

# Developing Social Cohesion: Realities from Companies Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Program

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*Abstract* — Corporate social responsibility provides a reasonable pathway for employees to find more meaning in their work, thus mediating employees' participation in CSR initiatives. This study describes government and private companies' employees' perceptions of Metro Manila on the influence of corporate social responsibilities participation in developing social cohesion.

This quantitative descriptive research determined the perceptions of 200 government and private companies' employees in Metro Manila. The researcher-developed questionnaire was administered online using Google Form. Strict ethical principles were applied in the study, such as informed consent, data privacy, and non-disclosure agreement. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution, mean and rank.

It can be gleaned that social cohesion can be developed when employee's participation in CSR initiatives is included in measuring the employee's level of engagement. Employee's level of engagement is essential to optimize the company's efforts to fully involve its employees in the programs, practices, and operations of the organization, including charitable and sustainability activities. Further, potential cultural, racial, and ethnic tensions, disparities in participation in corporate social responsibilities, and other company initiatives that would undermine the employees and the company's social cohesiveness should be avoided to maintain the extent of connectedness and solidarity of the employees.

*Keywords* — *Social cohesion, Employee cohesiveness, Corporate social responsibility, Employee participation, Employee engagement*

## Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a self-regulating business model that helps a company be socially accountable to itself, its stakeholders, and the public (Sheehy, 2015). According to Lee & Kotler (2013), corporate social responsibility aims to contribute to societal goals of a philanthropic, activist, or charitable nature by engaging in or supporting volunteering or ethically oriented practices as an internal organizational policy or a corporate ethic strategy Dann (July 1, 2009) or as a form of corporate self-regulation (Sheehy, 2012). On the organization level,

corporate social responsibility is considered as a strategic initiative that contributes to a brand's reputation Johnson (2019) that makes a positive impact on the environment and stakeholders, including consumers, employees, investors, communities, and others (Farrington, Curran, Gori, O'Gorman, & Queenan, 2017). In practicing corporate social responsibility, also known as corporate citizenship, the employees and companies become conscious of their impact in all facets of society, including social, economic, environmental, and political. Corporate social responsibility programs are a great way to raise morale in the workplace towards sustainability which is vital to both consumers and companies (Supanti, Butcher, & Fredline, 2015). The CSR activities can help forge a stronger bond between employees and companies, boost morale and help both employees and employers feel more connected with the world around them, such as Starbucks hiring 10,000 refugees, reducing the environmental impact of its cups, and engaging its employees in environmental leadership (Starbucks, 2019). Some companies viewed CSR as an integral part of corporate public relations, such as managing their brand image, believing that customers will be more likely to do business with brands that they perceive to be more ethical, such as eliminating unethical labor practices (slavery and child labor), underpaid employment, and implementing unity in diversity programs. Although CSRs are most common in large corporations, SMEs also participate in small-scale CSR programs such as donating to local charities and sponsoring local events.

This study describes government and private companies' employees' perceptions of Metro Manila on the influence of corporate social responsibilities participation in developing social cohesion. As such, it would be of great significance that employees and human resources officers and the practitioner should be able to scan and determine how CSR programs can bring the employees closer to the realities of the society while having a reasonable pathway to find more meaning in their work. Similarly, government and private employees as members of the community should be aware and involved in making themselves as a person of social significance by being engaged in CSR programs of their companies and making the employers socially responsible while providing quality products and services. Companies with issues may also use the results of this study on CSR program implementations to improve the design or repurpose their CSRs, develop and sustain social cohesiveness in the workplace.

## **Literature Review**

The concept and ambit of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) have exponentially increased in recent years (Sharma, 2020). Human resources practitioners have considered employee participation in CSR programs vital to employee engagement.

Social cohesion holds society together, has been found to influence several aspects of human behavior (Supanti, & Butcher, 2019). The concept of social cohesion, although complex, embodies a theoretical underpinning that is becoming an essential analytical tool of various human behaviors experienced by individuals in specific social contexts (Kalolo et al., 2019).

In most studies, social cohesion was defined as the capacity of societies, not merely groups or networks, to manage collective action and solve problems Woolcock (2011).

## Methodology

A quantitative descriptive research design was used to determine the perceptions of government and private companies' employees in Metro Manila on the influence of corporate social responsibilities participation in developing social cohesion. Purposive sampling was utilized to gather the perceptions of 200 government and private companies' employees using the researcher-developed questionnaire administered online using Google Form. Ethical research practices such as informed consent, non-disclosure agreement, and data privacy and confidentiality were considered during the conduct of the study. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution, mean, and rank.

## Results and Discussion

### Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents.

The majority of the respondents, 88 or 44%, belonged to 21- 30 years old. The respondents were dominated by males comprising 115 or 57.5% and 85 or 42.5% were females. The majority of the respondents 112 or 56% were singles and 85 or 42.5% were married, while a very small 3 or 1.5% were widowed/widower.

**Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

Profile		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>	21- 30 years old	88	44.0
	31- 40 years old	33	16.5
	41- 50 years old	34	17.0
	51- 60 years old	21	10.5
	61 and older	24	12.0
<b>Gender</b>	Male	115	57.5
	Female	85	42.5
<b>Civil Status</b>	Single	112	56.0
	Married	85	42.5
	Widowed/Widower	3	1.5
	Doctorate graduate	21	10.5

<b>Highest Educational Attainment</b>	MS/MA Graduate	35	17.5
	Bachelor's Degree Graduate	144	72.0
<b>Employer</b>	Government	156	78.0
	Private Company	44	22.0
<b>No. of Company CSR activities participated</b>	1- 10 activities	165	82.5
	11- 20 activities	23	11.5
	21- 30 activities	11	5.5
	31- 40 activities	1	0.5
	41- 50 activities	0	0.0
<b>Years of Work Experience</b>	1- 10 years	112	56.0
	11- 20 years	56	28.0
	21- 30 years	25	12.5
	31- 40 years	7	3.5
	41- 50 years	0	0.0
	51 or more years	0	0.0
<b>Status of Employment</b>	Regular/Permanent	176	88.0
	Contractual/ Probationary	22	11.0
	Project-based	2	1.0
<b>Monthly Gross Income (P)</b>	More than 100,000.00	5	2.5
	75,000- 99,999.00	12	6.0
	50,000- 74,999.00	34	17.0
	40,000- 49,999.00	25	12.5
	30,000- 39,999.00	11	5.5
	20,000- 29,999.00	102	51.0
	10,000- 19,999.00	11	5.5

### Perceptions of the Respondents on Participation on Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives

Table 2 presents the perceptions of the employees' level of participation in corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Generally, 200 respondents rated their perceptions at an average mean of 2.65 interpreted as agree. This implies that the respondents participate in the corporate social responsibility initiatives of their companies to contribute to the societal goals of a philanthropic, activist, or charitable nature by engaging in or supporting volunteering or ethically-oriented practices as either an internal organizational policy or a corporate ethic strategy, such that, CSR provides a reasonable pathway for employees to find more meaning in their work as it provides potential benefits to the

business from gains in eco-efficiency, a better social climate or a higher profile in the local community (Santos, 2011).

**Table 2. Perceptions of Employees towards Participation in Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives**

Statements about Participation in Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. I participate in defining the CSR initiative of the company by setting up different goals, identifying CSR stakeholders, planning and mapping company CSR activities that resonate company's culture and causes.	2.79	Agree	3
2. I participate in selecting the best possible CSR initiative causes and help seek assistance from CSR professionals.	2.85	Agree	2
3. Recommends considering and involving customers in developing the CSR initiatives.	2.74	Agree	5
4. Involve in identifying and managing CSR volunteers and monitoring the participation of the volunteers pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation of CSR initiative.	3.37	Strongly Agree	1
5. Helps in determining third-party partners and alliances that will support the CSR initiative that offers an opportunity to blend customers and networks and bring the credibility of the CSR activities.	2.79	Agree	4
6. Helps to seek media coverage such as press releases about the CSR initiatives, media mileage and live broadcasts, interviews with the CSR key persons to bring positive coverage and publicity.	2.13	Disagree	8
7. Tracks and generates a report of CSR goals versus the company's scorecard, and make them available on site and to all employees.	2.18	Disagree	7
8. Helps repurpose CSRs based on reports, setbacks, and realities on the community and stakeholders' recommendations.	2.36	Agree	6
<b>Overall Mean</b>	2.65	Agree	

*1.00-1.74- Strongly Disagree, 1.75-2.49- Disagree, 2.50-3.24- Agree, 3.25-4.00- Strongly Agree*

Among the eight statements about developing social cohesion in the company, ranked 1 was item number 4- *Involve in identifying and managing CSR volunteers and monitoring the participation of the volunteers pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation of CSR initiative* has the highest mean score of 3.37 interpreted as strongly agree. This implies that most of the respondents actively identified volunteers who will help the company implement the CSRs; achieve the CSR goals to make the company more socially responsible.

According to the Harvard Business Review article "Strategy & Society: The Link between Competitive Advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility," the employees' active participation in CSR activities creates shared value based on the idea that corporate success and social welfare are interdependent, such that, for a society to thrive, profitable and competitive businesses must be developed and supported to create income, wealth, tax revenues, and philanthropy. Further, the business needs a healthy, educated workforce, sustainable resources, and an adept government to compete effectively (Hoessle, 2013). Additionally, higher participation rates in CSR programs come from having a broad employee engagement strategy rather than just a CSR strategy, such that the size of the company matters when it comes to employee engagement and, by extension, CSR program participation. It is the inclusive focus on the employee first and their relationship with the company. It is not just communicating about the CSR efforts but creating comprehensive initiatives that drive employee activation, learning, and participation (Carr, 2018).

On the other hand, the statement that received the lowest mean score and was ranked 8th was item 6- *Helps to seek media coverage such as press releases about the CSR initiatives, media mileage and live broadcasts, interviews with the CSR key persons to bring positive coverage and publicity* with a mean score of 2.13 interpreted as disagree. The majority of the respondents were not involved and actively sought media coverage and other CSR publicity. This means that CSR owners in the companies or the CSR departments must engage their employees to tell their customers what they are doing to help improve society's well-being, solicit employees ideas and experiences, and allow them to use multiple digital platforms such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and a YouTube channel to reach people with different media preferences. These efforts help the sustainability of CSR initiatives and make them personal to the employees as well.

