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Ramli Ramli, Sulvinajayanti Sulvinajayanti, Adnan Achiruddin Saleh, & Fatjri Nur Tajuddin

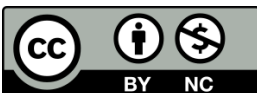
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Making a Partnership-based Corporate Social Responsibility: PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi's strategy to Sustainable Community Empowerment

Ramli Ramli^(a), Sulvinajayanti Sulvinajayanti ^(a), Adnan Achiruddin Saleh^(a), and Fatjri Nur Tajuddin^(b)

^(a) IAIN Parepare, Indonesia, ^(b) University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

ABSTRACT

The heightened corporate awareness regarding its social responsibility toward the community through empowerment activities is exemplified in the initiatives undertaken by PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi, which are executed effectively and sustainably. This research aims to explore the factors contributing to the success of corporate social responsibility in both charitable and empowerment activities within the company. To achieve this objective, a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach is employed. The study reveals that PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi's empowerment process entails collaboration with governmental and social community institutions, forming a network of policy makers through partnership relationships to identify community needs. The establishment of these partnership networks influences the development of activities that effectively address community challenges, aligning with government expectations for community social development. These partnership relationships with various stakeholders result in sustainable activities and serve as a conduit linking community needs, government expectations, and reinforcing the roles of social community institutions.

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Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), an integral component of a company's business ethos aimed at showcasing its dedication to societal and environmental advancement, often tends to prioritize image-building aspects over meticulously planned implementation (Zadek, 2004). However, the implementation of CSR by PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi stands in contrast to this trend, as it aligns seamlessly with the social development blueprint of the Sidenreng Rappang local government. The execution of activities aimed at enhancing quality through both charitable initiatives and empowerment initiatives corresponds directly to the priority areas outlined by the Sidenreng Rappang Regency Social Service (2019). These priorities include addressing

social issues across four key clusters: poverty alleviation, enhancing quality and accessibility of social services, strengthening social security systems, and empowering individuals facing social challenges. The congruence between the orientation of program implementation and the local government's agenda signifies a synergistic relationship between the company and the governmental bodies.

Many researchers overlook the identification of program implementation within the framework of partnership in corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. There are three predominant tendencies among researchers when examining the reality of CSR implementation. Firstly, researchers often focus on delineating a series of CSR processes, starting from planning, implementation, monitoring, to evaluation (Margaretha et al., 2020; Pasila et al., 2022). It is commonly believed that program implementation following established procedures and processes is a crucial determinant of program effectiveness (Wahyuningsih et al., 2023). Secondly, researchers explore various models of CSR implementation activities, such as initiatives aimed at improving education (Sidik & Nabilah, 2024) and empowerment through socialization and training (Hayati et al., 2023). Thirdly, researchers assess the effectiveness of CSR activities, often attributing effectiveness to programs aligned with community needs. For instance, Hua et al. (2023) highlight the extensive use of technology in community communication during the digital era. The alignment of programs with community needs is influenced by mapping mechanisms conducted prior to activity determination (Rela, 2023). These three prevalent research trends overlook the potential for collaborative discussions between companies and various stakeholders.

This study seeks to explore the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs undertaken by PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi to address gaps identified in previous research. To achieve this objective, the study formulates three main research questions. Firstly, it aims to investigate the planning mechanism by examining the establishment of corporate partnerships with various institutions. Secondly, it seeks to analyze program objectives aimed at identifying collaborative solutions to local community issues, serving as fundamental aspects of program determination. Lastly, the study addresses program mapping by considering local government policies in addressing social challenges. These three research questions are formulated to examine the empowerment model implemented by scrutinizing the relationships forged within the CSR process.

This research contends that the growing awareness among companies regarding their responsibilities toward complex societies necessitates more ethical and synergistic engagement with stakeholder networks. The involvement of diverse stakeholder networks contributes to the establishment of strategically aligned and efficient activities (Otero-González et al., 2021). Ensuring program efficiency can lead to the effective implementation of empowerment initiatives while minimizing conflicts of interest. In this regard, Tomi Kallio (2007) argues that companies must tailor their programs to align with the network of policy makers through dialogue and collaboration, thereby ensuring the sustainability of program implementation. Such an orientation is integral to every

empowerment program involving companies and is implemented in a sustainable manner.

