The Motive for Individual Social Responsibility and Its Possible Impacts:
The Case of Lebanon

Pierre Al Khoury[a], Rafik Hariri University, Mechref - Damour, Lebanon, Khourypp@rhu.edu.lb, +961 03230848

Marwan Al Kotob[b], Rafik Hariri University, Mechref - Damour, Lebanon, alkotobmh@rhu.edu.lb, +961 70 088916

Lama Temraz[c], Rafik Hariri University, Mechref - Damour, Lebanon

Mahmoud Kamar[d], Rafik Hariri University, Mechref - Damour, Lebanon

Abstract

Nowadays, more concentration is taking place on pushing individuals to be more socially responsible. Groups and societies consist of individuals, and individuals are the ones who achieve groups' goals. There are different factors that affect Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) in a society; and many other factors affect a person's intention to indulge in social responsibility actions. The purpose of this research is to study what urges a Lebanese young individual to indulge in social responsibility actions. In this research, quantitative study is conducted in which questionnaires are filled by a sample of youth. To study what support ISR actions and their effects on the society as a whole and individuals specifically, quantitative methods are used. The most important factors affecting ISR, as the study concluded, are: religion, gender, parents, and prior financial contribution to needy people. Still, people have to know the importance of ISR to practice it effectively in their society.

Key words: Individual Social responsibility, Corporate Social Responsibility, Society, Development, Youth.

Introduction

Individual Social Responsibility stems from corporate social responsibility (CSR). Corporate Social Responsibility is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. CSR is according to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization the way through which a company achieves a balance of economic, environmental, and social imperatives Individual Social Responsibility, (UNIDO). ISR is about an individual becoming responsible in his/her actions that have an effect on communities outside his/her immediate circle, the immediate circle being family and friends (Tiwari, 2008).

This topic is not a new topic, but rather not much discussed about. In developed countries, social responsibility is a thought and action process where all citizens practice it in their societies to develop to better nations. This research found a huge gap in Lebanon, where billions of dollars and are spent on luxury and entertainment by some people, while many others are in need, children without education, or even a place to live in. When ISR starts at an early stage of life among individuals, it becomes part of their personalities and reaches the whole society where all citizens get involved and benefit from. Many reasons could play a role in that, internal and external, and that will be shown further in this paper research.

Literature Review

ISR has been around for long, but has not been discussed and conceptualized as CSR (Tiwari, 2008). Logically, ISR is at the roots of CSR. A corporate comprises of individuals and hence determines the social responsibility culture it follows (Calfa, 2012). By definition, Corporate Social Responsibility is the continuing commitment by business 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 (Baker, 2004). Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation (WCIF), Bulgaria, describes ISR as: "The individual social responsibility includes the engagement of each person towards the community where he lives, which can be expressed as an interest towards what's happening in the community, as well as in the active participation in the solving of some of the local problems. Under community we understand the village, the small town or the residential complex in the big city, where lives every one of us" (WCIF, 2008).

ISR is at the roots of CSR because corporations are composed of individuals who can create a socially responsible culture (Lugtu, 2012). Thus For organizations and companies to promote this kind of culture, the leader, as an individual, should genuinely and proactively engage in the community by extending help to schools, religious communities, and the underprivileged. Therefore when everyone in the organization embraces ISR, then CSR becomes a self-running engine wherein the whole organization works not only to provide better products and services for consumers, but also helps build communities and the nation as a whole (Lugtu, 2012). The impact of CSR has become so significant and diverse that organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank and the International Labor Organization have come forward with Organizational arrangements (such as permanent staffing) to nurture and support CSR and Develop guidelines for addressing CSR issues at the organizational level (Lee, 2008).

In their online survey of 2,383 U.S. adults, The Harris Poll (2007) to gauge individuals' level of individual social responsibility, when it comes to individual social responsibility, there are three types of people:

1. Two-thirds of U.S. adults have "Good Intentions" – they believe that social responsibility is a good idea, and they do what they can in terms of volunteering, but they do not sacrifice huge amounts of time or money.
2. At the top end of the spectrum, 8 percent of U.S. adults "Practice What They Preach" and for this group, individual, as well as corporate, social responsibility is extremely important.
3. One-quarter of U.S. adults, however, follow a philosophy of "To Thine Own Self Be True" and, for this group, social responsibility has little consequence in their lives.

In Friedman's view, the purpose of the corporation is clear: "There is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud" (Friedman, 1970).

Companies in the Middle East are realizing the importance of adopting CSR strategies and their benefits. They are trying to go beyond donations or planting trees. They are starting to measure their KPIs (Key performance Indicators) and to write sustainable reports. It is true that companies in the Middle East still have a long road for sustainability, but it is good that there is a will, and when there is a will, there is a way (Diab, 2013). Despite the growth in awareness of the importance of CSR both in the social and business worlds, successful implementation appear problematic (Auld et al., 2008; Smith and Ward, 2007) and we posit that this results from an over emphasis on analysis at the organizational level and a lack of recognition of the role of the individual (Kennedy et al, 2012).

