and the host community. A law-abiding enterprise is a socially responsible enterprise as well (Sharpin, 2019). This background necessitated the study.

Objectives

The study seeks to achieve the following objective:

To determine the relationship between ethical responsibility and administrative integrity.

To examine the relationship between legal responsibility and administrative integrity.

Conceptual Review

The following concepts were briefly discussed to reflect their contextual meaning in this study:

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is a broad concept that can take many forms depending on the

perceptive ability of an organization. This is because businesses are majorly established with different motives (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). However, Mullerat (2010) averred that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a self-regulating business model that helps a company be socially accountable to itself, its stakeholders, and the public. By practicing corporate social responsibility, also called [corporate citizenship](#), companies can be conscious of the kind of impact they are having on all aspects of society, including economic, social, and environmental. Corporate social responsibility activities can help forge a stronger bond between the organization and host community, employees and corporations, boost morale and help both employees and employers feel more connected with the world around them (Greck in Gavrea, et al., 2014).

Operationally, corporate social responsibility refers to social obligations of business encompassing economic, environmental, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time. Corporate social responsibility is a form of international private business self-regulation which aims to contribute to societal goals of a philanthropic, activist, or charitable nature by engaging in or supporting volunteering or ethically-oriented practices (Wikipedia, 2021). Paul and Jason (2017) assert that corporate social responsibility refers to the **moral and ethical obligations** of a company concerning its **employees, the environment, its competitors, the economy** and several other areas of life that its business affects. In the assertion of Aslan and Demet (2014) corporate social responsibility denotes the continuing commitment by businesses to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large. It encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time. They maintain that corporate social responsibility is at the heart of the obligations that firms owe to the societies in which they operate (Aslan & Demet, 2014). Within the context of this study, corporate social responsibility is dimensionalized through ethical responsibility and legal responsibility.

Ethical Responsibility: The concept of ethics comes from the Greek word, "Ethos" which means both an individual's character and a community's culture. Generally, it is believed that business ethics involves adhering to legal, professional, regulatory and company standards, keeping promises and commitments and abiding by general principles like truth, fairness, honesty and respect (Anand, 2012). So to say, drawing from Wokutch's (2020) assertion, ethical responsibility is concerned with ensuring an organization is operating fairly and ethically. Organizations that embrace ethical responsibility aim to achieve fair treatment of all stakeholders, including leadership, investors, employees, suppliers and customers. Firms can embrace ethical responsibility in different ways.

This study defines ethical responsibility as the ability of a firm to recognize, interpret and act upon multiple principles and values according to the standards within their discretion. This embraces those activities and practices that are expected or prohibited by societal members even though they are not codified into law. Ethical responsibilities embody the range of norms, standards, and expectations that reflect a concern for what consumers, employees, shareholders, and the community regard as fair, to protect moral rights. In one sense, Lockwood (2014) postulates that changes in ethics or values precede the establishment of laws because they become the driving forces behind the very creation of laws and regulations.

Legal Responsibility: Legal responsibilities are not only liable to the individuals in society but also to the businesses in society. As business is an entity itself, it must also follow laws and rules. Every business has a responsibility to operate within the boundaries set by the various commissions and agencies at every level of the [government](#). These rules and regulations are set for maintaining balance and the greater good of the society (Hopkins, 2014).

However, legal responsibility refers to the organizational ability to operate in line with government stipulated policies for the betterment of both the business, government and the host community. A law-abiding enterprise is a socially responsible enterprise as well (Sharpin, 2019). The business is free to do business however it wants but only within the boundaries of regulations of

various [laws](#) such as labor law, environmental law and criminal law. For example, a business must pay taxes to the government and keep its account books clean as it helps the government track the economic state of the company. A company must follow the law and have a legal obligation to do so. For example, car companies are required to meet a certain level of emissions standards in car production (Khan & Alkinson, 2017).

