

THE PERCEPTION OF THE MUNICIPAL HOUSING MANAGER'S CSR ACTIVITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF ITS STAKEHOLDERS

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Purpose: The growing complexity of the environment in which they operate causes modern enterprises, including various types of organizations, to develop competitive management models aimed at meeting the expectations of various groups of stakeholders involved in their activities in the long-term perspective. This article focuses on the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the activities of the municipal housing manager in the context of its stakeholders. The study examines how stakeholders (employees, resource residents, entrepreneurs) perceive the city's housing manager's CSR activities.

Design/methodology/approach: In this study, in addition to the analysis of the literature on the subject, the results of the survey conducted in the first and second quarter of 2022 among 363 stakeholders of the municipal housing manager were used. In the study, the impartiality test χ^2 and the coefficient of T Czaprow convergence were used, with the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$.

Findings: The results suggest that each of the three selected groups of stakeholders perceive the necessity of CSR activities differently. The group that is the most interested in such activities are employees, the inhabitants of resources expect only actions aiming to improve the quality of their lives, and therefore actions within the aspect of local responsibility. Entrepreneurs in turn, are interested in activities in the social, external and environmental aspects. In addition, the results of these studies may contribute to the state of knowledge in the scientific literature by pointing to the importance of CSR activities by entities not focused on maximizing profits.

Originality/value: It can be expected that the developed models will help decision makers of city housing managers to gain a perception of the stakeholder's awareness of and attitudes towards the CSR concept.

Keywords: social responsibility, stakeholders, municipal housing manager.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

The outlining of social responsibility, both in the theory and practice of management, has raised numerous debates and controversies from the very beginning. This was due to the fact that the CSR concept changed the current model of business thinking (Olejniczak-Szuster, 2021), and becoming an important element of business practices (Porter, Kramer, 2006). Tomaselli et al. (2018) believe that despite the differences in the approach to CSR, there is a respectable consensus as to the responsibility for their impact on society, the environment and various stakeholders. According to I. Kuraszko, it can be stated that "CSR is a process of learning about and incorporating changing social expectations into a management strategy, as well as monitoring the impact of such a strategy on market competitiveness (...) it is a search for a dynamic balance between all interested parties in accordance to law and ethical norms. (Kuraszko, 2010). In practice, this means that enterprises can (positively or negatively) influence the surrounding reality by taking responsibility for their actions or by ignoring social expectations towards them (Mele, 2009; Skiba, 2021). At the core of CSR lies the issue of business ethics, taking into account the core values and corporate culture aimed at promoting responsible behavior. Although the concept of CSR may differ depending on the context, it is widely expected that organizations will focus their activities on poverty reduction, environmental protection, improved public health and better education, as well as accountability to various stakeholders (Ullah et al., 2014; Macassa et al., 2017; Bylok, 2005).

As CSR gains more and more attention from the company's stakeholders, the question arises as to what extent companies can and should be interested in the public interest and contribute to solving global and local problems (Nadanyiova, 2021). This is particularly important in the context of the activities of the municipal housing management, which in its activities does not aim to maximize the value in the form of profit, but to meet the housing needs of the society (inhabitants of the city of Częstochowa).

This study aims to fill the research gap by examining the activities of the municipal manager in the aspect of social responsibility from the point of view of three groups of stakeholders, i.e. employees, people living in local housing and entrepreneurs. Hence, the authors proposed a model for identifying the relationship between the perception of CSR and activities in its field.

This model can help decision makers of city housing managers gain an insight into stakeholder awareness and attitudes towards the CSR concept.

2. Literature review and conceptual framework

In the current market reality, balancing economic goals with social and environmental goals is an important element of the activities of a modern organization (Banerjee, Wathieu, 2017).