As Albert Einstein once said, "The world we have created is a product of our thinking; it cannot be changed without changing our thinking..." Under ISR, we make people aware about their responsibility towards society to create better future for us as well as coming generations(Albert Einstein).

"Our evidence suggests that, broadly, religious individuals do not prioritize the responsibilities of the firm differently, but do tend to hold broader conceptions of the social responsibilities of businesses than non-religious individuals. However, we show that this neither true for all religious groups, nor for all areas of CSR" (Brammer et al, 2007). Corporate social-responsibility advocates note that since corporations are "fictitious persons," created by law and sustained by government grants of limited liability for individual shareholders, they have obligations to society that surpass those of sole proprietorships or partnerships.

One such scholar, business professor Thomas M. Jones of the University of Washington in Seattle, explained, "The Corporation which acts in a responsible manner may simply be paying society back for the social costs of doing business, costs for which the firms rarely receive an invoice" (Hood, 1998). Practicing social responsibility therefore needs both individuals as well as businesses and organizations choose to make decisions that benefit the society overall, rather than just themselves. Social responsibility also entails avoiding actions that can be potentially detrimental to society. Thus, social responsibility is based on a collection of passive and active measures taken by those who can shape and affect their surroundings. As CrsytalLassen, a book critic and a publisher at the Publisher Review, puts it in her article "How to Practice Social Responsibility", individuals or business and organizations should: Avoid participating in acts that can hurt other people, Perform tasks, such as charity work, that better the lives of others, Use resources carefully, andfinally Clean up the environment (Lassen, 2013).

Objective

This research aims at setting the main reasons that urges a young Lebanese individual to practice ISR in his daily life. Youth were chosen since their intention to participate in ISR would indicate the future tendency for the society as a whole to get involved in ISR.

Methodology

A quantitative approach is used in this research. Data is collected through 200 questionnaires randomly distributed and filled by people aging between 18-28 years old. The questionnaire provided information about the impacts and sources of ISR. Then Data is analyzed using SPSS to achieve the aim of the research. Linear Model equation is used to show the regression results of our study:

$$Y = \alpha + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \beta_i x_i$$

(1)

□=constant coefficient
β_i= is the slope of constant variable
Xi= coefficients of variables affecting Y
Y= the dependent variable (As a human being, I have a Social Responsibility towards my society that oblige me to share some of my income with people in need)

Descriptive Statistics and Frequencies

The sample was normally distributed, as demogrpahic factors showed, 56.5 % of the respondents were males and 43.5% were females. as for the ages of the respondents, 45.5% aged between 18-21 , 40.5% were between 22-25, and 14% were between 26-28. The majority of respondents (79.5%) agreed that their religion obligies them to be socailly responsible and to contribute to needy people while . The majority (86%) have contributed to social responsibility or helped others before. More than 76% of the respondents agreed that their parents have induced social reponsibilty in them since childhood. When asked whethear, as humans, people you have rights towards the society and to being socially responsible, more than 69% agreed. Respondents agreed by 56% that social responibility is the mission of goverments and corporations, not individuals. The huge majority of respondents, 81%, seem to have attanded, either at school or university, seminars about social responsibility. More than 43% of the respondents said that they were ready to contribute or help other people.

   Many other fators might affect how people look at being social responsible, mainly social factors such as educational level, income, religion … etc. As for the educational level of respondents, 20.5%,had high school, 69.5% had BA/BS, and 10% had an MBA degree or Phd. As for the Tution, since most respondents were getting a certain degree (highschool, BA/BS, MBA or Phd), which was ranged from36.5% of the respondents paod a tuition fee of <=5000, 49.5% paid a tuition fee 5001-10000, and 14% paid >10000. As for the religion, respondts were christains17.5%, muslims 63% and druze 19.5%. The Skewness level of all demographic variables was controlled below 1. More than 60% of the respondents said that they have a consistent behaviour of being socially responsible. The huge majority of respondents,82%, were scared that social relations will erode if people don't engage in socially responsible activities.

   Descriptive frequency analysis shows that questionnaires were distributed fairly among 200 participants between 18 and 28 years old , that the majority contributed in their lives and helped people in need , and their religions also obilges them with that . while this is an action as human beings then induced by their parents to be socially responsilbe. They where also scared to lose the social interactions showed by the 82% of them agreeing on that and a neutral agree of goverments interaction , while less ready to sacrifice in a budget and attended seminars regarding social responsibilites.