Other Types of Corporate Social Responsibility

Although the study has adopted ethical responsibility and legal responsibility as its dimensions, other types of corporate social responsibility include the following:

Environmental Responsibility: Yang et al. (2017) assert that the environmental responsibility of an organization is the liability to conserve natural resources and protect global ecosystems to support the health and well-being of the organization, now and in the future. This is because so many decisions that impact the environment are not felt immediately, a key element of environmental responsibility is its forward-looking nature. Environmental responsibility is reliably interacting with the planet to maintain natural resources and avoid jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Cornelius, et al 2018). They further stressed that environmental responsibility is about acting in a way that ensures that organizational future generations have the natural resources available to compete equally, if not better. In the postulation of Osagie et al. (2014), environmental responsibility is the capacity of an organization to improve the quality of itself while living within the carrying capacity. This is because it deals with addressing how organizations can cope with the challenges their business environment offers.

Furthermore, Boons et al (2013) averred that environmental responsibility is a responsible interaction between an organization and its environment to avoid depletion or degradation of natural resources and allow for long-term environmental quality. The practice of environmental responsibility helps to ensure that the needs of today's population are met without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Environmental responsibility is the rates of renewable resource harvest, pollution reduction, and non-renewable resource depletion that can be continued indefinitely between an organization and its host community (Engert, et al. 2016).

Philanthropic Responsibility: Doukakis et al. (2015) posit that the philanthropic responsibility of an organization involves charitable giving to worthy causes on a large scale, but it is much more than just a [charitable donation](#). Philanthropic responsibility also involves an effort an individual or organization undertakes based on an altruistic desire to improve human welfare, and wealthy individuals sometimes establish [private foundations](#) to facilitate their philanthropic efforts. Philanthropic responsibility is most often seen in the form of financial contributions, but it can also include time and resources. Thus, it involves making an effort to drive social change. It is not only the charitable donations that can go toward any number of direct-giving scenarios, such as disaster relief or feeding the homeless.

According to Zheng, et al. (2015), philanthropic responsibility denotes finding a long-term solution to homelessness, rather than delivering temporary relief. Many corporations simply donate money to causes that are intended to bring about social change. They may or may not place their brand on the cause and take credit for the resources offered. This kind of giving often happens without any direct involvement outside of the funds offered. Epstein (2011) postulates that philanthropic responsibility is not bound by directive aid made by companies but extended to the encouragement of philanthropic activities by associates and customers through various collaborations.

Economic Responsibility: According to Gavrea, et al. (2011), **economic responsibility** is the practice of a firm backing all of its financial decisions in its commitment to do good in business. The end goal is not to simply maximize profits, but positively impact the environment, people, and society. When a business is acting with economic responsibility in mind, it is making financial decisions that prioritize doing good, not just making more money. This means that this type of CSR is intertwined with the other types above.

Butle (2010) averred that economic responsibility is an interconnected field that focuses to strike a balance between business, environmental, and philanthropic practices. Economic responsibility

abides by, the set standards of ethical and moral regulations. In this context, companies try to find out a solution that can facilitate their business growth and generate profits by benefitting the community and our society (Butle, 2010). Here economic decisions are made by considering their overall effects on society and businesses at the same time. Hence, economic responsibility can improve business operations while engaging in sustainable practices.

Major Benefits of Social Responsibility in Enhancing Business Productivity

Most firms are driven to embrace corporate social responsibility due to moral convictions, and doing so can bring several benefits of improving productivity in business. More so, Kiss (2011) opined that corporate social responsibility initiatives can, for example, be a powerful marketing tool, helping a company position itself favorably in the eyes of consumers, investors, and regulators. CSR initiatives can also improve [employee engagement](#) and satisfaction which could drive retention. Such initiatives can even attract potential employees who carry strong personal convictions that match those of the organization.

According to Chan, et al. (2016), corporate social responsibility initiatives, by their nature, force business leaders to examine practices related to how they hire and manage employees, source products or components, and deliver value to customers. In the same sense, Garcia et al. (2016) assert that the reflection can often lead to innovative and groundbreaking solutions that help a company act in a more socially responsible way and increase profits. Reconceptualizing the manufacturing process so that a company consumes less energy and produces less waste, for example, allows it to become more environmentally friendly while reducing its energy and materials costs [value](#) that can be reclaimed and shared with both suppliers and customers.