Until recently, issues related to CSR did not evoke admiration among business owners, managers and their employees or other market participants, because they were associated with some vague, legally underdeveloped and new way to show the transparency of the organization's activities (Borowska-Żywno, 2018). Currently, social responsibility is an element of enterprises' orientation towards harmonious development, taking into account the expectations of various stakeholder groups, including one of the most important aspects of modern management (Dziadkiewicz, 2014; Sacconi, 2009). For this reason, organizations undertake, on the one hand efforts to minimize and/or eliminate the harmful effects of their activity on the market, and on the other hand, efforts to maximize the long-term (positive) impact on society and the environment (Mohr, Webb, Harris, 2001; Correia, 2019). In this context, CSR refers to social or environmental activities focusing on organizational results that go beyond financial results (Ellemers, Chopova, 2022). McAdam, Leonard (2003) state that corporate social responsibility is manifold, covering such areas as employee welfare, local community, care for the environment and sustainable development of the company. Kowalczyk and Kucharska (2020) state that CSR refers to the obligations that organizations have towards a wide range of stakeholders, i.e. those who are influenced by and those that have influence on corporate policies and practices. In turn, Post et al. (2002) explain that stakeholders are essential to the proper functioning of an organization. This is because they provide the resources of the organization (e.g. customers, investors, employees), create an industry structure (e.g. partners in the supply chain, strategic alliances) and create the socio-political arena (e.g. communities, governments). Stakeholders can be divided into at least three categories: direct and indirect influence of the external environment and the influence of the internal environment, whose functions are unique in social dialogue and at the same time complement each other (Zukauskas et al., 2018). The existing literature shows that pressure from a wide range of stakeholders convinced managers of many companies or organizations to adopt CSR practices (Delmas and Toffel, 2008). Similar conclusions were drawn in the studies of Sarkis et al. (2010), or Yu, Choi (2016) according to which the pressure of stakeholders positively determines the level of adoption of CSR practices. Taking into account the activities of the municipal housing administrator, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: the stakeholders of the city housing manager expect the implementation of socially responsible activities.

H2: Conscious identification, listening and acting in accordance with the priorities of each individual group of stakeholders translates into increased CSR activity.

According to the stakeholder theory, the essence of business lies primarily in building relationships and creating value for all stakeholders. Organizations are expected to take care of their employees (internal stakeholders) and fulfill their obligations towards local communities and the entire society, including the natural environment (Barić, 2017; Kabus, 2017). Therefore, organizations should first identify their stakeholders, understand their expectations and then manage them appropriately (Harrison et al., 2010; Kabus, 2017). This is because organizations experience various pressures from their stakeholders (Yu, Lo, Li, 2017; Watson et al., 2018; Tang, Tang, 2018). Researchers indicate that ignoring the needs of stakeholders and the lack of CSR activity negatively affects the organization's performance (Story, Neves, 2015). As shown by the research by Bhattacharya, Sen (2004), the perception of CSR initiatives by stakeholders is not uniform. This is because different stakeholders produce different assessments of such initiatives. Recent research has identified two strands of this perception.) In the first, the stakeholders assess CSR initiatives through the prism of the results achieved, and in the second, the assessment is based on the motives of the organization's involvement in CSR initiatives (Bhattacharya et al., 2008). Based on the research to date, the following hypothesis was put forward in the aspect of the municipal housing manager:

H3: Internal and external stakeholders have different perceptions of the implementation of the municipal housing manager's CSR activities.

3. Research methodology and research sample

In order to achieve the main goal of the article, the empirical study was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, according to the typology of Zukauskas et al. (2018), the stakeholders of the city housing manager were selected, and then the relationships at the level of the city housing manager – individual groups of stakeholders were determined (Table 1).

The second stage related to the conducted diagnostic survey, and then testing the hypotheses. This research was exploratory in nature, with random sampling to identify respondents (Palinkas et al., 2015). To decide the size of the sample for this study, reference was made to the study by Kang (2014), which conducted the perception of corporate social responsibility on a 200-person sample. Thus, a structured survey questionnaire was used for the study, which was addressed to 500 stakeholders of the municipal housing manager. It should be noted that some of the respondents did not answer all the questions; as a result, a significant number of rejected questionnaires emerged. Ultimately, 362 correctly completed questionnaires were obtained from the data analysis, representing first-level stakeholders having a direct impact on the activities of the municipal housing manager. And so, 28.9% of internal stakeholders – employees, and 71.1% of external stakeholders participated in the study, of which: 83.3% were people living in apartments belonging to the audited entity (tenants and owners of properties), and 16,7% were entrepreneurs using commercial properties.

