

Role of Businesses in Care of Older Adults: A Sociological Exploration

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Abstract

Census 2011 estimates that India has 104 million older people, constituting 8.6% of the total population. The United Nations has projected that India will be having almost 19.6% of its total population as older people. This rising population of older adults has led to growing concern about their health and care. However, given the resource limit of the state, other players such as businesses, civil society and NGOs have to play a vital role to have a concerted effort for their care. Efforts of the businesses can be traced from the contributions done under the corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy. Companies Act 2013 directed the companies of certain profitability to spend at least 2% of their average net profit of preceding three years on the sectors specified under schedule VII under section 135. Schedule VII contains a list of development sectors for which the companies can spend their CSR budgets and elder care is one among the mentioned areas under it. In this context, the paper attempts to understand how businesses can share the responsibilities of the government for the amelioration of the marginalised sections of the society by specifically studying its role over the older adults. Therefore the objective of the paper is to explore the budgetary allocation of companies for the welfare of older adults under their CSR hence evaluating the role of businesses for the cause of older adults. The current study is exploratory and descriptive in nature and it has used the secondary data from the CSR portal of the ministry of corporate affairs.

Keywords: CSR, Companies Act 2013, Older Adults, NGO, Civil Society

INTRODUCTION

India has 104 million older adults, which constitutes 8.6% of the total population, according to the 2011 census. According to UN estimates, 19.6% of India's population would be 65 years of age or older by 2050. This creates a growing concern for the country as the older adults are more prone to disease and ignorance. Many times, it has been seen that they do not get proper attention and care because, unfortunately, they are considered a liability by family members and relatives. However, there are various institutional supports such as government schemes and old age homes for the older adults which gives care to them. However, there is a limit to the capacities of the state to provide institutional support to the older adults, other players such as businesses, civil society and NGOs have to play a vital role to have a concerted effort for their care. Efforts of the businesses can be traced from the contributions done under the Corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy. There is a provision in the Companies Act 2013 which directs the companies making certain profitability to spend at least 2% of their average net profit of preceding three years on the sectors specified under schedule VII under section 135. List of the development sectors on which the company can spend their CSR money is mentioned under it. The companies under CSR are involved in many sectors which is included in schedule VII of the Companies Act but their expenditure pattern shows that they are only spending in some specific area just to fulfill the norm set by the government under CSR policy (Pandey & Dubey, 2023). One such area is elder care. It shows that the businesses can share the responsibilities of the government for the

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amelioration of the marginalised sections of the society by specifically studying its role over the older adults. Therefore, this becomes imperative to understand how a business through its CSR, can become a positive tool for the welfare of older adults and join hands with the government and civil society.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH GAP

According to Behra and Parida (1989), the primary issues facing the elderly can generally be divided into the following categories: vulnerability to certain illnesses, such as cardiovascular conditions (such as hypertension and strokes). Respiratory conditions (such as chronic bronchitis and asthma). Age-related mental health issues are as important.

Lena et al. (2009) conducted a cross-sectional study on the health and social issues affecting the elderly in the Udupi Taluk of Karnataka and came to the conclusion that a significant portion of the elderly were unemployed, partially or entirely dependent on others, and experiencing health issues with a sense of neglect from their family members. In order to develop a strategy that will satisfy the needs of the elderly who are disabled, there is an increasing need for interventions to ensure the health of this vulnerable group. To fully understand the scope of the issues facing the aged, further study is required, particularly qualitative research.

Old age homes could be used more as supplements than readily available alternative care solutions, according to Jamuna (2008), who researched the challenges of elder care and elder abuse in the setting of India. By appropriately adjusting them to Indian settings, they came to the conclusion that India needed to build home or family care models that could be complemented by a range of respite programmes.

In *Globalization and Ageing in India*, Joshi (2011) contextualises this issue within the context of globalisation and rigorously evaluates the state's strategic approach to this enormous challenge, with special attention to economic security and health care. In his conclusion, he makes an argument against the traditional welfare approach and in favour of an integrated strategy built on a clear social development viewpoint within the context of social quality valuation.

Pandey and Dubey (2023) found in the study Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for quality education and CSR in India, it is found how sustainable development goal has become one of the important matters of debate in recent discourse. This article focuses on how businesses adopt CSR policy in order to fulfill the goal 4 of SDG which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunity for all. The findings of the study present data related to the initiatives taken by different companies who fall under the CSR policy. The study also has the suggestion that business should include NGOs and civil societies for the implementation of the education programmes under SDG goal. The main limitation of this study is that there is only discussion about the school education for the children whereas inclusive development of all, means development should be of each and every sections of the society which also includes older people of the society they should also get education about different things like awareness about the schemes provided to them by the government, education related to sanitation and hygiene, knowledge on the technological development in the country so that the older adults can also upgrade themselves accordingly.

After undergoing extensive literature reviews, it has been found that a negligible amount of research work has been done, which identifies how corporations can play a vital role in the development of marginalised and vulnerable sections of society in general and especially older adults.