When a business commits to socially responsible practices, it positively impacts its employee satisfaction and retention. It's also great for brand identity because CSR initiatives help bolster customer trust and public respect. Thus, the CSR initiatives themselves have a ripple effect of positive good. With every new sustainable business practice and every company committed to fair pay and ethical employee treatment, more positivity is brought into the world (Markusson, 2019).

Models of Corporate Social Responsibility

There are several models of corporate social responsibility, but this study addresses the following: Carroll's Pyramid Corporate Social Responsibility Model

This is one of the leading corporate social responsibility models. It is formally known as the model of Carroll's four-part pyramid. The major focus of the model is to embrace the complete spectrum of expectations that society has from a business, defining them and dividing them into different categories. The model can be represented with the help of diagram-1 shown below.



Figure 1: Carroll's pyramid CSR model

As shown in the above figure, there are four kinds of social responsibilities that cohesively

constitute the concept of **CSR**. This involves economic, legal, ethical and, philanthropic. The pyramid is used to show the different responsibilities of a business in the order of decreasing importance. The most basic responsibility representing the bottom of the pyramid is economic responsibility (Carroll, 2016). All the other responsibilities of the business are predicted based on this component.

Intersecting Circle (IC) **CSR** model

The Intersecting Circle (IC) **CSR** model is very different from the pyramid model. The major point of differentiation between the two models is that:

It recognizes that there is a possibility of interrelationships between the different domains of **CSR**.

It rejects the hierarchical order of importance.

Diagram-2 below shows the pictorial representation of the model.

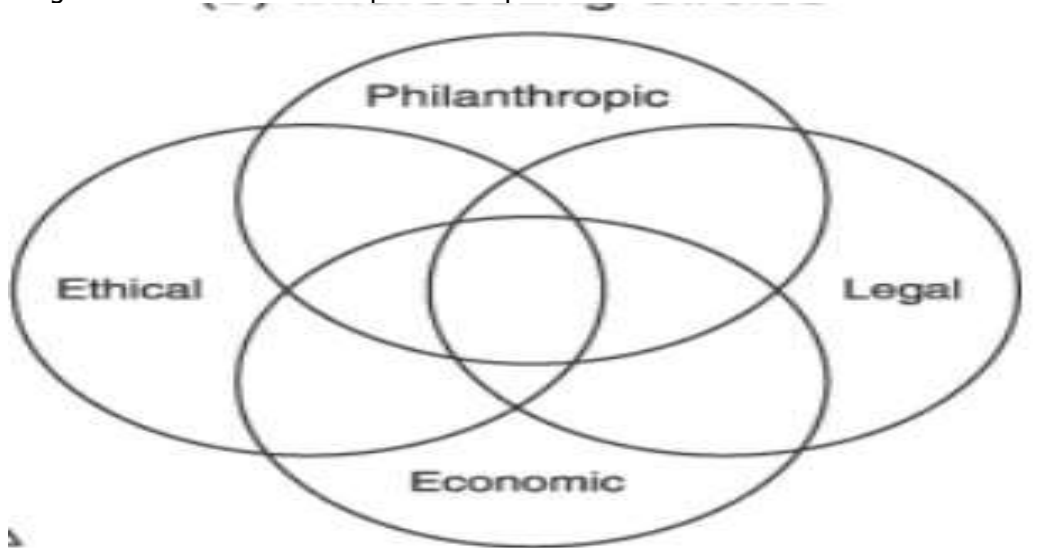


Figure 2: Intersecting Circle (IC) **CSR** model

Carroll's pyramid model could not properly capture the interpenetrating nature of the different domains of **CSR** nor does the model was successful in reflecting the possible tension points. However, this mutuality has been considered an integral characteristic of **CSR**. This model includes all the possible domains of **CSR** and hence could depict the picture of the interrelationships between the different domains.