Correlations

Correlation is a relation. It is a set of ordered pairs of observations. Correlation means the co-varying of the variables. According to analysis results, a correlation is significant at the both 0.05 and 0.01 levels (2-tailed), when the correlation is above 0.05 or 0.01 levels it is considered as insignificant. Statistics show:
First, at the level of 0.05, there is a high significant between "I have as a human being a Social Responsibility towards my society that oblige me to share some of my income with people in need", and the following:
- Religion
- Education
- Age

Second, at the level of 0.01, there is a high significant between "I have as a human being a Social Responsibility towards my society that oblige me to share some of my income with people in need" and the following:

- My religion obliges me to have social responsibility
- My parents have induced in me the idea of social responsibility
- In school/university we attended seminars about social responsibility
- I already helped people in my life
- It is a consistent behavior of mine to engage in social responsibility
- I am afraid that our social relations will erode if we don't behave socially responsible
- I am ready to sacrifice things I like and contribute its budget to socially responsible actions
- Gender

Regression

Regression analysis is conducted to detect the effect of some independent variables over other dependent variables. Regression analysis is conducted to find the variables that affect the society's view about the importance of being socially responsible as an individual. A two-step method has been used. First, a stepwise method is used to show the significant variables, which were X1="Gender,"X2=**"**My religion obliges me to have social responsibility," X3="My parents have induced in me the idea of social responsibility," X4="I already helped people in my life." Then, an Enter method is used to show the explanatory power of those above significant independent variables over the independent variable.
The results can be shown in a linear equation as follows.
Y = as a human being, I have a Social Responsibility towards my society that oblige me to share some of my income with people in need

$$Y = a + bX1 + cX2 + dX3 + eX4 \qquad (2)$$
$$Y = 0.859 - 0.293X1 + 0.227X2 + 0.453X3 + 0.317X4$$
t 2.880 -2.139   2.818   4.856   4.442
sig. 0.004   0.034   0.005   0.000   0.000

The conducted analysis has shown an R of 0.609 meaning that about 61% is the sum of the coefficients of the independent variables only, being the most influencer factors of all independent variables on the dependent variables. The analysis has shown also an R^2 of 0.371, which means that 37.1% of the dependent variable is explained by the four dependent variables. "Gender," **"**My religion obliges me to have social responsibility," "My parents have induced in me the idea of social responsibility," "I already helped people in my life." Have a great influence on whether a person considers that he/she have as a human being a Social Responsibility towards society that oblige him/her to share some of individual income with people in need. Moreover, "Anova" (analysis of variables) has shown a significant of 0.00 being highly significant.

Conclusion, Limitations, and Recommendations for further research

This study aimed at analyzing the impact of social responsibility practices in Lebanon. It focused on the youth mainly to see what factors encourage them to be socially responsible. As social works are not just for governments and corporations: but also for individuals. Throughout our research and data collection, it is noticed that social responsibility practice is available but not to a large extent, as here in Lebanon corporations mainly practice such actions, like "Go Green" and recycling issues but work poorly for individuals.
The idea of individual responsibility is in a buzz these days, and had been in practice in Europe and other countries for years. Being responsible does not only mean not to trash outside or recycle, it also holds volunteering to help people get education, assist them financially, and make public places more friendly and clean.
   The concept of social responsibility begins at schools and homes, where parents and instructors teach children the concept of social responsibility and make them part of it through activities, and actions. As being responsible is a thought, if you do not have it you cannot make the action and be responsible.
Religion, parents, and culture play a major role in ISR, as all religions call for human responsibility towards one another and towards mother earth. Parents can nurture social responsibility in their children by encouraging them to devote a small percent of their allowances to charity. This practice does not require large amounts; it is just a devotion of individuals or corporations all together for a particular aim beneficial for both society and individuals.

Summarizing the results, and analyzing the answers of the respondents, one can conclude that questionnaires were distributed fairly among 200 participants between 18 and 28 years old, most people consider that they have social responsibilty towards each other and towars the society as a whole.

The majority have contributed to social activities and helped others. Moreover, gender affects ISR, where males seem to have contributed more than females in ISR. Religion and parents have a great effect. As mentioned above, all religions promote people to be socially responsible and help others, on the other side parents support their children to be social activists. Respondents where also scared to lose the social interactions if people didn't engage in social responsibilty activities. Finally, it is important to mention that such a practice is of great importance, and should be practiced and preached upon in Lebanon for its effects for further improvements to the Lebanese society.

Although the research is carefully conducted, the limitations faced cannot be ignored. First, people were reluctant to disclose their religion, thus not reflecting the true numbers. Second, this study was limited to the Lebanese society, thus results cannot be generalized to other countries in the region.

A more thorough research is needed in that relies on thousands of respondents from all over the Middle East to confirm the results of this research, were more time and resources are available. Moreover, respondents should be set in a private place where they can mention their religion freely without being afraid of losing privacy. To add, two of the most important incentives to engage in social responsibility as proved by the article "Individual and Corporate Social Responsibility" (Benabou, et al, 2009), and this research did not discuss, are social prestige and Self-image concerns. This paper ignored those two motives since youth between 18 and 28 do not take self-image and social prestige as priority factors in their considerations.

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[a]**Pierre Al-Khoury,** Chairman of Management Studies Department (2007-present) Rafik Hariri University, Mechref, Lebanon. Pierre was previously an Economic researcher at the Central Bank of Kuwait.

[b]**Marwan HassaneAl- Kotob**, Research Assistant at Department of Business and Financial Studies

[c]**Lama Temraz**, Marketing and Advertising Graduate

[d]**Mahmoud Kamar**, Marketing and Advertising Graduate