

Upliftment of rural women through adoption of farm and non-farm vocations by CSR in Vedanta operational area in Odisha

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Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the role of the companies that can play in fulfilling the agenda of sustainable development and entails a balanced approach to economic growth, social progress as well as environmental stewardship. The women folk are the pivot of social and economic aspiration of any nation. One measure of a country's growth is the status of women in society. Consequently, empowerment of women is of paramount importance. The empowerment can not be possible unless there is substantial adoption of intervened developmental vocations. The study was conducted in the Vedanta operating region in the Jharsuguda district of Odisha. to assess the adoption level of developmental vocations implemented through its CSR activities. The study sample included 120 beneficiary and 120 other women in the operational area of Vedanta. The variables such as farm activities, income generating activities, health care and sanitation, educational activities, socio-cultural activities and use of infrastructures were selected to assess the extent of adoption of various developmental vocations by the women under study. The study revealed that there was significant differential gap in the extent of adoption of developmental vocations among beneficiary and other category of the respondents in the developmental aspects like health care and sanitation (14.46%), educational activities (26.42%), socio cultural activities (23.77%) and infrastructure use (22%) except farm activities and income generating activities. This indicates a significant impact of CSR activities of Vedanta on the extent of adoption of vocations its operational area. But at the same time the importance is to be given on farm as well as other income generating activities for substantial economic development of the women in the operational area of the corporate. The Socio-Economic variables like social participation, extension contact, source of information, house type and possession of household articles had exhibited positive and significant influence in accelerating adoption of the developmental vocations among the beneficiary respondents. The statistical tools used were percentage, mean score, score gap, critical ratio test (C.R.) and correlation analysis.

Key Words: CSR, Adoption, Farm and non-farm vocation, Rural women

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility is the initiative by companies towards society through its business and social investment. The prime purpose is to make the corporate business activities and corporate culture being sustainable in economic, social and environmental aspects for which equal amount of attention is to be given to all these three dimensions. In terms of its proposal, it is strongly related to the concepts of sustainable development that the corporate should be obliged to make decisions not only in financial or economic factors but also on the social and environmental consequences of their activities. Corporates operating in India and overseas focus their CSR efforts mostly on promoting women's empowerment, health care, educational advancement, and environmental conservation. As one measure of national growth is the status of women in society, The Indian government instructed the corporate citizens to aid in the process of empowerment. Now a days, many of the corporate houses are including women empowerment in their CSR agenda. Pradhan (2013) stated that in the corporate world of today, CSR is a phenomena that is becoming more and more important. It offers a practical way to maintain their brand's reputation. The Vedanta group of companies has fixed the target towards upliftment of women in Jharsuguda district of Odisha through its CSR activities. Various vocational activities have also been implemented for the upliftment of rural women. Educational and other extension approaches are being undertaken to increase proficiency in knowledge and skills of the women in managing their vocational activities properly. Unless the

women adopt and skillfully manage the enterprise, their upliftment may not be much expected. At this juncture, the study was undertaken to assess the extent of adoption of the developmental activities under CSR by the women along with optimum resource utilization.

Objectives of the study:

- To assess the extent of adoption of developmental vocations by women through CSR activities of Vedanta
- To assess the relationship of socio-economic variables with various aspects of adoption

Materials and Methods

The study sample included 120 beneficiary and 120 other women in the operational area of Vedanta. Data were gathered using a survey study approach. Multiphase sampling technique has been followed to select blocks, panchayats, villages and respondents. A purposeful selection was made of five CSR-adopted villages and one neighbouring community where no CSR activities were conducted. 120 women from adopted villages who were beneficiaries and another 120 from nearby, non-adopted villages were randomly chosen for the study. Extent of adoption of farm and income generating activities, health care and sanitation measures, education, socio-cultural and infrastructural activities were selected as the variables to assess the extent of adoption. The data was analysed using scores of 3, 2, and 1, respectively, on the scale points of completely, partially, and not adopted. The percentage difference in extent of adoption and C.R. value was calculated for the comparative analysis.

Results and Discussion

Capacity building programmes are being organized by Vedanta to develop knowledge and skill competency of the rural women in proper management of various developmental activities. The results obtained has been summarised and discussed under the specific variables selected in the study.

Farm activities

Extent of adoption of the farm activities has been indicated in Table-1 after analysis of the data collected from the respondents.