Concentric Circle CSR Model

The Concentric Circle model which is also known as the CON model shares some similarities with Carroll's Pyramid and IC model. For instance, the CON model also states economic responsibility as one of the core social responsibilities. Also, like the IC model, the CON model emphasizes the interrelationships among different responsibilities (Zu, 2009).

However, besides these similarities, there is a major difference as well. In contrast to the Pyramid model and IC model, the CON model states that non-economic social responsibilities are the one that embraces core economic responsibilities.



Figure 3: Concentric Circle CSR model

As shown in the figure above the inner circle represents the core responsibilities of the business in terms of CSR. This includes responsibilities that focus on the efficient execution of economic functions such as products, jobs, and economic growth (Ma, 2012)

Drivers for Corporate Social Responsibility

There are numerous drivers in the marketplace that have encouraged larger companies [to be more socially responsible](#), but the key drivers for firms becoming more socially responsible as identified by Farnsworth in Gavrea et al (2011) are:

Government Legislation: In many countries across certain industries, the government has imposed legislation that requires companies to conform and behave in a certain manner. In this case, however, the organizations impacted by this legislation are only complying with various requirements because of regulation. They may or may not be willing to incorporate social responsibility initiatives into their day-to-day operations of an overall strategy.

Customers' Expectations of Firms: Consumers are becoming more aware of social and environmental issues and the consideration of the future is becoming slightly more important when consumers consider purchase decisions. As a result, some consumers will expect that certain companies behave appropriately, relative to society and the communities.

Consumer Lobby Groups: In conjunction with the previous driver of corporate social responsibility, the Internet and social media have made it much easier for consumer lobby groups to form, generate attention and adverse media coverage, and therefore achieve their goals of change.

The Extent of Costs Involved: A shift to increase social responsibility may come at a reasonable cost to the organization. For example, a manufacturer choosing to manufacture its products in more developed countries or choosing to pay the production workers a much better salary rather than "exploiting" unskilled workers in developing countries will significantly impact their unit margin and overall profitability.

The Type of Industry in Which They Operate: There are several more significant industries where there is greater pressure and expectation on the firms to become responsible corporate citizens. Following the Global Financial Crisis, there have been increased expectations on banks and other financial institutions to be more transparent and ethical in their business operations.

Potential For a Competitive Advantage by Image: Some companies are attempting to build their core image or at least parts of their brand association around their socially responsible behavior. Some companies will highlight that they are ethical manufacturers.

Corporate Culture and Top Management Values: Corporate social responsibility is also a reflection of the overall corporate culture and top management values. In other words, how important is

making a contribution to society to the senior management of the organization? This will guide how embedded social responsibility is in the overall strategy.

Administrative Integrity

A key component of workplace ethics and behavior is integrity or honesty and doing the right thing at all times. For example, health care employees who work with mentally or physically challenged patients must possess a high degree of integrity, as those who manage and work primarily with money. Workers with integrity also avoid gossip and sneakiness while on the job. Integrity demands the translation of one thought into action (Keith & Jeffrey, 2017).

[Integrity](#) involves maintaining the consistency, accuracy, and trustworthiness of information content (data or message) over its entire life cycle. Data or messages must not be changed in transit, and steps must be taken to ensure that data cannot be altered by unauthorized people (for example, in a breach of confidentiality). The Business Dictionary defines administrative integrity as the assurance that the data being accessed or read by workers (administrators) has neither been tampered with nor altered or damaged through a system error, since the time of the last authorized access. It can also be defined as the dependability and trustworthiness of administrative information. More specifically, it is the accuracy, consistency and reliability of the administrative information content, processes and systems (Keith & Jeffrey, 2017). Among organizations, it is common, as well for information content to be categorized according to the amount and type of damage that could be done should it fall into unintended hands in the system. This will impel management on the significance of such information therefore protect its integrity through confidentiality (Rouse, 2014).