To assess the perception of CSR activities by the city housing manager in the context of its stakeholders, a five-point Likert scale was used, which measured the average level of assessment of selected elements in the business and social area. The perception of CSR activities was: measured by dividing them into three aspects which were social internal, social external and environmental, based on Mona et al. (2015). Due to the fact that the municipal housing manager does not seek to maximize the value in the form of profit, but to meet the housing needs of the society (inhabitants of the city of Częstochowa), the economic aspect was omitted in the study.

The obtained data was subjected to statistical analysis, in which a choice was made between two contradictory hypotheses:

H0: for the stakeholders of the city housing manager, the given feature does not matter – there is no relationship.

H1: for the stakeholders of the municipal housing manager a given feature is of great importance – there exists a relationship.

For the estimation of H0 and H1, after Ratajczak (2016), arithmetic averages, the χ^2 impartiality test and the T Czuprow's convergence coefficient were used, retaining a level of significance.

4. Results and discussions

The analysis of the stakeholders (Table 1) showed that the expectations towards the municipal housing manager differ between the selected types of stakeholders.

According to the research of Polonsky (2015), Khuong et al. (2021), employees are considered to be the most influential stakeholder group in the CSR decision making process. It was found that the stakeholders with a low impact, but which were largely interested in the activities of the municipal housing manager, were primarily residents of the resources (tenants, owners of properties). It should be remembered that the municipal property manager belongs to specific entities on the market. Their activities focus on improving the quality of life of residents (Dziadkiewicz, 2020).

Table 1.
Stakeholders of the city housing manager

	Kind	Characteristic	Strength	Predictability	Interest	
First Degree	Internal Stakeholders					
	Employees	A group of people employed in the Company having an impact on the efficient functioning of the Company Large	Large	Large	High	
	External Stakeholders					
	Tenants (Type A)	Low-income people in social or municipal housing belonging to the Companies	Direct influence	Large	Low	High
	Tenants (Type B)	People with stable but moderate incomes who have the right to rent a flat under the TBS		Large	Low	High
Property Owners	Housing communities as well as people with the ownership (usufruct) right to the housing premises	Large		Low	High	
Entrepreneurs	People or entities renting out utility premises for the purpose of running a business	Small		Low	Low	
Second Degree	Local government bodies	Self-government of the city of Częstochowa	Indirect influence	Large	Large	High
	Organizational units of the commune	MOPS, State Employment Office and other institutions with which the Company cooperates as part of its operations		Small	High	Low
	Academic environment	Czestochowa University of Technology		Small	High	High
	Local society	People living in the city of Częstochowa		Medium	Low	High
	Service Providers	Entities providing certain services to the resources of the Company		Small	High	Low
	Social organizations	Entities and institutions implementing social goals		Small	High	Low
	Media	Mass media through which information about the Company is provided		Medium	Low	High

Source: own study.

The obtained results (Table 2) showed that in the case of H1 and H2, the null hypothesis should be rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. In view of the above, it can be concluded that the stakeholders of the municipal housing manager expect him to engage in socially responsible activities (as well as understand their needs and expectations).

Table 2.
Dependencies in the perception of CSR and the implementation of the activities of the municipal housing manager

Stakeholders	Statistic value	Meter value	Value that determines the area of rejection	Adopted hypothesis
engaging in CSR activities	207,71	0,31	37,65	H1
understanding needs and expectations	57,39	0,18		H1

Source: own study.

Taking into account H3, the analyses were carried out in each of the three selected groups (employees, residents of resources, entrepreneurs) in relation to the three CSR goals pursued by the company:

- OBJECTIVE 1 local responsibility.
- OBJECTIVE 2 responsible employer.
- OBJECTIVE 3 environmental responsibility.

The obtained results allowed for the creation of three models (Figures 1-3).