Literature review

The Role of Corporate Social Responsibility

Various studies have elucidated the concept of corporate social responsibility through interdisciplinary approaches encompassing definitions (Barauskaite & Streimikiene, 2021), corporate governance (Abbas, 2020), and strategic management (Yuan et al., 2020), drawing from psychology, sociology, and economics. Alternatively, corporate social responsibility is viewed as a mechanism entailing corporate and community responsibilities, assessed across three dimensions. The first dimension recognizes corporate responsibility across institutional, organizational, and individual levels (Fatima & Elbanna, 2023), guided by associated principles such as the legitimacy principle, public responsibility principle, and managerial discretion principle (Ervtits, 2021). The second dimension explores how these principles inform corporate actions, delving into socially responsive processes encompassing stakeholder management, environmental scanning, and issues management (Dmytriyev et al., 2021). Lastly, the third dimension evaluates the outcomes of corporate actions through the analysis of social policies, programs, and impacts.

The multifaceted dimensions of corporate social responsibility activities offer distinct perspectives that influence the implementation framework. The corporate social responsibility model, which underscores a company's obligation to address social issues, highlights three primary domains: corporate responsibility, the societal issues pertinent to the company, and social responsiveness manifested through economic, social, and legal actions (Sulaiman & Muhamad, 2017). This framework compels companies to consider social, economic, and environmental impacts alongside business concerns, with community development at its core. To foster community empowerment, corporate social responsibility initiatives target endeavors that mitigate inequality, promote equal opportunities, rectify significant disparities in income, wealth, and influence, ultimately striving for social justice (Thadikaran et al., 2021).

Empowerment-based corporate social responsibility

Introducing the small business model offers a distinctive perspective on managerial processes compared to large enterprises. The necessity for a discerning model aims to provide a precise definition, avoiding the classification of small businesses merely as miniature versions of large corporations (Bowman & Wyer, 2022). A comprehensive exploration of small businesses is crucial to grasp the qualitative and quantitative distinctions that underpin the differential treatment between small and large enterprises. According to Wyer et al. (2022), small firms encounter potentially unique challenges arising from owner-manager dynamics and size-related attributes, which may pose

conflicts with the high adaptability and swift responsiveness often regarded as key elements of small firms' competitive edge.

Researchers primarily focus on the management dynamics involving owners and managers of small businesses to uncover the challenges encountered by these enterprises. This dynamic has implications for business development motivation, as it restricts the recruitment of skilled employees due to concerns regarding the independence and autonomy of business management (Lee et al., 2020). The recruitment of specialists in small businesses significantly influences business growth by leveraging their expertise in identifying market opportunities and swiftly addressing production and distribution challenges (Olson et al., 2019). The proprietorial management style prevalent in small businesses contributes to the stagnation of business evolution. Additionally, an issue commonly observed in small businesses, where managerial processes rely heavily on the owner, is the reluctance to delegate authority and grant employees more autonomy, leading to a lack of employee engagement in business advancement initiatives (Signoretti, 2020). Corporate social responsibility focused on empowerment aims to enhance community value across economic, human resources, and cultural dimensions. Economic development-oriented social responsibility involves bolstering community skills, capabilities, and resources to foster increased income and sustainable livelihoods (Chomane & Biljohn, 2021). Resource empowerment primarily targets augmenting asset ownership, enabling individuals to exert full control over their lives within the community (Reshi & Sudha, 2021). Social empowerment processes emphasize self-control, fostering autonomy (Bessa et al., 2021), while cultural empowerment involves reshaping norms and regulations to facilitate sustainable community development (Cillo et al., 2022).

Corporate social responsibility programs employ empowerment mechanisms to enhance both employees and their associated environments. Two primary dimensions of this empowerment have been identified. Firstly, there is a focus on addressing environmental social issues, utilizing the local potential of surrounding communities to generate environmental benefits for the company (Prasetio et al., 2021; Putera et al., 2020). Secondly, there's the mentoring model, where the company provides various resources to facilitate community development targeting different objectives. Toto Sugito et al. (2022) highlight the company's role as a mediator between community needs and stakeholders. Empowerment constructs related to facilitation involve an increase in control, competence, and internalization of goals, serving as tools to leverage local potential for sustainable development.

Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach, which, as defined by W.J. Creswell & J.D. Creswell (2018), aims to comprehend social phenomena by delving into the deeper understanding of the meaning, experiences, perceptions, and context surrounding the subject of inquiry. Conducted in Sidrap Regency, the research focuses on a case study investigating the planning and implementation processes of community empowerment

programs by CSR PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi. Data collection involved interviews, with research informants selected using purposive sampling criteria. Informants related to the planning process included CSR PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi, local and village government representatives, and NGOs, while those associated with CSR program implementation included village government officials and beneficiaries. The collected data underwent analysis through triangulation, incorporating source triangulation. The analysis process followed three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Sugiyono, 2017).

