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Evaluation of Socially Responsible Practices for Preventing Housing Project Challenges in Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose *- Housing represents one of the most basic needs of man therefore considering the number of deficit housing units which stands at over 23 million, the need increase supply becomes most imperative. To ensure effective and efficient delivery of housing, socially responsible practices can be employed in housing production to prevent challenges, hence the purpose of the study was to explore socially responsible practices adopted by construction firms for preventing challenges in housing projects, which will consequently enhance housing production.*

Design/methodology/approach *- The study adopted the descriptive research design, quantitative design method, case study research strategy and cross-sectional time horizon. The study collated variables and afterwards sampled opinions of construction professionals', 'as respondents' in four construction firms in Abuja, Nigeria, so as to provide information on application of socially responsible practices in housing projects. The data analysis tools adopted were Mean Rating and Kruskal Wallis Test. A part of the 138 professionals sampled, ranked these practices afterwards.*

Findings *- The study revealed the five key practices in preventing housing project challenges to be: generating profit; managing projects within the confines of the law; ensuring an environmentally friendly project; community service/development and payment of taxes when due.*

Research Limitations *– The research limitations were three-fold being: difficulty in gaining access into some large construction firms for data collection; the inability to view some vital documents which would have provided more insight into CSR practices in the case studies, as the documents were termed 'classified'; and the difficulty in interfacing with respondents as the research was conducted during the COVID 19 pandemic which had financial and time implications.*

Theoretical/Social/Practical implications *– The findings of the study further indicate that socially responsible practices are multiple and vary from one project phase to another. Inability to effectively utilize these practices in a housing project life cycle suggests cost and time implications which can derail or lead to project abandonment. Construction participants need to effectively and efficiently integrate these practices in housing project execution to ensure stakeholder and shareholder satisfaction.*

Originality/value *- More than ever, there is need to distinctly categorize socially responsible practices into economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibility respectively in housing project service delivery and consider project peculiarities while adopting these practices. Furthermore, applying these practices constructively and logically suggests great potentials in preventing housing project challenges.*

Keywords*: Housing Project, Challenges, Socially Responsible, Practices.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As housing deficit has become one of the strenuous challenges facing Nigeria, measures to address it therefore becomes very necessary. Several strategies have been adopted in the past such as: Site and services scheme; proper layouts and improved infrastructure; improved accessibility to project sites and improved project fund management, however, housing shortage still persists hence the need for corporate social

responsibility (CSR).

CSR has been adopted in developed nations with high success levels. Over expansive literature, CSR has informed on practices that guide firms towards improving stakeholder relationships and interest while at the same time, generating business value. Considering the importance of service delivery, CSR cannot be overstated as it can build empathy through studying the lives, practices and struggles of past which helps to appreciate a myriad of cultures, ideas and traditions as well as recognising them as meaningful products of specific times and places. CSR as a concept, has a long, absorbing and diverse history. Earlier and present CSR practices are three faceted: firstly, to provide jobs and economic growth through well run business; secondly, to run businesses fairly and honestly regarding employees and customers and thirdly, to become more broadly involved in improving the conditions of the community and environment in which it operates.

Firms often engage in socially responsible practices which help in preventing challenges that undermine housing project provision success. Constant changes in today's project setting, an increasing globalisation and the problems facing social life, force firms into a constant search for effective ways to adapt to new conditions, both socially and economically which is as such in housing projects. Effective adoption of corporate social responsibility requires a careful and extensive investment on the part of the organisation, as organisations do not only need to undertake activities in a responsible manner, but also need to understand how their activities are viewed by stakeholders. To adopt CSR in a firm, it is vital to imbibe orientation towards addressing the constraints affecting individual and collective moral values and to further integrate these values in corporate decision making.

Through CSR, decision makers can reflect on what ethical guidelines to adopt to ensure productive service delivery in housing projects and use the commitment as a foundation for developing service models that will be economically sustainable. Despite the importance of CSR in housing projects, most CSR researches and application strategies in housing development are as a result of practices in developed countries, whereas CSR in housing development in developing countries like Nigeria is still rudimentary which creates a gap that informed this study, hence the need to investigate the application of socially responsible practices towards addressing housing project challenges.

2.0 Literature Review

A socially responsible housing firm is a learning firm which serves the needs of a people and is ready for changes, not only to maximise its profits but also to contribute to the surrounding environment. This can be achieved by critical decision making as regards ways to improve services in housing projects. It is required that a construction firm of the future is anticipated to learn how to meet the needs of society, create the common good and take an active part in the life of society. In line with the principles of CSR, moral and reflective expectations of firms must be addressed towards all construction project participants such as owners, shareholders, employees, contractors, social and environmental organisations, suppliers and collaborators.

2.1 Socially Responsible Practices in Housing Projects

Through CSR, decision makers will possibly reflect on what ethical guidelines to adopt to ensure productive service delivery in housing projects and use the commitment as a foundation for developing service models that will be economically sustainable. Ekong, Ujene and Ubong (2014) posited that most CSR researches and application strategies in the construction industry are as a result of practices in developed countries, whereas CSR in construction practice in developing countries like Nigeria is still rudimentary. Sung (2015) held that firms engaging in housing projects must have a direction which sees them acting responsibly economic, legal, philanthropic and ethical wise. This can help to prevent challenges in the project setting.

