

The value of social responsibility programs in the activity of public relations

A study about the concept and the importance

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Abstract :

This study deals with the issue of the importance of social responsibility programs in public relations activity, by providing a specific and clear definition of the concept of social responsibility in public relations, and highlighting the various gains that the institution can achieve if it adopts the principles of the philosophy of social responsibility and takes them into account in all its dealings and activities.

The study also aims to provide practical models for the types of programs that the institution can plan to be in line with all sectors and segments that deal with it.

key words: importance, organization, planning, public relations, social responsibility.

Introduction:

The social responsibility of organizations is one of the most important new concepts imposed by the recent developments that the world has witnessed.

It came as a result of the gradual transition from paying attention to the interests of the institution to paying attention to the external environment and its various segments that are directly or indirectly related to the institution and its

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activities, based on the fact that the institution is an entity connected to society and the environment in which it operates. The first place is to serve the community and elevate its members.

The orientation of social responsibility is reflected in all the activities of the institution and its dealings, as it takes the nature of responsibility and moral commitment with all the parties dealing with it.

Public relations are one of the most prominent activities related to this concept, as the concept of social responsibility intersects with the ethics and principles that govern and frame the activity of public relations, in addition to the fact that public relations are the plan and implementer of the social responsibility programs of the institution, in order to achieve the goals of society and not prejudice the objectives of the institution on Both,

And from this research paper came to shed light on the importance of social responsibility programs in public relations activities, by asking the central question:

How is the importance of social responsibility programs manifested in the public relations activity of the institution?

The following questions arise from this question:

- What is the concept of social responsibility in public relations?
- What are the types of social responsibility programs in public relations?
- What are the gains achieved by the implementation of social responsibility programs in relation to the activity of public relations?
- Is the application of social responsibility programs in public relations an imperative or an option?

We can summarize the importance of the study as follows:

-This study enables us to identify the importance of the role that social responsibility programs play in public relations activities at the level of any institution, regardless of its type and nature of activity.

-It sheds light on the issue of social responsibility, as it is a new research direction that still lacks many researches and studies in order to cover and understand it from all angles.

-It helps create a degree of awareness among institutions of the importance of adopting the principles of social responsibility as a philosophy whose manifestations appear in all of the institution's activities and dealings.

This study seeks to:

- Getting to know the different types of social responsibility programs planned and implemented by public relations.
- Highlighting the advantages and objectives that the institution can achieve by adopting the philosophy of social responsibility in public relations.

THE FIRST TOPIC: Theoretical rooting of the concept of social responsibility.

This topic is concerned with providing a reading of the definitions presented by researchers for the concept of social responsibility, so that we will then shed light on the different dimensions of social responsibility at any organization.

FIRST REQUIREMENT: The concept of social responsibility.

In this part of the research, we present the various definitions that social responsibility has known, which paves us the way then to discuss the concept of social responsibility in public relations.

Firstly: Definition of social responsibility.

The concept of social responsibility was neither known nor circulated until the beginning of the twentieth century, and this term was used for the first time in 1923 by the scientist and researcher “Sheldon”; Who saw that the responsibility of any organization is a social responsibility in the first place.

Sheldon went; To the survival and continuity of the organization depends on the fulfillment of the duties entrusted to it towards society.

With the advent of 1947, and in the aftermath of the Second World War, the theory of social responsibility developed remarkably, and then this theory began to develop steadily to the world and researcher Carrol; He developed his own classification which was later known in the theoretical literature as Carroll's hierarchy of social responsibility.

The concept of social responsibility is considered one of the flexible concepts that was not clearly defined, as the definitions that this concept knew were

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numerous in parallel with its historical development and the expansion of the fields it covered, in addition to the various touches added by the jurisprudence of researchers, each according to his specialization.