Results

Locality-based corporate social responsibility: planning to maintain synergy

The integration of corporate social responsibility (CSR) with the strategic development agendas of local governments and community institutions occurs within the framework of activity planning. This process is facilitated through three established mechanisms aimed at fostering a synergistic approach to empowerment. Initially, there is the mechanism of assessment and research. PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi emphasizes program planning grounded in thorough assessment and research to tailor initiatives to community needs. Collaboration with NGOs, universities, and local government entities is integral to this process. The outcomes of these assessments inform comprehensive social mapping exercises, which encompass stakeholder identification, public interest forums, regional potential analysis, identification of vulnerable communities, social issue prioritization, and other pertinent concerns.

“Prior to formulating a CSR program, we initiate a comprehensive needs assessment encompassing economic, environmental, social, and occupational safety dimensions, along with an evaluation of available resources within the company’s vicinity. Our approach prioritizes fostering communication with the community, underscored by a deep respect for local culture, cultural heritage, and community rights.” (R1)

Furthermore, this assessment entails an examination of challenges and opportunities, along with an evaluation of the potential impacts of company operations. Secondly, there is stakeholder engagement, where companies actively involve various stakeholders affected by their operations, including local communities, governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and employees, through ongoing dialogue and interaction. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of stakeholders’ perspectives and needs, fostering robust relationships with local communities. The implementation of dialogue takes place through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted annually in December.

“The CSR committee and staff engage in annual communication with government officials to align with the government’s initiatives that complement CSR programs. Additionally, the Sidrap District CSR Forum convenes regularly with local government representatives to gather program suggestions and ideas.” (R2)

These FGD sessions serve to capture the aspirations of local communities, NGOs, the Sidrap Regency CSR forum, employees, and to acquaint stakeholders with government initiatives that align with the company's CSR endeavors.

Thirdly, there's the process of social mapping, which entails identifying stakeholders, public interest forums, and pertinent social, economic, and environmental issues. Through social mapping, companies gain deeper insights into the communities they operate in, enabling them to tailor CSR programs that address local needs effectively. In the case of PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi, an analysis was conducted on the economic, social, and environmental landscape within the company's operational area. This involved identifying challenges and risks through the documentation and analysis of prevalent social issues, such as poverty, educational accessibility, healthcare, and infrastructure. Additionally, vulnerable groups were identified, and potential partnerships with external entities like educational institutions, local governments, and NGOs were explored.

Bypassing Local Challenges through corporate social responsibility: Setting Goals and Strategies for Empowerment

An examination of various community challenges, which exceed the capacity of governmental and social community institutions to address, serves as a guideline for identifying activities to support underserved communities. Proposed activities undergo stakeholder validation to assess their potential benefits and strategic alignment, while also identifying any impediments to implementation by local governments through surveys and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

“Surveys and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) play a crucial role in identifying the targets for implementing CSR programs, ensuring synchronization with local government initiatives. This targeting process is informed by assessment outcomes and responsive to emergent activities such as feminist development.” (R3)

Strategic priorities are then outlined in proposals submitted to the company committee for approval, along with budgetary requirements. Within this framework, PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi conducts biennial needs assessments. Following interviews, the company collaborates with local health centers (puskesmas) to identify strategic interventions. These discussions lead to initiatives such as expanding the number of community health volunteers (posyandu cadres) to enhance healthcare services. Moreover, activities are implemented through inter-institutional synergy, engaging other organizations focused on enhancing community capacity. This is exemplified by PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi's partnership with the Padi Menguning Study Club, aimed at improving foreign language proficiency within the community.

The engagement of the government as a partner of the company is geared towards aligning with the vision and mission of the local government, particularly the Sidrap District Government. This alignment is evident in the Sidrap Regency Government's

fourth mission, which emphasizes “Building and Improving Infrastructure Development (such as Roads, Bridges, Irrigation, Markets, and Telecommunications) to Enhance Goods and Services Mobility,” and its sixth mission, focused on “Optimizing Resource Areas Through Rural Community Empowerment via the Smart Village Concept (Promoting Smart, Self-Sufficient, and Sustainable Development with Environmental Awareness).” The company contributes to realizing these missions through empowerment programs that address beneficiaries’ basic needs. This includes initiatives such as providing access to water through borehole construction connected to households, extending electricity services to villages, and constructing roads to facilitate the transportation of local natural resources.