Sung (2015) noted that economic responsibilities in a housing project centres on: generating profit for

construction firms; paying employees' wages promptly; payment of taxes when due; investment and re-investment for profit generation; effective budget planning; budget adherence and loan schemes. Legal responsibilities centre on: managing activities of housing projects within the confines of country law; educating employees on the requirements of the law; obeying labour and tax laws; proper project contract/agreement documentation; to include engaging the services of qualified legal luminaries (Sung, 2015). Sung (2015) highlighted ethical responsibilities which border on: reviewing employee wages; enhancing benefits for employees; avoidance in dealing with unscrupulous clients; suppliers and contractors in housing projects; offering employment when needed; avoidance of corruption and cheating during housing project tendering activities; paying contractors and suppliers duly; adopting the use of quality material and equipment during housing project; ensuring a conducive housing project work environment; ensuring health and safety standards in housing projects; assisting in staff accommodation and transportation, setting up housing project conflict resolution mechanisms and ensuring that housing projects are environmental friendly in avoiding air, land, noise and water pollution. According to Sung (2015), the philanthropic responsibilities deal with: societal donations by the housing project developers; charitable actions; engaging in community service and creating programmes which ensure the ability to give back to society.

The elimination of unethical activities with the use of social programmes can improve the image of construction firms in society and can increase the confidence in such firms, thus contributing in the long run to the increased earnings from their activities (Yam, 2013). Barney, Mackey and Mackey (2007) held that the growing interest in a firm's corporate social responsibility is the result of the following parameters: an increase in social expectations resulting from the inability of state institutions to provide basic social needs (both social and environmental); the process of economic globalisation, progressive expectations of business transparency; the improvement of business reliability in the wake of economic affairs known via media and the lack of acceptance of aggressive marketing and the exploration of new ways of competition based on trust. These areas may benefit housing projects. In the era of globalisation and the growing competitive rivalry, the application of CSR seems to be a necessary factor in the policy of modern construction firms, both domestic and foreign (Windsor, 2001). The elimination of unethical activities and undertaking the projects within fields of social programmes to improve the image of firms increase the confidence of such firms and contribute to their increased service delivery (Bojar, 2007).

A socially responsible housing firm is a learning firm which serves the needs of a people and is ready for changes, not only to maximise its profits but also to contribute to the surrounding environment (Blome, 2012). It is required that a construction firm of the future is anticipated to learn how to meet the needs of society, create the common good and take an active part in the life of society (Mia and Othman, 2008). In line with the principles of CSR, moral and legal responsibilities of firms must be addressed towards all construction project participants such as owners, shareholders, employees, contractors, social and environmental organisations, suppliers and collaborators (Abdul Hamid, Singh and Abdullah, 2013).

Walton (2010) expressed that most recently, the nature of how a company relates with its employees and host communities can greatly contribute to the sustainability of its business success and firms that are socially responsible in making profits also contribute to some, although obviously not all, aspects of social development. Every firm should not expect to be involved in every aspect of social development. The ability of a firm to be involved in aspects of CSR towards society, both within the firm and on the outside, can make its services more attractive to the public, thereby making the firm more profitable. Parkhe (2014) and Wirba (2023) held that there will be increased costs to implement CSR, but the benefits are likely to far outweigh the costs. In developed countries, CSR encourages development by ensuring ethical, legal, philanthropic and economical responsibility along a pyramid (Hanachor and Okanezi, 2020).

Carroll (2004) presented different responsibilities as running layers within a pyramid, such that social

responsibility requires the meeting of all four levels consecutively. Originally, people felt that a business enterprise had fulfilled its social responsibility by surviving and realising the maximum profit possible (Carroll and Buchholtz, 2008). By adopting layers of the CSR pyramid and eventually making profit, firms would have contributed to a growing, healthy economic system that provides employment and adequate incomes for all (Ma et al, 2023). Baron (2007) also noted that although profit is the main target of business, social as well as economic goals should receive attention and can be guided by the layers of the CSR pyramid.

Yam (2013) enumerated the following as crucial areas of social responsibility in housing projects: the ability to eliminate or avoid conflicts of interest resulting from employees' non-protection or dissatisfaction with their work; reduced care for the welfare of employees; lack of environmental protection and inadequate welfare. Petrovic-Lazarevic and Violet (2009) identified four green areas of corporate social responsibility in the activities of housing projects: economic advancement; the area of sociology; area of ecology and the area of ethics. Yam and Ismail (2010) advanced that the implementation of CSR in housing development should result in the following parameters: the flow of project investments and returns; employment, effective service delivery; the creation of infrastructure for social development; the transfer of technology; the implementation of best practice standards and actions to include the development of local communities. The effective use of the responsible practice categories will be beneficial in adequately advancing housing projects as evidenced by Carroll (2004), in the figure 1.