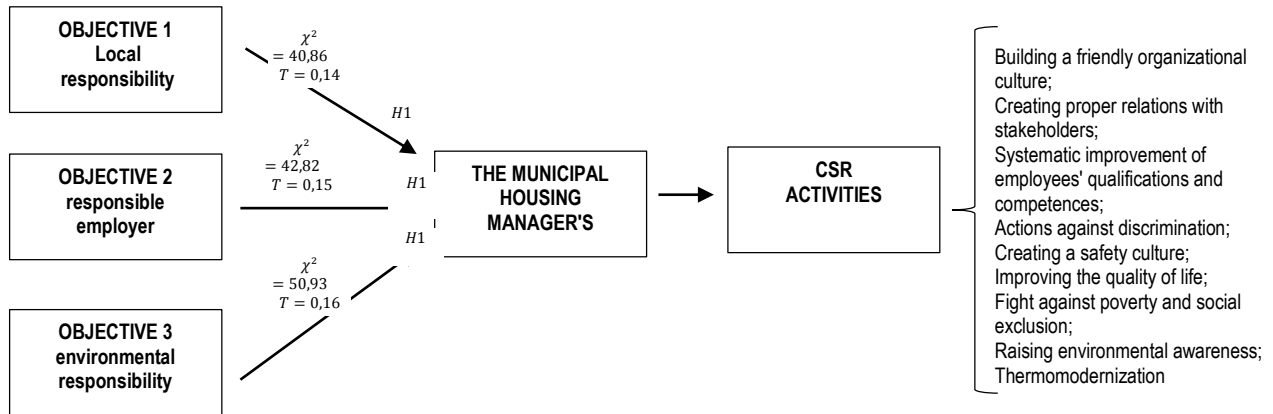


Figure 1. Model of the perception of CSR activities by the internal stakeholders of the city housing manager. Source: own study.

Model 1 results show that employees have a positive perception of socially responsible activities in each of the three goals pursued by the city housing manager. This is confirmed by the values obtained in the case of Objective 1, Objective 2 and Objective 3. Therefore, for each of the three considered objectives, the null hypothesis should be rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis.

The obtained values are slightly different in the case of the perception of CSR activities by the inhabitants of the resources (Figure 2).

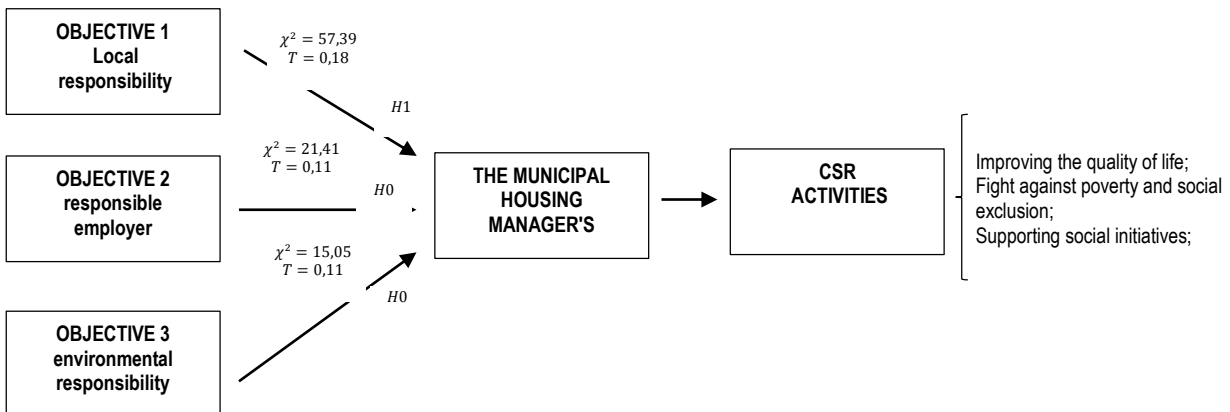


Figure 2. Model of the perception of CSR activities by external stakeholders of the city housing manager – residents of the resource. Source: own study.