The depth of deliberation in shaping the program underscores PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi’s commitment to fostering a sustainable empowerment model through its corporate social responsibility endeavors.

“Each CSR program implemented is tailored to benefit individuals residing in the immediate vicinity of PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi’s operational area. This emphasis reflects the complexity of the community directly impacted and under- scores the company’s aspiration to be a positive neighbor to the community. In executing CSR initiatives, sustainability is a key objective. PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi endeavors to ensure that its CSR programs are not transient but rather continue beyond their designated timelines, fostering sustainable outcomes. The ultimate goal is to foster a community that is more self-reliant and prosperous compared to its previous state.”
(R1)

The implementation phase of PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi’s CSR program commenced during the 2014-2015 period, coinciding with the company’s construction phase, characterized by direct contributions, donations, and sponsorships. Although not officially documented in the system until 2014, operational records began from 2015 onwards. CSR initiatives are geared towards community empowerment, with a specific emphasis on addressing environmental impacts, healthcare, and meeting fundamental needs such as access to clean water, electricity, and essential resources through infrastructure projects like road construction and lighting. However, PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi’s CSR activities refrain from involvement in religious and cultural spheres out of deference to indigenous communities.

Synergizing Social Responsibility: Empowering Local Development

The approach to identifying needs and development plans by the Sidrap Regency government significantly influences the formulation and determination of PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) program. Two models of CSR program implementation align with the development objectives and priorities of Sidrap Regency. Firstly, there’s the charity model, which aims to enhance community social security in support of regional development priority programs.

Category	Activity	Target	Indicator
Welfare assurance	House renovations	Underprivileged communities	Affordable house
	Funding Support	Community events	Implementation of community and local government activities
Quality improvement assurance	School Renovation	School	Provision of safe school fences for children
Health assurance	Cleft lip surgery	Community	Availability of health services

Table 1. Support for improving community social security. *Source:* Authors' elaboration.

For instance, PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi's support for improving health insurance focuses on tailored activities that address pertinent needs. This approach enables the community to perceive and address existing social limitations effectively.

Secondly, there's the community empowerment model adopted by PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi, which aims at enhancing development in two dimensions: enhancing the quality and accessibility of social services through mentoring activities (refer to table 2), and improving the standard of living by augmenting economic value. PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi's implementation of corporate social responsibility is designed to align with regional development needs by maximizing the involvement of community institutions in fostering a sustainable development process. Activities directly targeting the community are integral to the commitment to actively participate in complementing governmental efforts. Furthermore, skill development initiatives, such as enhancing language proficiency, involve collaboration with institutions like the *Padi Menguning* Study Club, contributing to educational advancement.

Category	Activity	Target	Indicator
Education	Language support	Teaching staff and students	The presence of proficient English teachers and the accessibility of English learning resources for students in schools
	Paket C (High School Diploma) Scholarship	Child dropout	Reduction in dropout rate
Health	Posyandu Cadre Training	Posyandu Cadres	Enhanced understanding among Integrated Services Post (posyandu) cadres
Infrastructure	Electricity Supply	Community and school	The provision of electricity access for lighting both households and schools
	Procurement of Borewells	Community	Access to clean water for the community

Table 2. Support for improving quality and access to social services. *Source:* Authors' elaboration.

Enhancements in the realm of quality development and accessibility to social services are coupled with an elevation in the standard of living through direct support to industry players and farmers within the Sidrap Regency area. PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi addresses capital constraints by offering direct business assistance to oyster mushroom and rice entrepreneurs, thereby augmenting their business outcomes. Similarly, farmers receive aid in the form of agricultural tools distributed through farmer groups. This initiative underscores the company's role not only as an entity focused on economic gains but also as a contributor to social and environmental welfare.

Discussion

The efficacy of PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi's corporate social responsibility (CSR) implementation hinges on the utilization of planning-to-evaluation mechanisms that prioritize alignment with government development plans and engage with social community organizations. Collaborative planning efforts contribute to the identification of activities that address the needs of local communities, tackle social issues, and support the long-term development goals of local governments. This collaborative approach fosters a deep understanding of stakeholders' perspectives and needs, leading to the creation of sustainable solution programs. Sustainability is inherent in initiatives that synergize with local government development plans, ensuring that the benefits of the programs can be perpetuated by the local authorities. PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi's sustainable community empowerment, characterized by a synergistic partnership with government policies and social community institutions, represents an innovative model in corporate social responsibility that has demonstrated effectiveness.