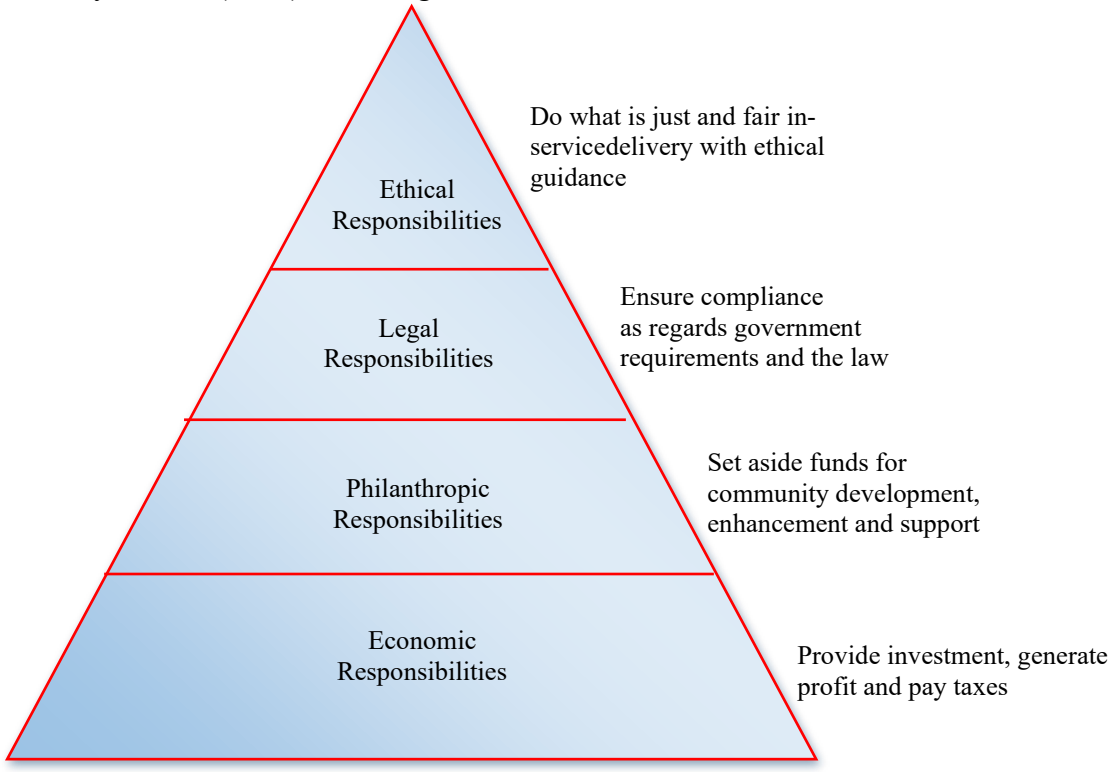

Figure: Carroll's CSR Pyramid.
Source: Carroll (2004)

2.2 Challenges in Housing Project Provision

Challenges have remained detrimental to housing development which has manifested in housing shortage (Nwosu, 2010). Challenges in housing project provision was collated along the five project life cycle phases which are: initiation, planning, design, execution and commissioning. Some of the collated challenges from past researchers such as Okechukwu, (2008); Usman, Kamaru and Mieri

(2014); and Onuachu (2019), which are detrimental to the entire project life cycle are hereby undernoted.

For initiation phase project challenges include: faulty forecasting, poor project fund allocation, poor project budgeting, lack of feasibility study, lack of viability study, failure to proper define project, inadequate amenities, poor infrastructure, weak project initiatives and poor housing project sensitisation. Others include: inability to mobilise contractors, low government assistance in projects, inadequate housing project financiers, poor attitude of housing project stakeholders, weak project policies, poor resource mobilisation, erratic contract negotiations and unrealistic expectations from clients or partners. These challenges if not prevented, can affect the entire planning process of the project.

The collated housing project challenges from literature which can be detrimental to the planning phase of a housing project life cycle are: late site delivery to construction firm; poor project funding; faulty documentation (feasibility report, drawings, technical specification, bill of quantity); task collusion during project; poor organisational framework; poor scheduling; poor planning; poor site allocation; poor resource distribution; diversion of project funds; land acquisition issues; delay in Certificate of Occupancy follow up to include poor loan arrangement. Others are poor project infrastructure and layout; poor choice of contractors; poor devolution of responsibilities; inability to create enabling environment and inflated contract quotes. These setbacks are likely to influence decisions needed to advance the project in the design phase of the life cycle.

Some of the design phase challenges collated from literature which can affect activities in a housing project include: inappropriate design; faulty design; uneconomic design; late site delivery; poor design interpretation; delay in correcting design changes; design change during housing project; unachievable designs and improper design interpretation. These design issues will impact negatively on project execution.

The collated housing project challenges which are detrimental to the execution phase of a housing project life cycle are: poor project supervision and control; poor workmanship; misuse of resources; wastage of materials; poor quality of materials; delay in supplies; site accidents; equipment breakdown and religious and tribal conflicts. The occurrence of these challenges will negatively affect the housing project timeframe as well as commissioning.