### **Perceptions of the Respondents on Developing Social Cohesion in the Company**

Table 3 represents the perceptions of the employees on the influence of developing social cohesion in the company. Generally, 200 respondents rated their perceptions at an average mean of 3.10 interpreted as agree. This implies that the respondents believed that developing social cohesion in the company is the key to employees' engagement toward workplace productivity and instrumental to thriving workplace culture.

In a workplace, diversity is essential for success as it fosters creative innovation and stretches your team's skills, more talent, and more experience (Uzzell, Pol, & Badenas, 2002).

Diversity in the workplace also translates to higher productivity, increased motivation, and improved employee performance (Dayton-Johnson, 2001). Developing social cohesion in a diverse workplace is the key to workplace productivity and instrumental to a successful workplace culture Koonce (2011) characterized it as a shared liking or team attraction that includes bonds of friendship, caring closeness, and enjoyment of each other's company (Zubrick, 2007).

**Table 3. Perceptions of Employees towards Developing Social Cohesion in the Company**

<i>Statements about Developing Social Cohesion in the Company</i>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1. The company uses strategic planning to align its organizational policies, actions, and performance indicators on corporate social responsibilities.	2.75	Agree	9
2. The company has a program that allows the employee to understand the characteristics of the people who live and work in the area and if and how it might change over time.	2.96	Agree	5
3. My employer helps me determine whether there are, or whether there is potential for, tensions that can undermine social cohesion.	2.63	Agree	10
4. My workplace is open to creating collaborative working relationships to respond to issues of concern to the community.	2.96	Agree	6
5. My company keeps track of changes in its personnel and nurtures relationships formally and informally over time.	2.91	Agree	7
6. My employer works with business and community partners to develop a plan which can be quickly activated if necessary to respond to a situation in the workplace or the community.	2.80	Agree	8
7. My company provides opportunities and enables young people to feel connected to their community and provides safe spaces to interact.	3.31	Strongly Agree	4
8. My company uses multiple media and platforms and different types of targeted messaging to encourage CSR engagement and build social cohesion.	3.53	Strongly Agree	3
9. My employer has a Corporate Social Responsibility Department that takes charge and works with the community to identify how to measure the appropriateness, effectiveness, and efficiency of actions and initiatives with employees' active participation.	3.59	Strongly Agree	2
10. My employer uses employee participation in CSR initiatives to measure employee engagement to determine whether and how social cohesion was improved due to the CSR initiatives.	3.63	Strongly Agree	1
<b>Overall Mean</b>	3.10	Agree	

*1.00-1.74- Strongly Disagree, 1.75-2.49- Disagree, 2.50-3.24- Agree, 3.25-4.00- Strongly Agree*

Among the ten statements about developing social cohesion in the company, ranked 1 was item number 10- *My employer uses employee participation in CSR initiatives to measure employee engagement to determine whether and how social cohesion was improved as a result of the CSR initiative* has the highest mean score of 3.63, interpreted as strongly agree. The majority of the respondents believed that employees participating in the companies' corporate social responsibility initiatives help the company improve its business and community relationship, develop employees' social and task relations, perceived unity, and share responsibility. Employees trust and participation in CSR also improved when their participation is used in measuring their level of engagement to the company's efforts to fully involve its employees in the programs, practices, and operations of the organization, including charitable and sustainability activities so that employees will take positive steps to further the organization's interests or reputation while creating a culture that encourages new hires and employee retention.

According to Hu, Liu, & Qu (2019), CSR participation impacts the subjective well-being of the employee, drawing on self-determination to emotional attachment employees feel towards their place of work, job role, position within the company, colleagues, and culture, and the affect this attachment has on well-being and productivity. Further, it helped employees a high level of self-discovery or identification, and how the company brings its employee closer to the realities of the society.

On the other hand, the statement that received the lowest mean score and was ranked 10<sup>th</sup> was item 3- *My employer helps me determine whether there are, or whether there is potential for, tensions that can undermine social cohesion* with a mean score of 2.63 interpreted as agree. The majority of the respondents believed that their employers do not give signals as to whether there will be cultural or any potential tension that might happen that would undermine the social cohesiveness of the employees and the company as a whole. The company's cultural diversity must be well-managed to avoid racial and ethnic tensions, disparities in CSR and other company initiatives participation, and maintain the extent of connectedness and solidarity of the employees.

## **Conclusion**

It can be gleaned that social cohesion can be developed when employee's participation in CSR initiatives is included in measuring the employee's level of engagement. Employee's level of engagement is vital to optimizing the company's efforts to fully involve its employees in the programs, practices, and operations of the organization, including charitable and sustainability activities. Further, potential cultural, racial, and ethnic tensions, disparities in participation in corporate social responsibilities, and other company initiatives that would undermine the employees and the company's social cohesiveness should be avoided to maintain the extent of connectedness and solidarity of the employees.

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