Theoretical Framework

This research can be understood through the Weberian theory of substantive rationality, which explains that an action is based on some values. Something can be considered substantively rational if the consequences of the actions are considered desirable by the social actor and the actions are selected, measured and judged by these values. Businesses fulfil their social responsibility by making investments in various development sectors through CSR.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study is to explore the budgetary allocation of companies for the welfare of older adults under their CSR hence evaluating the role of businesses for

the cause of older adults. The current study is exploratory and descriptive in nature and it has used only secondary data from the CSR portal of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. All the companies which have done their CSR have been taken and their CSR contributions have been studied, and comparisons have been done taking the last five financial years from 2017–18 to 2021–22.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

It is clear from Table 1, that during all the financial years from 2017 to 2022, companies have undertaken CSR initiatives for senior citizen welfare. However, the amount spent on their welfare is very miniscule if we compare it

with the total amount spent on CSR. In the financial years 2017–18 and 2018–19, only 0.23% of the funds have been allocated for the projects of senior citizen welfare. Again, in the financial year 2019–20 the amount spent has decreased to 0.20% of the total CSR amount spent. In the financial year 2020–21 too, the budgetary allocation for senior citizens remained nearly the same (0.21%). However, in the financial year 2021–22 the amount spent on welfare projects for senior citizens rose meagerly to 0.29%.

Also, the average amount spent (during the studied five years) by companies on senior citizens was only 0.23% of the total CSR spent during these five years combined.

Table 1: Comparative Report of CSR Expenditure on Senior Citizens Welfare

<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Total Amount Spent on CSR (Inr Cr.)</i>	<i>Amount Spent on Senior Citizen Welfare (Inr Cr.)</i>	<i>Amount Spent on Senior Citizen Welfare of Total (In %)</i>
2017–18	17098.57	40.1	0.23%
2018–19	20217.65	46.52	0.23%
2019–20	24965.82	52.33	0.20%
2020–21	26210.95	56.47	0.21%
2021–22	25932.79	76.23	0.29%
Total	114,425.96	271.65	0.23%

Source: CSR, Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

Health and Well-Being of Older Adults and Potentials under CSR

CSR has huge potential as it covers diverse sectors such as health, education, environment, sanitation, poverty and many other developmental sectors. CSR can come to the rescue of its citizens during unforeseen situations like pandemic and during pandemic many companies came forward to contribute in terms of providing food, medical kits, masks, sanitisers and hospitals, etc. (Pandey & Dubey 2023). So, the companies can assess the developmental needs and prioritise the development sectors, and it is also necessary to be cautious about overinvestment in any particular sector and underinvestment in any of the crucial sectors. The huge amount of money spent on various CSR projects can be utilised in the best way by following a need assessment-based framework. Healthcare is the most prioritised sector for the top companies in terms of CSR expenditure (Pandey & Dubey 2023). SGD 3

is about good health and well-being of the citizens of India, in such a way the older adults can be taken care of by achieving the targets under goals 3 and in this way SDGs have become the guiding principles for the CSR and many companies have already integrated SDGs with their CSR policies. SDGs can be used by the companies as a framework to enhance their CSR practices (Fallah Shayan et al., 2022). CSR and SDG both are interrelated. CSR helps achieve SDGs and SDGs help to shape CSR (Satapathy & Paltasingh, 2022).

Analysis

As the world's population is ageing at an unprecedented rate, the care of older people has emerged as a pressing social issue. Traditionally, governments and public healthcare systems were primarily responsible for this. However, as the difficulties brought on by ageing populations increase, corporations are becoming more

aware of their responsibilities to support older persons' needs through CSR programmes. CSR includes a variety of initiatives that companies voluntarily carry out to better society while also boosting their own reputation and sustainability. Through financial assistance, employee participation, and innovation, businesses are ideally positioned to significantly contribute to the well-being of aging populations. Businesses have to play a positive role and take cognizance of the issue of the elders, and it may prioritise the care of older adults for the well-being of the older adults.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the population of older adults is growing which creates a concern for the health and well-being of them. There are various constitutional safeguards and policies which address the issue of care of older adults; however, businesses can also play a vital role by providing old age homes, healthcare, and other support for older adults. After studying the areas under which companies are making expenditure under CSR policy it was found that environmental sustainability is one of the important area where the companies are spending some amount of their profit, environmental sustainability means making the environment such that each and every sections of the society can live a better life. As older people are the vulnerable sections of the society they should also be kept in mind while expenditures are made for environmental sustainability, there should be construction of elder-friendly zones in the parks where the older people can do exercise and meditation. Therefore, the potential of the companies can be utilised in terms of CSR for the betterment of older adults.

Recommendations

It is important to carefully negotiate the ethical issues and difficulties that CSR projects in eldercare present. Further study and cooperation between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors are required as businesses continue to acknowledge the role, they can play in meeting the needs of older adults in order to make sure that these initiatives result in favourable and long-lasting outcomes for older people and society at large. Companies are also recommended to do surveys on the older people of the

country at different intervals of time so that the companies can get an idea of important requirements of the older people, who are the vulnerable sections of society, and the companies should try to help them at their best in fulfilling the needs of older people.

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