The collated commissioning phase challenges from other literature are: inability to set up a closing team; poor progress evaluation; failure to keep pace with project phases; inconsistent project funding; poor management; misuse of time; poor communication and delay in project hand-over.

2.3 The Effect of Socially Responsible Practices on Housing Project Challenges

Like many areas of study, corporate social responsibility has a productive effect if adopted and implemented in housing projects (Preston, 2005). The nature of the effects of CSR on housing projects may give guides as to directions to follow when engaging in activities of housing projects. Contemporary business practices confront intense pressures to address social concerns, in which case socially irresponsible businesses can gain or lose significant competitive advantage depending on CSR decisions (Porter and Kramer, 2006). Yam, Ismail and Tan (2008) pointed out that a major effect that CSR corrects in housing development is that in which housing project developers tend to focus on profitability and environmental issues and place less emphasis on social and community aspects which can have a negative impact on housing projects. In housing projects, targeting a positive image has a positive effect on a project because a developer gets more leverage to operate freely during project activities (Ketut and Dwijendra, 2013).

A survey revealed that after housing cost and location, clients rate social practices next in requirement targets of Malaysian housing projects (Yam, Ismail and Tan, 2008). The more influential clients of organisations are more likely to expect firms to act responsibly (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). An effect of CSR is that it can aid in guiding reputation and service delivery in housing projects. Good image and reputation has a positive effect because it distinguishes a housing project developer from other competitors, engendering client loyalty and thereby allowing the firm to occupy a unique position in the mind of stakeholders (Ketut and Dwijendra, 2013).

Mainly, CSR is carried out with the purpose of generating a socially beneficial environment, enhanced corporate image, reputation and the expectation of enhanced business profit (Frankental, 2001). A consideration of the present effects and future projections in service delivery in the built environment can be a starting point in CSR implementation for sustainable development. More broadly, the effects of CSR include the extent to which firms are deemed socially responsible to various stakeholders and promote community improvement and sustainable development (Idowu, 2005). As a consequential effect, Husted and Allen (2000) posited that business practices see CSR as a value-adding strategy to enhance reputation by appealing to clients' sense of morality. Holmes (2002) expressed the effects of housing-related CSR in Scotland to primarily influence housing development and management for the purpose of environmental sustainability, as well as elements of ethical and social responsibility.

The nature of a housing project developer can have a major effect on housing project outcome. A project developer's awareness of CSR can be closely associated with the developer's experience, awareness and expertise level which greatly has an effect on housing project outcome. Generally, housing project managers view CSR as auxiliary to financial objectives. Most Malaysian housing project developers include CSR elements in their housing projects to meet up with competitors (Yam, Ismail and Tan, 2008). Housing project developers who support CSR take it as a strategic tool to fulfil their obligation as corporate citizens, thereby improving service delivery and firms' financial performance (Hong, Ismail and Yin, 2008). Housing project developers may view CSR as a means to provide facilities above what is required by laws and regulations. Housing project developers mostly agree that CSR improves corporate reputation and project marketability (Hong, Ismail and Yin, 2008).

Another effect in the opinion of Hong, Ismail and Yin (2008) is that through CSR, exceptional service is guaranteed as a benefit for the general health and well-being of housing project developers and stakeholders. In addition, the quality and desirability of the physical environment in housing project developments still has its effects (Yam and Ismail, 2010). Environmental factors which are detrimental to housing projects can be tackled to better the delivery process by avoiding crowding of the land by buildings; mixing residential, commercial and industrial uses; proximity to traffic; sanitary services and essential community facilities (Preston, 2005).

Another major effect of CSR in housing projects also stems from stakeholder engagement and management during the project process, as Lomano (2010) focused specifically on stakeholder management and community relations practices respectively within Malaysian housing projects through case studies and found that often, employees of many housing projects lack knowledge and training when dealing with the community. Lingard, Townsend, Bradley and Brown (2008) analysed specific effects of ethical human resource management from the point of view of the Construction employees. A case study of the UK construction industry conducted by Jones, Comfort and Hillier (2006) indicated that the consideration of CSR can help to reduce costs by reducing energy use;

water use and especially applying health and safety measures and training of employees in order to complete construction projects on time and to budget which is a positive effect to projects. It is paramount that due to fierce competition in the construction industry, firms need to balance CSR commitments with their commercial goals to create a positive effect in construction projects (Jones, Comfort and Hillier, 2006).