As can be seen, the inhabitants of the resources positively perceive only the measures related to Objective 1 – which mainly refer to measures aimed at improving the quality of life in the housing resources. In other cases, the null hypothesis should be adopted, therefore, actions directed at employees (responsible employer) and the environment (responsibility for the environment) do not matter for the residents. Also entrepreneurs (Fig. 3) differently perceive the activities of the city housing manager in terms of CSR.

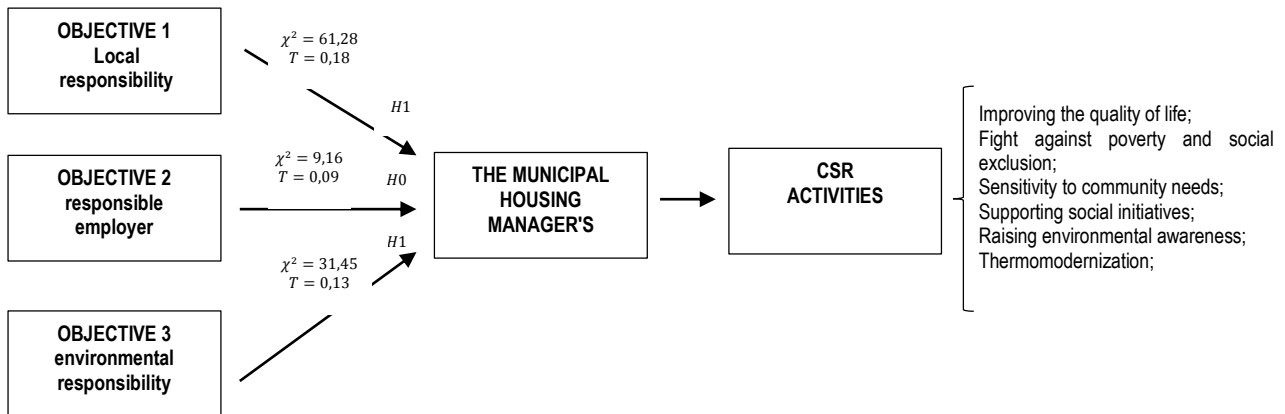


Figure 3. Model of the perception of CSR activities by external stakeholders of the city housing manager – entrepreneurs. Source: own study.

Entrepreneurs positively perceive the activities of the city manager in terms of local (and environmental) responsibility. For this group of stakeholders, actions towards employees are of little importance. Therefore, the null hypothesis should be rejected for Objectives 1 and 3, and adopted for Objectives 2.

Over the last few years, researchers (Song et al., 2013; Abugre and Anlesinya, 2019) emphasize that stakeholders play an important role in the implementation of CSR activities. The results of the available studies show that stakeholder pressure has a significant and direct impact on the adoption of CSR practices. While the relationship between CSR and stakeholders was previously viewed as characterized by constraints and exchange, an additional value-creation trait is now increasingly accepted. Our results show that in the case of municipal housing management, the implementation of CSR activities is perceived in various ways.

Summary

This article refers to the perception of CSR activities by the municipal property manager. The research found that: the key stakeholders of the municipal housing manager are its employees. In addition, internal stakeholders perceive the need for CSR activities carried out by the municipal housing manager to a greater extent than external stakeholders. Tenants of the properties and owners of properties are stakeholders who are very interested in the activities of the Company, but have very little opportunity to influence its activities. In terms of CSR activities, they positively perceive the activities of the municipal housing manager in relation to the implementation of activities that have an impact on the local community. Entrepreneurs are influential stakeholders but do not have much interest in the activities of the Company, nor are they actively involved. In terms of CSR activities, they positively perceive the Company's activities that affect the local community and the natural environment. Concluding this article,

however, two issues should be noted: the results of the research conducted allowed to establish that, firstly, the stakeholders of the municipal housing manager expect actions related to the improvement of the quality of life, which applies to both employees and residents. The great role and possibilities of the manager of council flats in achieving social effects thanks to CSR activities should also be noted. Especially in the field of creating social innovations that increase the quality of life in a common space, the safety of residents and build their environmental awareness, both from the point of view of employees and residents

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