The origins of corporate social responsibility "CSR" can be traced back to the earlier years of the twentieth century. Abrams (1951) voiced his concerns about managerial responsibilities towards employees, customers, and the public at large. At the same time, these issues were also picked up by several academic contributors. In the 1950s, some of the largest US corporations were no longer owned by individual persons or their families. Equity and debt instruments began to be traded across capital markets. Firms were being owned by many shareholders. The key issue that followed raised concerns on how should these companies ought to be managed. Communicators debated whether corporations should pursue the interests of shareholders, or the interests of their wider communities. It may appear that much of the earliest literature that revolved on social responsibility has legitimized the interests of societal groups, including shareholders.¹

The concept of social responsibility is called "RSE" as an abbreviation of the French term "La Responsabilité social des entreprises", which includes both environmental and social concerns in the activities of economic enterprises, while the term in English is the abbreviation "CSR" "Corporate Social Responsibility" and there are those who use the term Social Responsibility, which is broader in scope than the term Social Responsibility.²

It has also been defined by Gray, Owen and Maunders as "The process of communicating the social, ethical and environmental effects of organization's economic actions to particular interest groups within society and to society at large. As much it involves extending the accountability of organizations particularly (companies), beyond the traditional role of providing a financial account to the owners of capital, in particular, shareholders. Such an extension is predicted upon the assumption that companies do have wider than simply to make money for their shareholders"³.

¹ Camilleri Mark Anthony, Corporate Sustainability, Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, An Introduction to Theory and Practice with case studies, Springer International publishing, Switzerland, 2017, p4.

² Mehri Shafiq, Communication and its Relationship to Social and Environmental Responsibility in the Economic Institution, Master's Thesis in Media and Communication Sciences, Faculty of Media and Communication Sciences, University of Algiers 3, 2012, p5.

³ Belal Aaur Rahman, Corporate Social Responsibility Reporting in Developing countries, the case of Bangladesh, Ashgate publishing company, USA, 2008, p2.

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It is clear from the presented definitions of social responsibility that this concept expresses a new intellectual perspective according to which a move has been made from a pragmatic view that is concerned with the interests and objectives of the institution only, to a different view that pays attention to the external environment of the institution and its various categories. After institutions have worked for many years in isolation from the external environment, focusing their attention on income and profits, they realized the importance of interaction with the components of this environment. Thus, what is known as the “social role” of institutions appeared, which reflects everything that the institution does in order to achieve the benefits of the relevant parties and not the benefits of the institution in the first place.

Hence, we can define social responsibility as “an intellectual orientation that the institution adopts in a voluntary and non-compulsory manner, according to which it bears the consequences of its decisions and the results of its activities on the environment and society alike, by observing the moral values, customs and traditions that govern this society, as well as respecting the laws in force in its scope”.

Commitment to the principles of social responsibility can be manifested at higher levels when the institution seeks to voluntarily serve the community and provide an added value to its members.

Secondly: Definition of social responsibility in public relations.

Public relations as an administrative and communicative function in the institution performs several functions, as it bears the tasks related to research and planning for the objectives of the institution, whether in the short or long term, so that the planned programs are then implemented and evaluated in order to identify the advantages and shortcomings and try to remedy them in the future.

This planning is not done randomly, but rather comes in parallel with the basic principles that public relations call for, such as transparency, honesty and integrity, which intersect widely with the principles of social responsibility, so we find that the relationship between the two concepts is a complementary one.

In this context, "Mohammed Muhammad Al-Badi" believes that social responsibility is the social framework for public relations, and without this framework, public relations become words without content.

That is, if social responsibility is an intellectual trend, it is public relations that transforms this intellectual trend into a work approach and organized behavior¹.

And from it we can define the social responsibility of public relations as the public relations activities responsible for implementing programs that are in the interest of the public, society and the external environment of the institution in general, with the aim of gaining the satisfaction of the masses and forming friendly relations with them, as these activities are characterized by being optional and not mandatory.

SECOND REQUIREMENT: Dimensions of social responsibility.

In this element, we highlight the dimensions of social responsibility by identifying the angles touched by it at any organization.

The dimensions of social responsibility mean the different levels that social responsibility activities touch in any institution, and perhaps one of the best classifications presented by researcher Carol Caroll, who divided it into four levels: economic, legal, moral, and social. We can elaborate on these levels as follows:

-The economic dimension: It is the sum of the principles that the institution possesses and that govern its activity in the economic aspect, such as the efforts made in the process of pricing its products and services so that they are accessible to consumers. And the balanced exploitation of natural resources, putting the consumer's interest in the first place, and the consequent absence of fraud or harm, by ensuring the quality of products and their freedom from any harmful substances.