2.4 The Need for Socially Respossible Practices in Future Housing Projects

The need for social responsibility in construction related projects gained prominence very many years ago (Abdul Hamid, Singh and Abdullah, 2013). Successive researchers have acknowledged the wide spread need and adoption of CSR in various aspects of housing across America, Australia, Europe, UK and many other developing countries (Yam and Mcgreal, 2010). A fact remains that a rapidly growing number of firms in the world practice some form of CSR (Husted and Allen, 2007). Andayani and Atmini (2012) reported that in a 2008 economist online survey, 1,192 global executives (an estimated 55 percent) reported that their respective firms gave high priority to the need for corporate social responsibility. The number was projected to increase to 70 percent by 2010 (Andayani and Atmini, 2012). The need for corporate social responsibility application as a strategy in the management of housing projects, as a panacea to housing project challenges which has been established to be a major deterrent in housing delivery as well as housing deficit in Abuja, is most relevant. CSR is vital towards stakeholder satisfaction in a project setting. Developers can benefit as CSR can provide a desired framework to guide housing project activities from start to end with reduced challenges by way of amelioration. CSR in projects guarantees reduction of financial risks; an enhanced ability to recruit, develop and retrain staff; employee benefits in the directions of healthcare and education by way of philanthropy. It is also beneficial to clients as invested finances will be maximized with better financial return. CSR provides infrastructure and amenities to society as firms reciprocally gain improved image and license in society.

This clearly demonstrates that a rapidly increasing number of firms across the globe which include construction firms are committed to the need for CSR practice; and many more are increasingly likely to follow the trend. CSR may come in different forms and play a vital role in the activities of housing projects. Employees engaged in housing projects are likely to have work expectations at different levels. Minimal humanitarian donations in the form of motivation may create an ethical momentum that may take the shape of formalised support from the construction firm. Creating CSR welfare packages is an easy way for an employer to support employees as a motivation. For construction firms to ensure that their operations are supported by a social license to operate in the local communities where they practice, the firms' managers may accede to charitable requests (discretionary) for communities, within a set budget targeted towards ensuring that project execution is not affected (Preston, 2005). This can possibly ensure the socially effective running of the housing project with minimal hitches. Sung (2015) posited that when there is often enough lee-way in a budget, construction firms at their discretion may direct funds to causes that are most likely and indirectly to the benefit of projects and which could have a positive influence on the collective activities of the housing project however sometimes, some of these initiatives may not have any direct benefits to the housing project, but can simply serve to enhance a firm's image and social standing in society.

Another vital need for CSR in effective housing project management and delivery for the future stems from an enhanced action plan for firms' leaders in decision making (Hung, Ismail and Yin, 2006). Construction firms are not monolithic entities, but organisations governed and led by individuals and anchored in the societies in whichthey conduct their businesses (Kerzner, 2013).

CSR strategies reflect the human side of firms and their leaders' personal commitments to contribute to the society of which they are a part of by acting responsibly (Bouma, 2002). Some leaders of construction firms may feel a strong compulsion to protect the laws and practices of the community or society in the course of the housing project, while others may sponsor CSR programmes to express and support their shareholders value (Preston, 2005). Additionally, Yam and Ismail (2010) noted that leaders of construction firms are aware of the need to gain goodwill and societal cooperation when operating within the communities where they execute the projects.

Yun and Lee (2011) found that compared to public firms, privately owned construction firms 'both large and small' often have much greater freedom in allocating charitable contributions (discretionary) in line with the philanthropic inclinations of their leaders or owners. As a construction firm grows larger, it may be vital to seek a more disciplined approach to its philanthropic activities, either through the creation of a formal foundation to oversee the firm's CSR humanitarian activities or the creation of a "community affairs" liaison within the firm to direct its CSR activities (Yun and Lee, 2011). The owners of construction firms may attempt to move philanthropy to a more strategic level by creating a closer alignment between the goals of the phases of the housing project life cycle and requisite humanitarian actions.

Relating the effect of the socially responsible practices on the viability of the housing project life cycle phases may be viewed in light of:

i. Project Initiation Phase: To develop a proper CSR and sustainability measures that will have a positive effect on the housing project:
ii. Project Planning Phase: To define CSR scope, time, cost, quality and measures as to the housing project. This has an enormous effect on the practicability of the housing project.
iii. Project Design Phase: To define, streamline and maximise the design process through CSR in the housing project which has an effect on clients, stakeholders and the community.
iv. Project Execution Phase: The procurement and execution of CSR planning, tracking, reporting, communication, accountability, teamwork, shared attitudes and feedback in the housing project. This has a significant and direct effect on housing project outcome.
v. Project Commissioning Phase: Explanations on how CSR sustainable objectives were achieved, tasks involved to include recommendations for contingency planning at project completion. This has an effect on future housing projects.

3.0 Research Methods

This study adopted the descriptive research design which was aided with the Research Onion developed by (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007). The research philosophy was guided along Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology. Ontology was inclined towards subjectivism; epistemology was inclined towards pragmatism and axiological suggestion was inclined in the direction of value laden axiology. The research approach adopted was mixed design method, while the research strategy was case study research strategy. Research time horizon was cross-sectional as it involved a shortened and specific duration.

Considering that CSR application in housing projects is a practice which encompasses construction stakeholders, the population for the study comprised various professionals engaged in housing projects within the construction industry in Abuja, Nigeria. Determining the definite population of professionals through the office of Federation of Construction Industry (FOCI) and relevant

professional bodies in the built environment such as Nigeria Institution of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS), Nigeria Society of Engineers (NSE), Nigeria Institution of Architects (NIA) and Nigeria Institution of Builders (NIOB) was extremely difficult because the lists were seldom updated. Furthermore, determining the non-registered professionals in practice was impossible thereby making the study population unknown.