Table-1: Extent of adoption on farm activities

Sl. No.	Activity	Mean score		Diff. %	C.R. Value
		Beneficiary (n=120)	Others (n=120)		
1.	Use of quality seeds and planting materials	2.25	2.40	6.25	0.067
2.	Recommended dose of fertilizer and manure	2.10	1.93	8.10	0.093
3.	Pest and disease Management practices	1.95	2.35	17.02	0.212*
4.	Use of farm implements and Tools	2.08	2.03	2.40	0.027
5.	Maintenance of optimum plant population	1.78	1.74	2.25	0.023
6.	Timely application of inputs	2.43	2.16	11.11	0.138
7.	Timely harvesting	2.57	2.51	2.33	0.029
8.	Post harvest management	1.65	2.13	22.54	0.270**

(Maximum obtainable score-3)

*Significant at 0.05 level **Significant at 0.01 level

Analysis of data in the table revealed that both beneficiary and other category of the respondents were having similar perception since no significant differences were observed through critical ratio test except pest, diseases and post harvest management. In contrary, other category of the respondents

had better adoption of pests, diseases and post harvest management practices in comparison to beneficiary respondents. Farm activities are the most important activities of the rural families for their sustainable livelihood. The activities advocated to the farm families will not fulfill the objectives unless they adopt these with all the recommended practices.

Income generating activities

Vedanta has made a number of money-making ventures popular, especially for the resource poor families and women for their economic empowerment. Some of the significant activities are phenyl preparation, agarbati making, tailoring, retail shop, vermicomposting, mushroom cultivation and marigold cultivation. The extent of adoption of various aspects of income generating activities were collected, analysed and presented in Table-2.

Table-2: Extent of adoption of different aspects of income generating activities

Sl. No.	Activity	Meanscore		Diff.(%)	C.R. Value
		Beneficiary (n=120)	Others (n=120)		
1.	Remunerative enterprise	2.20	1.63	25.91	0.319**
2.	Regular production	1.98	1.90	4.04	0.044
3.	Infrastructure development	1.92	1.86	3.13	0.034
4.	Use of essential tools and equipments	1.93	1.91	1.04	0.011
5.	Maintaining hygiene and sanitation	2.13	1.88	11.74	0.137
6.	Timely harvesting	2.42	2.30	4.96	0.061
7.	Proper Post harvest management	2.01	1.63	18.91	0.218*

(Maximum obtainable score-3)

*Significant at 0.05 level **Significant at 0.01 level

The information in the table showed that the beneficiary respondents had significant adoption of remunerative enterprise, maintenance of hygiene and sanitation, proper post harvest management. This indicates the rural women are skilled enough to adopt remunerative enterprises. A federation named Subhalaxmi Mahila Cooperative Society Ltd. has been formed for promotion and marketing of the produce with remunerative price. This finding is in line with the findings of the study by Suguna (2002) where it is stated that, Women's empowerment incorporates both individual and collective action. It improves their intrinsic aptitude by giving them more power, knowledge, and experience. Organising and strengthening of Women Self Help Groups, institutional collective action and collective action of members could bring about the graded development of women. Puhazhendi (2000) also stated that the employment generation had a beneficial influence on 45 percent of the women who had engaged in income-generating activities.

Healthcare and sanitation

Vedanta has undertaken various health care and sanitation measures under CSR for better living of its adopted families. Various extension activities were also organized to sensitize and educate them to adopt better health care practices and to keep environment clean. The data collected from the respondents on adoption of various aspects of health care and sanitation measures were analysed and the results are presented in Table-3.

Table-3 Extent of adoption on healthcare and sanitation measures

Sl. No.	Activity	Meanscore		Diff.(%)	C.R. Value
		Beneficiary (n=120)	Others (n=120)		

1.	Vaccination against contagious diseases	2.30	1.94	15.65	0.192*
2.	Use of safe drinking water	2.45	2.32	5.31	0.065
3.	Maintaining clean environment	2.32	2.17	6.47	0.078
4.	Preparing nutritious diet from local food materials	2.07	2.09	0.96	0.011
5.	Health care to children and age old	2.65	2.31	12.83	0.168
6.	Regular health checkup	2.63	1.93	26.62	0.360**
7.	Avoiding treatments by local quack	2.53	1.74	31.23	0.419**

(Maximum obtainable score-3)

*Significant at 0.05 level **Significant at 0.01 level

As observed from the table, extent of adoption on use of safe drinking water, maintaining clean environment, preparing nutritious diet from local food materials, health care to children and age old persons were almost at par as no significant differential adoptions observed among beneficiary and other category of the respondents through critical ratio test. Significant differences were observed on avoiding treatments by the local quacks, regular health check-up and vaccination against contagious diseases where the beneficiary respondents had stated better for adoption.

The data in the table as a whole revealed that the beneficiary respondents had better adoption on various aspects of health care and sanitation measures in comparison to other category respondents. This might be indicated as the impact of CSR activities of Vedanta.

