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2022/2023 PhD Thesis Abstract

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RT: Deployment and Perception of Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives during the Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown by Selected Churches in South West, Nigeria

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AB: Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is critical to the public reputation of modern non-profit-oriented corporate organisations, including churches. With a divine mandate to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ, modern churches have had to incorporate corporate philanthropy into their mission to accomplish their ultimate evangelism goal. The national lockdown in Nigeria induced by the COVID-19 pandemic heightened this charitable act of the church and triggered the perception and debate that churches were using their impromptu charity as bait for proselytization. Studies have examined the audience perception of CSR in churches. However, there is paucity of empirical evidence for audience perception of CSR in churches during COVID-19 lockdown. Therefore, this study examined the deployment and perception of CSR during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown by selected churches in the South-West, Nigeria.

The study adopted exploratory sequential mixed-method approach using key informant interview and survey research design. The population of the qualitative aspect comprised 348 church pastors with a sample size of 12 pastors which were drawn from the four churches in South-West, Nigeria. Respondents were recruited using the purposive sampling techniques and a validated interview guide was used to gather data. The responses from the interview were analyzed thematically. For quantitative aspect, a population of 9,848,000 congregants of Seventh-day Adventist Church, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Baptist Church, and Living Faith Church in Lagos, Oyo and Ondo states. A sample size of 1146 congregants was determined

using the Cochran's formula. The respondents were determined using the simple random sampling technique. A validated questionnaire was used to collect data. The reliability test of the questionnaire yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranging from 0.82 to 0.91. The response rate was over 99%. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Qualitative findings revealed that the Corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies deployed by the selected churches during the COVID-19 lockdown included providing potable water for the community, intercessory prayers, counseling and encouragement (over the phone), sharing cooked meals, and clothes. Further findings showed that respondents were aware of the churches' use of CSR activities during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown ($\bar{x} = 3.79$, $SD = 1.3$). However, many could neither participate in ($\bar{x} = 3.24$, $SD = 1.4$) nor benefit from ($\bar{x} = 3.22$, $SD = 1.4$) these initiatives. Respondents had a positive perception of the CSR initiatives ($\bar{x} = 3.70$, $SD = 1.2$), and CSR initiatives encouraged congregants to attend churches ($\bar{x} = 3.6$, $SD = 1.2$). Deploying CSR initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown accomplished the evangelism goal of the conversion of souls ($\bar{x} = 3.7$, $SD = 1.5$).

The study concluded that congregants perceived the churches' charity during COVID-19 lockdown as one of the means of actualizing the mission of the church on earth. CSR initiatives are germane to the survival of churches as they depict the mandate of Christ to believers. The study recommended that churches should sustain charity programmes under CSR beyond crises periods.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, Deployment of CSR, Evangelism campaigns, Nigerian churches

Word count: 479

Abbreviations: RFN: Researcher's Full Name, RD: Researcher's Department, RS: Researcher's School, RE: Researcher's Email, RAE: Researcher's Alternate Email, RP: Researcher's Phone Contact, RT: Registered Title, MS: Main Supervisor, ME: Main Supervisor's E-mail Address, SP: Main Supervisor's Phone Contact, CS: Co-Supervisor, CE: Co-Supervisor's E-mail Address, CP: Co-Supervisor's Phone Contact, AB: Abstract

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