In selecting the sample for questionnaire administration, this study adopted the multi-stage technique in which construction professionals were first identified before those with requisite knowledge in the application of CSR in housing were selected from the pool. The choice of sampling technique adopted was guided by the need to target the best possible respondents who would provide quality information on housing project challenges experienced over time and the responsible practices adopted by firms to prevent these challenges.

The study adopted the quantitative research approach. The methods of data collection were: Questionnaires for primary data and observation of project documents and CSR policy documents for secondary data. Methods of data analysis was descriptive which included Mean rating and Kruskal Wallis test. The sample size of the study was 138 respondents as determined by the formula below suggested by Napierala (2014), however, 41 were considered invalid due to the inability of respondents to correctly supply the required information hence, 97 were adequately completed and used for the study:

$$n = \frac{Z^2\,(p)(q)}{e^2} \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (1)$$

Where:
n = Sample size
e = Acceptable margin of error
Z = Confidence level obtained from the Z score
p = Probability of success (number expected to be returned)
q = 1-p Probability of failure (expected number of un-retrieved instrument)

For this study, the following parameters were used at confidence level of 95%
p = 0.9
q = 1-0.9 = 0.1
z = 1.96, for confidence level of 95%
e = 5%

This implies that:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2(0.9)(0.1)}{(1.96)^2} = \frac{(3.8416) \times (0.09)}{0.0025} = 138$$

Out of the 138 administered, 97 questionnaires (87%) were proper to be used for analysis.

A total of 31 socially responsible practices were collated from past literature relating to housing projects. These socially responsible practices were grouped under the four standard CSR categories namely: Economic, Legal, Ethical and Philanthropic. The Null hypotheses of the study was formulated being that: "There is no significant variation in the perception of stakeholders on the socially responsible practices affecting the management of housing project life cycle in Abuja". Analysis was carried out using Mean Score and Kruskal Wallis Test respectively, after which the practices were ranked based on their mean scores and their Kruskal Wallis values significant (*P)* values.

4.0 Analysis and Discussion

Opinion of actively engaged respondents in the built industry was sampled with the use of a well-structured questionnaire so as to determine the effectiveness of socially responsible practices adopted by construction firms to effectively and efficiently prevent housing project challenges by way of ranking. The table below presents the analysed data indicating the various socially responsible practices, their respective mean scores, ranks and Kruskal Wallis Values all arranged along the four earlier mentioned CSR responsibility categories. Kruskal Wallis Values less than 0.05 indicates a significant variation, while those less than 0.05 indicates insignificant variation.

Table 1: Socially Responsible Practices for Preventing Challenges in Managing Housing Projects

Items	Mean Score	Rank	Kruskal Wallis Value
Economic Responsibility			
Inconsistent Project Funding	4.85	18	0.005
Inability to Set Up Closing Inspection Team	4.84	20	0.023
Poor Final Progress Evaluation	4.46	34	0.000
Poor Management	4.38	40	0.014
Failure to Keep Pace with Project Phases	4.31	43	0.000
Delay in Housing Project Site Hand-Over	4.19	46	0.001
Misuse of Time	3.58	60	0.000
Average Mean Score	4.37		
Legal Responsibility			
Managing Projects Within the Confines of The Law	5.00	1	1.000
Obeying Labour and Tax Laws	4.85	7	0.013
Educating Stakeholders on Requirements of The Law	4.67	12	0.000
Enforcement of Legal Provisions	4.45	15	0.058
Proper Project Contract/Agreement Documentation	4.31	16	0.000
Engaging the Services of Quality Legal Counsel if Needed	4.15	19	0.042
Ensuring an Environmentally Friendly Housing Project	4.98	3	0.743
Use of Quality Equipment and Materials	4.89	6	0.045

Items	Mean Score	Rank	Kruskal Wallis Value
Ensuring A Conclusive Work	4.83	9	0.001
Adopting Health and Safety Standards	4.68	11	0.036
Avoidance of Corruption and Cheating	4.60	13	0.056
Paying Contractors and Suppliers Duly	4.31	16	0.054
Avoidance of Unscrupulous Clients, Suppliers and Contractors	4.15	19	0.004
Ensuring First Aid Equipment and Service for Site Accidents in Housing Projects	4.07	22	0.000
Enhancing Employee Benefits	3.99	25	0.002
Reviewing Employee Wages	3.93	26	0.000
Assisting in Staff Accommodation and Transportation	3.92	27	0.010
Setting Up Conflict Resolution Mechanism in Housing Projects	3.83	28	0.017
Routine Fumigation of Project Site	3.81	29	0.086
Offering Employment When Needed	3.77	30	0.032
Average Mean Score	4.27		
Philanthropic Responsibility			
Community Service/Development	4.95	4	0.042
Societal Donation by Construction Firms	4.18	18	0.000
Creating Programs Which Ensure the Ability to Give Back to Society	4.07	22	0.004
Charitable Actions	4.00	24	0.001
Average Mean Score	4.30		