Educational activities

Vedanta has initiated various educational activities such as establishing quality coaching centres, engaging expert teachers on guest faculty, supplying school uniforms, books and teaching materials for better education of the children in the adopted families. The women were also sensitized for better care and education to their children. The data collected on the extent of adoption of educational activities have been analysed and presented in table below.

Table -4: Extent of adoption on educational activities

Sl. No.	Activity	Meanscore		Diff.(%)	C.R. Value
		Beneficiary (n=120)	Others (n=120)		
1.	Proper education to children	2.73	2.08	23.81	0.365**
2.	Priority to education of girl child	2.48	1.38	44.35	0.613**
3.	Sending children to coaching centre	1.08	1.38	21.74	0.209*
4.	Providing books and teaching materials	2.37	2.11	23.83	0.328**
5.	Providing school uniforms	2.90	1.95	32.76	0.473**
6.	Proper food and health care to children	2.80	1.98	29.29	0.412**

Significant differential adoption level was observed among both beneficiary and other category of the respondents on various educational activities covered under the study. The findings conclude that CSR activities of Vedanta had created good impact on the beneficiary towards adoption of better educational activities. However, the women need to be further sensitized about the benefits of sending their children to the coaching centre initiated by Vedanta named as “Pratham Odisha” for competency development in education.

Socio-cultural activities

Socio-cultural activities usually strengthen the community for better living. The Vedanta has organised

various activities like sports, dance competition, exhibition, fairs etc, to strengthen the community. Extent on adoption of these activities have been analysed through the data collected from the respondents and presented in Table-5.

Table-5: Extent of adoption on socio-cultural activities

Sl. No.	Activity	Meanscore		Diff.(%)	C.R. Value
		Beneficiary (n=120)	Others (n=120)		
1.	Strengthening cohesiveness	2.53	2.00	20.95	0.273**
2.	Good cooperation and coordination among people	2.58	2.03	21.32	0.281**
3.	Helping others in crisis	2.52	1.92	23.81	0.312**
4.	Participating in socio-cultural activities	2.37	1.92	18.99	0.238**
5.	Maintenance of avenue plantation	1.53	1.08	29.41	0.303**
6.	Active participation in exhibition and fair	2.03	1.65	18.72	0.217*
7.	Allowing children to participate in sports and culture	2.05	1.27	38.05	0.468**

Significant differential adoption level on various socio-cultural activities among the beneficiary and other category of the respondents were observed from the table. The beneficiary respondents had better adoption of socio-cultural activities in comparison to other category of the respondents. In a study by Santhi and Dhanalakshmi (2004) it is stated that Women may achieve their full potential and powers in all domains of life via the active, multidimensional process of empowerment. Though empowerment of women starts with economic empowerment, still their leadership quality and active participation in group culture lead to improvement in political domain which in turn could strengthen and sustain the overall process of empowerment. This established the impact of socio cultural activities on empowerment of women.

Use of infrastructures

Vedanta has established various infrastructures such as concrete road, pond, temple, clubhouse, drinking water facilities etc. for use of the communities. These infrastructures are to be well protected with repairing and maintenance for sustainable use. The data collected from the respondents towards management of these infrastructures have been analysed and presented in Table-6.3.6.

Table-6: Extent of adoption on infrastructure use

Sl. No.	Activity	Meanscore		Diff.(%)	C.R. Value
		Beneficiary (n=120)	Others (n=120)		
1.	Proper maintenance of the infrastructure	2.18	1.77	18.81	0.226*
2.	Proper use of the infrastructure	2.20	1.71	22.27	0.271**
3.	Protecting the infrastructure from damage	2.02	1.78	11.88	0.135
4.	Cooperating others in use of the infrastructure	2.08	1.42	31.73	0.386**
5.	Proportionate contribution for repairing and maintenance	1.57	1.39	11.46	0.114
6.	Due consideration to resource poor for use	1.97	1.28	35.03	0.418

(Maximum obtainable score-3)

*Significant at 0.05 level **Significant at 0.01 level

As observed in the table, adoption level on protecting infrastructures from any sort of damage, proportionate contribution for repairing and maintenance, due

consideration to resource poor to use the infrastructures with relaxation as well as proportionate contribution among beneficiary and other category of the respondents were almost similar as no significant differences observed through critical ratio test. Significant differences were observed on proper maintenance, use and cooperating others in use of the infrastructures where beneficiary respondents had better adoption. It is also established in the study by Prasad (2000) that in many village communities, issues like drinking water, roads, electricity and health services were addressed by the women groups. The women involved themselves in various activities like de-silting of tanks and child development in addition to income generating activities.

Comparative Analysis on the extent of adoption

Further attempt has been made for a comparative analysis on the extent of adoption of all the developmental vocations. For the purpose of computing the average mean score value of each variable, the mean score values of the statements under each variable were gathered together. The results so obtained have been presented in Table-7.