The successful execution of corporate social responsibility by PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi signifies the realization of expectations held by diverse stakeholders aimed at enhancing community welfare. This accomplishment mirrors a foundational paradigm of corporate preparedness to fulfill its social obligations (Hartman et al., 2002; Mitchell et al., 1997). The government, being invested in community prosperity, relies on a strategic development plan as a tangible blueprint for prioritizing empowerment initiatives. The process of cultivating relationships through dialogues with local government entities reflects a commitment to exploring diverse models and approaches conducive to community welfare (Nijhof et al., 2008). Similarly, engagement with community social institutions contributes to shaping innovative perspectives in program implementation. Such engagement serves not only as a strategic utilization of their expertise but also as a means of normative legitimacy, affirming the earnestness of program implementation to the community (Lister, 2003).

The realization of expectations and the attainment of normative-identity legitimacy within PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi's corporate social responsibility program signify efforts to establish a novel framework for contributive and sustainable CSR practices. Acting as conduits, the government and social community institutions offer priority

development plans and expert guidance, facilitating the integration of companies with communities. This collaborative mechanism enables companies to address community needs, fulfill government expectations, and optimize the functions of community institutions (Nussbaum, 1997). Such an approach fosters a harmonious balance that accommodates the diverse interests of companies, governments, and social institutions, thereby mitigating the likelihood of resistance to CSR initiatives (Grolin, 1998). These relationships not only enhance program effectiveness but also optimize the efficiency of company expenditures. Otero-González et al. (2021) further underscore this role, noting that companies proactively engaging in independent empowerment initiatives can significantly reduce wasteful spending.

Many have overlooked the identification of factors contributing to empowerment mechanisms within corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. This oversight is evident in the execution of empowerment processes undertaken by companies toward surrounding communities. Consequently, the recognition of effective CSR practices by scholars such as Hua et al. (2023) and Rela (2023) likely stems from the synergistic mechanisms established by individual companies. The company's adept communication with various stakeholders also influences the selection of activities aimed at sustainable community empowerment. Thus, initiatives like education improvement (Sidik & Nabilah, 2024) and empowerment through socialization and training (Hayati et al., 2023) represent consensus products among stakeholders. The oversight of synergistic efforts by companies has prompted researchers to focus on the CSR process itself (Margaretha et al., 2020; Pasila et al., 2022), emphasizing the importance of facilitating two-way communication between companies and diverse interested parties.

The synergistic approach undertaken by PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi underscores the importance for companies to meticulously plan and execute CSR programs in collaboration with various stakeholders. This coordinated effort offers valuable insights and options across multiple facets that may not be attainable by the company alone, thus enhancing the effectiveness of the empowerment process. PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi's implemented mechanism serves as a commendable model that can serve as a benchmark for other companies aiming to enhance the efficacy and positive impact of their CSR initiatives. The execution of CSR programs at PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi exemplifies a steadfast commitment to sustainable development, characterized by prudent resource allocation, streamlined project management, and adherence to predefined schedules. Through collaborative endeavors with diverse stakeholders, the company ensures that its implemented programs yield sustainable benefits for local communities.

Conclusion

This study presents a novel perspective on the assessment of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, focusing on both implementation effectiveness and the determination process. The research highlights technical aspects as primary factors influencing the effectiveness of empowerment initiatives conducted by PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi, with

a particular emphasis on partnership mechanisms. By establishing partnerships with governmental and social community institutions, the company creates a convergence point that addresses the needs of the community, aligns with governmental expectations, and reflects the aspirations of social community institutions in community development. This convergence of interests materializes in the form of programs that accommodate the diverse roles of various stakeholders, fostering sustainable community development. As a result, the implementation process unfolds effectively and efficiently, while simultaneously addressing the diverse interests involved.

The identification of key factors in the empowerment process through social responsibility stems from the application of a research model aimed at uncovering deeper meanings within social actions. The actions arising from the empowerment process are analyzed by examining the networks formed, thus manifesting the corporate social responsibility model through various activities. However, it's important to acknowledge the limitations of this research. The focus on a single case study may restrict the generalizability of the findings, necessitating further research to broaden the scope and incorporate diverse perspectives and experiences. Future research endeavors could explore the effectiveness of different CSR strategies in varied contexts, and develop a comprehensive evaluation framework to assess the long-term impact of CSR programs.

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We are Ramli, Sulvinajayanti, and Adnan Achiruddin Saleh stating that the script has been prepared, written and approved for submission to this journal by us.

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Availability of data and materials

All data are available from the authors.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interest.

Additional information

No additional information related to this research.

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