Source: Field Work (2020)

In order to determine the effectiveness of socially responsible practices adopted by construction firms to effectively and efficiently prevent housing project challenges, respondents' opinions were sampled and the result is presented in Table 1 above. The Kruskal Wallis test was adopted to indicate if there is a significant difference between groups, or not. The Kruskal Wallis values for the respective socially responsible practices were obtained which was used to determine whether there were or weren't significant variations in the opinions of the respondents. From the overall mean scores; Generating profit and Managing projects within the confines of the law, both ranked 1st with mean scores of 5.00 respectively. Ensuring an environmentally friendly housing project ranked (4.98) ranked 3nd, Community service/development (4.98) ranked 4th and Payment of taxes when due ranked 5th.

This indicated that the quest to generate profit, the need to manage projects within the confines of the law, provide a conducive project environment, engage in community service/development and pay taxes duly were the effective practices adopted in preventing the challenges associated with housing projects in Abuja. This further indicated that the highest ranked socially responsible practices in preventing housing project challenges in Abuja borders

on reflective behaviours and actions on the path of primary and secondary stakeholders of projects. The least ranked socially responsible practices from collated data from respondents in ascending order include: Accommodation of loan schemes (3.76); Offering employment when needed (3.77); Routine fumigation of project site (3.81); Setting up conflict resolution mechanism in housing projects (3.83) and assisting in staff accommodation and transportation (3.92) respectively.

In an attempt to determine whether there were significant variations in the submissions of the respondents, the respective Kruskal Wallis p. values of these socially responsible practices were examined. Generating profit; and Managing projects within the confines of the law were both ranked 1st by all 4 groups of respondents with Kruskal Wallis sig. P values of 1.000. Ensuring an environmentally friendly housing project was ranked 1st by Contractors, Consultants and Clients and 4th by government officials with a sig. P value of 0.743, while Community service/development was ranked 1st by consultants, government and clients and 9th by contractors with a sig. P value of 0.682. Payment of taxes when due was ranked 1st by contractors and consultants; 6th by government and 11th by clients with a sig. P value of 0.041. These indicated that, there were no significant variations on the submissions of the respondents regarding the first four socially responsible practices hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant variation in the perception of stakeholders among the socially responsible practices adopted for mitigating challenges in the management of housing projects in Abuja, was therefore accepted, while the 5thsocially responsible practice was rejected.

In regards to the respective average mean scores of the various responsibility categories. For economic responsibility, the highest ranked socially responsible practice was ‘inconsistent project funding’. Inconsistent funding has a major effect on the project life cycle. If funds are not made available when due, the is a likelihood to affect the process as some responsibilities will be put on hold which will have cost and time overruns as a major challenge. The lowest ranked practice was ‘miss-use of time’, however, stakeholders tend to work round-the-clock to ensure time maximisation. The highest ranked practice under the legal responsibility was ‘managing projects within the confines of the law’. The ability to avoid litigation plays a major role in project success as it affects project delivery time, as well as imposing additional finance to the project which is many times unplanned for and poses challenges to housing projects, while the lowest ranked practice for legal responsibility is ‘engaging the quality of a quality legal counsel’. This is likely so because litigation must be perceived prior to engaging such service.

For ethical responsibility, the highest ranked practice was ‘ensuring an environmentally friendly housing project’ which ensures that stakeholders in a project operate safely, comfortably and are guaranteed with the best possible working environment which helps to mitigate challenges. The least ranked practice under ethical responsibility was ‘offering employment when needed’ which is obviously a must-do for organisations regardless of the sector of operation. Lastly, for philanthropic responsibility, the highest ranked socially responsible practice was ‘community service/development’ as its importance cannot be over-emphasized. Community service/development has always benefited society positively by putting construction firms in good light. This guarantees cooperation form stakeholders’ which ensures a hitch free project delivery. The lowest ranked practice was ‘charitable actions’, considering that such actions are subject to firms’ ideologies and choices and may, or may not be made known to the general public.

On ways through which socially responsible practices can prevent challenges in a housing project, the challenge of poor project budgeting can be prevented through preparation of peer reviewed and scrutinized budgets prior to projects; lack of feasibility and viability studies can be prevented or mitigated by undertaking a feasibility and viability appraisal for damage control while failure to define a project can be prevented by early and routine meetings and decision taking. Furthermore, the challenge of inadequate amenities can be prevented by generating profit from initial projects to ensure adequate capital. unrealistic expectation from partners can be avoided by setting up an effective project board to create quality policies, while erratic contract negotiations can be prevented through an enhanced corrupt-free and well-monitored procurement process. The challenge of delayed site delivery can be prevented by early planning on how to deliver on the requirements. Diversion of project funds can be prevented through fragmented and precise disbursement of funds to include monitoring and control as well as routine materials inspection and periodic auditing.