From the above revelation, this study defines administrative integrity as the extent to which information content shared is genuine and free from alteration in an organization. The only way to truly improve the message integrity of information within an organization is to take a holistic approach that spans its established processes and considers the relevant information assets. It is believed that the proven quality management systems of an organization can provide the necessary framework for ensuring information integrity. This can be done through the adoption of quality management programs. Quality management programs are universal in any modern organization and they are proven to be the most successful tools in meeting organizational goals and objectives. If the information integrity concepts are incorporated within the quality management practices, the enterprise will be able to reduce/eliminate information integrity errors (John, et al., 2015). Thus, the study by Rouse (2014), averred that for the administrative process to said to have integrity, it must be confidential. Measures were undertaken to ensure confidentiality is designed to prevent sensitive message contents from reaching the wrong people. While making sure that the right people can get it, access must be restricted to those authorized to view the data in question.

Relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility and Administrative Integrity

The relationship between corporate social responsibility and administrative integrity is discussed under the following headings:

Ethical Responsibility and Administrative Integrity

Generally, it is believed that business ethics involves adhering to professional, regulatory and company standards, keeping promises and commitments and abiding by general principles like truth, fairness, honesty and respect (Anand, 2012). The principles of ethics provide a guide to making decisions but they also establish the criteria by which your decisions will be judged by others (Davis, 2015). In business, how people judge your character is critical to sustainable success because it is the basis of trust and credibility. Both of these essential assets can be destroyed by actions that can be or are perceived to be unethical. Thus, successful executives must be concerned with both their character and their reputation. This goes a long way in enhancing administrative integrity.

In line with the above assertion, Wokutch (2020) averred that organizations that embrace ethical

responsibility aim to achieve fair treatment of all stakeholders, including leadership, investors, employees, suppliers and customers. Lockwood (2014) postulates that changes in ethics or values precede the establishment of laws because they become the driving forces behind the very creation of laws and regulations. When organizations are ethically balanced, they comply with stipulated standards to maintain their corporate image. This is because the organization that has a strong image tends to equally have a strong brand reputation. Nielsen (2018) posits that compliance with ethical standards improves ethical and moral responsibility to protect the environment and prevent harm to human health; interest and motivates them to purchase products and services from organizations that recognize the importance of environmental compliance and care about environmental issues.

Legal Responsibility and Administrative Integrity

As business is an entity itself, it must also follow laws and rules. Every business has a responsibility to operate within the boundaries set by the various commissions and agencies at every level of the [government](#). These rules and regulations are set for maintaining balance and the greater good of society and the organization as well as to improve administrative integrity. In line with the above assertion, Sharpin (2019) averred that a law-abiding enterprise is a socially responsible enterprise as well. The business is free to do business however it wants but only within the boundaries of regulations of various [laws](#) such as labor law, environmental law and criminal law.

Theoretical Foundation

Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theory is the second theory adopted for this study. The stakeholder theory was propounded by Edward Freeman in 1948. The theory states that business firms owe the responsibility to a broad range of stakeholders, other than just shareholders. "Stakeholders" refers to all parties who affect or are affected by corporate actions. It includes employees, suppliers, customers, government, investors, the community and the environment (Asieh, et al., 2016).

The major assumption of the theory is that business firms owe corporate accountability to a broad range of stakeholders' interests. It considers a firm as an interconnected web of different interests. The more profound recognized this theory as one of the strategies for improving the management of firms' socially responsible behavior. The basis for adopting this theory in this study is that it reveals that firms as corporations have responsibilities to a wider group of stakeholders. Firms' social responsibility programs are anticipated to create development within their host community over time.

SUMMARY

The study has shown that the social responsibility of organizations is a very good catalyst with which to trigger administrative integrity. However, it is still effective to some satisfactory level to employ corporate social responsibility to enhance administrative integrity. Based on this, it suffices to conclude that organizations can, with a moderate level of faith and trust, apply the tool of corporate social responsibility such as ethical responsibility and legal responsibility to enhance their administrative integrity. It, therefore, implies that organizations that refuse to see this opportunity and make judicious use of it might be eluded from the benefits that accrue it.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the summary of the study, the following suggestions are advanced:

Ethical responsibility should not be done with some economic mindset, but rather with the mindset of helping every stakeholder of the business.

Organizations should ensure that their business is fully registered and they should equally ensure that they operate in line with government procedures.

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