Table-7: Comparative analysis on the extent of adoption

Sl. No.	Activity	Meanscore		Diff. (%)	C.R. Value
		Beneficiary (n=120)	Others (n=120)		
1.	Farm activities	2.10	2.16	2.78	0.032
2.	Income generating activities	1.97	1.97	0.00	0.00
3.	Health care and sanitation	2.42	2.07	14.46	0.181*
4.	Educational activities	2.46	1.81	26.42	0.344**
5.	Socio-cultural Activities	2.23	1.70	23.77	0.292**
6.	Infrastructure use	2.00	1.56	22.00	0.255**

(Maximum obtainable score-3)

*Significant at 0.05 level **Significant at 0.01 level

The beneficiary respondents had better adoption of various aspects of health care and sanitation measures, educational activities and to some extent on socio-cultural activities. The adoption level in the areas like use of the infrastructures and farm activities were not encouraging. At the same time, very poor adoption level was observed on income generating activities. Significant differential adoption levels were also observed on education and socio-cultural activities, health care and sanitation measures as well as infrastructure use where beneficiary respondents found to have better adoption. This may be due to the intervention of Vedanta indicating the impact of its CSR activities. No significant differential adoption levels were observed on both farm and income generating activities between beneficiary and other category of the respondents.

Influence of Socio-Economic variables on Adoption

Attempt was made to assess the influence of some selected socio-economic variables influencing adoption level of the beneficiary respondents. The outcomes of an investigation of Pearson's correlation coefficient have been presented in Table-8.

Table -8: Influence of socio-economic variables on adoption

Sl. No.	Variable	Correlation "r" value	"t" value
X1	Age	0.020	0.222

X2	Education	0.024	0.261
X3	Social participation	0.287**	3.254
X4	Cosmopolitaness	0.135	1.480
X5	Extension contact	0.239*	2.573
X6	Source of information	0.303**	3.454
X7	House type	0.460**	5.627
X8	Land holding size	0.165	1.812
X9	Occupation	0.121	1.325
X10	Possession of household articles	0.233*	2.601
X11	Annual income	0.031	0.337

*Significant at 0.05 level **Significant at 0.01 level

Correlation co-efficient analysis indicated in the table revealed that the socio-economic variables such as age, education, cosmopolitaness, land holding size, occupation and annual income had no influence in increasing adoption level of the beneficiary respondents. Rather, social participation, extension contact, source of information, house type and possession of household articles found to have significant influence on adoption level which may be taken into account by the officials of Vedanta while advocating various developmental activities for the upliftment of rural women. Multiple regression analysis was also made for the beneficiary respondents to assess the causal impact on the consequent factors. The results obtained with the analysis of the data have been reflected in Table-8.

Table-9: Regression analysis to establish relationship of socio-economic variables on adoption

Sl.No	Variable	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		‘t’ value	Probability
		Beta	Std. Error	Beta	Std. Error		
X1	Age	0.070	1.601	0.004	0.011	.044	0.965
X2	Education	-1.094	0.875	-0.125	0.032	-1.250	0.214
X3	Social participation	0.999	0.483	0.201	0.015	2.068	0.041
X4	Cosmopolitaness	-0.130	0.546	-0.029	0.116	-0.238	0.812
X5	Extension contact	1.086	0.736	0.178	0.231	1.476	0.143
X6	Source of Information	0.291	0.441	0.087	0.314	0.659	0.511
X7	House type	5.767	1.271	0.392	0.305	4.537	0.000
X8	Land holding size	1.828	1.537	0.117	0.106	1.190	0.237
X9	Occupation	2.928	1.452	0.185	0.201	2.017	0.046
X10	Possession of household articles	0.730	0.679	0.113	0.303	1.074	0.285
X11	Annual income	-2.449	1.274	-0.223	0.118	-1.923	0.057

$R^2=0.361$ Adj. $R^2=0.296$ S.E.=9.199

The best fitted regression equation could explain 36.10% of the

total variance in increasing the adoption level of the beneficiary respondents. Among the selected eleven socio-economic variables, the variables such as social participation, house type, occupation and annual income had exhibited significant influence in increasing the adoption level of the respondents.

Conclusion

India is progressing in every direction, but due to several obstacles, the country's growth is almost stagnant. One of them is gender discrimination. Corporate social responsibility may definitely truly empower women. It requires the assistance of dedicated citizens, committed people, substantial financial organisations, and strong political will. To cater to the need of the faster growing population, the corporate houses must join hand with the government. The government alone can not accomplish the task of women empowerment alone. The convergence of all government and non-government developmental department can bring epoch-making change in the development process.

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