To avoid the challenge of poor choice of contractors, resource requirements need to be determined wherein the nature, skill, expertise and competent levels are adequately captured. Delay in design approval can be prevented by creating approval teams of competent professionals to carry out regular visitations as follow-up towards ensuring that approvals are secured early enough. Uneconomic design can be prevented by carrying out requisite changes and advising on the changes made for clients or board approval as well as implementation. Furthermore, the supply of poor-quality materials can be prevented by adequate inspection and screening to determine quality as well as informal investigations which can also be done to determine performance of such materials when used in similar projects. Delay in supplies can be prevented by choosing credible suppliers and ensuring that proper documentation is done for supplies, which can further be backed up payments for supplies as at when due. To prevent site accidents, safety standards must be imbibed as properly serviced and running machines and equipment need to be used. The challenge of poor progress evaluation can be prevented by creating a proper plan on how to manage the delivery process with emphasis on proper routine assessment of performances and standards. To prevent the challenge of failure to keep pace with the project phases, a properly prepared organizational Gantt chart can help in organizing the process provided it is strictly adhered to. Poor management and inability to set up closing inspection teams can be prevented by appointing focused and organized personnel to advance housing project activities all through the life cycle phases. The challenge of delays in project hand-over can be prevented by putting together a closing team early enough, and properly orientating on expectations.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

As project challenges are a major factor in housing inadequacy, the study evaluated the socially responsible practices which prevents housing project challenges in Abuja and afterwards ranked the socially responsible practices, with the intention of determining the effectiveness levels of these practices. The socially responsible practices ranked from first to fifth respectively were: Generating profit, managing projects within the confines of the law, ensuring an environmentally friendly housing project, community service/development and payment of taxes when due.

In the overall, housing project challenges need to be addressed to ensure project maximization and satisfaction by shareholders and stakeholders, and this can be achieved by adopting socially responsible practices in housing projects. Profit and profit making remains the main goal in service delivery as is the case in housing projects. Profit keeps a housing project running, ensures growth and sustainability. Profits ensure available funds for efficient

CSR practice, especially philanthropic responsibilities; however, to achieve profits, activities must be responsibly undertaken. CSR ensures that housing project activities are coordinated and executed with the aim of making profit, therefore, reciprocity exists in the relationship between profit and CSR. A safe business is one which is managed within the confines of local, state and federal laws. By advancing projects within the confines of the law in Abuja, firms have been able to avoid forms of bans and liens which are capable of derailing housing projects. Abiding by the law is a responsible practice, therefore firms seen to be doing so are always on the advantageous end of society. CSR which is a responsible act has ensured that by abiding by the law during projects, the entire project life cycle is safeguarded.

The CSR practice of being environmentally friendly is very important and hence, widely accepted in different climes. A positive way through which firms in Abuja have remedied the menace of pollution in construction is by ensuring routine environmental sanitation to promote a safe and healthy habitability. Clearing of drainages are also done intermittently, while construction of new drainages was embarked upon when and where necessary. Proper use of water is also major environmentally friendly practice engaged in by firms as water was properly channeled such that it could be re-used rather than wasted. Environmental Impact Assessment has helped in providing sufficient and reliable data on the environment and data which aids in decision making. It was observed during the study that EIA also leads to the implementation of preventive measures towards negative housing project environmental impacts. Uncontrollable felling of trees which tends to be practiced amongst firms into housing projects can be averted. Planting of trees has been encouraged as it has provided shelter, green areas and a panacea to global warming. Community service/development is a CSR where people come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems towards making a society better. When community development is effective, it ensures reduced crime, less disparity between citizens, better jobs availability and a more talented workforce. All of these are important towards preventing challenges that can mar a housing project. Community service/development in housing projects falls within CSR's philanthropic responsibility which is humanitarian.

In light of the above, the recommendations put forward in line with the findings of the study are:

vi. To address housing project challenges, conscious efforts should be made by construction firms to develop CSR working documents which will clearly indicate the use of the responsible practices in advancing housing projects. This can capture the link in implementation between the responsible practices and the challenges which they can address all through the housing project life cycle.
vii. It also becomes imperative to review the performances and relevance of the responsible practices in preventing housing project challenges on a periodic basis. By so doing, adjustments can be made towards improvement in order to suit economic vagaries, stringent policies changes, cultural and religious pressures and a continuously rising labour demand.
viii. The use of this CSR policy should be strictly adhered to after the process of critical review and improvement; however, adjustments can be made where some practices are better suited to address peculiar challenges. This sets the housing project on a success path.
ix. There is a need to create an enabling platform by way of sensitization for construction firms to clearly differentiate and understand the application of the various corporate social responsibility categories as it will help stakeholders to efficiently undertake construction activities in housing projects thereby addressing challenges.
x. There is a need to create better awareness on the importance and benefits of humanitarian practices in the process of housing development, instead of solely depending on profitability alone as philanthropy ensures relative satisfaction amongst primary and secondary stakeholders. This can guarantee corporation from project host communities, thereby

preventing the likelihood of challenges to a great extent.

xi. Information as a result of the ranking of these socially responsible practices will inform project stakeholders on the levels of importance in addressing challenges during the course of executing housing projects.

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