Enriching Organisational Knowledge of Corporate Social Responsibility From the Traditional African–Nigerian and Islamic Religion Perspectives

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Organisational knowledge of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been dominated for decades by the American-European perspectives, although there are different perspectives to this debatable concept. This preference for CSR perspective from developed countries is obvious in the historical discourse of CSR. According to Carroll (1999), the long history of CSR could be linked to centuries of observed unethical behaviours and misconducts of corporations in the developed countries which later triggered agitations in the United States calling on the corporations to show more empathic concerns towards the society and the people. The agitation in favour of CSR became more pronounced in the 1950s through a widely celebrated treatise of the United States economist Howard Bowen titled *"Social Responsibilities of the Businessmen"* (Roy, 2010; Tounés, et al., 2011). Ismail (2009) opined that Bowen's understanding of CSR is premised on the realisation that businesses could impact positively on the lives of the society through philanthropic initiatives and social-welfare projects.

Another perspective to the origin of CSR emanated from Tounés et al. (2011) who noted that the Protestant and Catholic groups were instrumental in the emergence of CSR through their philosophies of 'public service' and 'stewardship'. The Catholic group preached to their members, particularly the property owners in industrial society, to imbibe the spirit of selfless service, empathy and contribution to support the society. It was the church's philosophy as enunciated above that inspired ethical consciousness and led to the adoption of social responsibility.

For Mintzberg (1983), CSR had long existed as a consciousness to show concern for others in the society, a term widely known among Europeans as 'noblesse oblige', which literarily connotes 'nobility obliges'. The root of 'noblesse oblige' indicates that it was a common French notion, used for describing ethical traits and worthy character displayed by a typical country gentleman, especially one who fulfils social obligations to the community. Obviously, CSR predated Bowen, it has been a noble English value practised by responsive individuals for ages. Bowen got credit for articulating CSR within the business context (Raimi, 2015).

Further exploration of CSR's origin by Ismail (2009) indicates that CSR is an age-long practice traced to Oliver Sheldon, who wrote on the social performance of businesses in 1923 – a nuance that identified a strong link between social performances of business in the society and their market performances.

Similarly, it has been explained that before the discovery of CSR in Europe and America; there had existed a well-developed philanthropic model called Zakat - a form of religious tax enjoined on the rich as part of their social responsibility for supporting the poor (Roy, 2010). Whereas, Tounés et al. (2011) wrote that opinions differ on the origin of CSR. There are write-ups that traced the earliest proponents of CSR to the Protestants in the United States of America. In other words, the two prominent religious group (Protestantism and Catholicism) were instrumental to the emergence of CSR through rigorous advocacy of church's philosophy of public service that inspired ethical consciousness and a personal sense of responsibility among the congregants.

The African-Nigerian and Islamic perspective of social responsibility has been fairly explored by scholars in their quest to unveil indigenous African and Islamic ethical practices (Amaeshi et al., 2006; Helg, 2007, Le Grange, 2012; Raimi, 2014), but there is still need for deeper exploration in this direction. A separate CSR discourse from non-Western lenses is important because Africa has a different CSR agenda and challenges, which are quite different from those of the developed climes (Visser 2008).

For instance, the African-Nigerian ideals such Ubuntu and Omoluwabi which provide support for CSR need to be fully comparatively discussed. Salarzehi, Armesh & Nikbin (2010) wrote that evidenced-based research affirmed that good actions are embedded in people's beliefs and social culture and both shape their personality and attitude to social actions. In particular, religious belief largely influenced participation charitable giving and voluntary social action. Research found traces of social responsibility visible in the ethno-religious beliefs and the culture of Africans (Amaeshi et al., 2006). Also, the communal solidarity in Africa is built on selfless services, personal sense of responsibility and zeal to serve parents, relations, friends and community at large (Fajana, 2000).

From the foregoing background, the objective of the paper is to examine Organisational Knowledge of Corporate Social Responsibility from the Traditional African-Nigerian and Islamic Religion Perspectives in order to enrich the conventional American-European perspectives of CSR. Apart from the introductory section, there are five sections in this paper. The next section critically reviewed the literature spanning discussion on CSR from American-European Perspectives, CSR from Traditional African-Nigerian Perspective and CSR from Islamic Perspective. The third section clearly describes the hermeneutics theory of interpretation. The fourth section discusses the methodology employed in the study. The fifth section presents the emerging findings and thematic issues. The sixth section presents the conclusions and research implications.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 CSR from American-European Perspectives

Western literature classified CSR into two continental perspectives, namely: (a) American perspective of CSR and (b) European-UK perspective of CSR. The American perspective of CSR is the philanthropic model, which advocates voluntary participations by corporations in societal programmes that they are favourably disposed to. Their common line of thought is that corporations should show philanthropic gestures through donations to societal initiatives voluntarily without being coerced.

However, the European perspective of CSR is typified as a citizenship model, which is anchored on the assumption that corporations must have an inclusive policy that integrates socio-environmental concerns into their business model because they are part of the larger society. This perspective of CSR is built on the ideals that corporations apart from their primary goal of profit-maximisation have ethical

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