-The legal dimension: through which the laws and legislations in force in the environment to which the institution belongs are taken into account by working in a sound environment that takes into account the general law, as well as the special laws framing the activity of the institution, such as the laws that specify the ways of dealing with workers and clarify their rights and duties, or those that clarify the

¹ Al-Badi Muhammad, Public Relations and Social Responsibility, 1st Edition, The Anglo-Egyptian Library, Cairo, 1980, p98.

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ways The competition is to take place in fair and impartial frameworks and free from abuse.

-Ethical dimension: the ethical dimension of social responsibility means the institution's consideration of the total values and ethics recognized in society and its endeavor to promote, through its programs, virtuous values that it believes can serve the community and add to it a moral value that elevates it.

-The human dimension: through which the institution expresses that it is an active element in the society to which it belongs and that it is an integral part of it. It is concerned with its social problems and seeks to find solutions to this. This dimension has grown in particular during the Corona pandemic, as institutions sought to support individuals in various ways, such as providing financial support to families affected by the pandemic or distributing sterilizers and masks for free to hospitals. There are those who call this dimension the "good dimension" or "discretionary responsibility" on the grounds that the activities that can flow into its scope are innumerable, but its application is due to the institution's discretion in choosing what is most appropriate and appropriate for its objectives and budget.

The figure below shows the sequence of these dimensions in what is known as the "Carroll pyramid":

Figure (1): Carroll's Social Responsibility Pyramid



The source: Delphine Gendre-Aegerter, the perception of the SME manager of his social responsibility: A cognitive mapping approach, thesis presented for obtaining the Doctorate, University of Fribourg, Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, 2008, P157.

And Carroll goes; That success in work requires finding a close relationship between the requirements of industrial and commercial establishments, on the one hand, and the requirements and needs of work, on the other hand; Each of the society and the various work institutions expect from the other a certain role, and each of them must perform its role; In order to achieve the interests of both parties.

However, corporate social responsibility, according to Carroll; It is the sum of the four types that were referred to above. Social responsibility is: economic responsibility, moral responsibility, legal responsibility, and charitable responsibility.

THE SECOND TOPIC: Social responsibility programs in public relations.

This topic is reserved for the explanation of the different types of social responsibility programs carried out by public relations in organizations, in addition to mentioning the importance of these activities in the field of public relations.

FIRST REQUIREMENT: Types of social responsibility programs in public relations.

This requirement includes the multiple divisions of social responsibility programs.

There are hundreds of fields that can be a field for social responsibility activity, and as a result of this diversity, there are many types of programs that the institution can carry out in each field.

Therefore, we find several classifications of the types of social responsibility programs in public relations, some of which are based on “target mass groups” and others are based on the “activity environment” in terms of being internal or external.

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There are those who add other classifications based on "sectors and segments". However, after examining in depth the references, we found that the first classification based on mass groups and the third classification based on sectors and segments are two classifications that are very close in terms of content.

Therefore, we decided in the end to rely on only two classifications of the types of social responsibility programs, which are as follows:

Firstly: According to the activity environment.

It means whether the environment to which the program is directed is internal or external, and this type operates on two main parts:

1-Social responsibility towards the internal public:

the internal public means the total employees of the institution or establishment, whether they are permanent or temporary, and the internal public in some institutions and establishments may include the following categories: shareholders, intermediaries, marketers and permanent agents, permanent and variable suppliers.¹

It shows the social role of the institution towards its internal audience through the development of practical programs aimed at winning his affection and achieving job satisfaction for him. This is what public relations seeks to achieve through the development of a set of activities, such as development and training programs, according to which workers are sent to undertake training courses, the costs of which are borne by the institution. This is in order to develop their skills, increase their chances of promotion in the future, and give them wages and bonuses from time to time as recognition of their efforts and push them to provide more.

Public relations also adopt the principle of consultation and dialogue, and periodic meetings are held from time to time through which employees are involved in the decision-making process and take their ideas and suggestions and discuss them seriously, which makes the worker feel the importance of his role in the institution. In this context, the Corporation also works to strengthen "occupational health and safety" by creating healthy and safe working conditions such as insuring workers against work accidents and respecting labor legislation.

2-Social responsibility towards the external audience:

The external audience includes all individuals and groups with direct or indirect relationship to the institution and which are located outside its geographical space,

¹ Jaradat Nasser, Abu Hamam Azzam, Moral and Social Responsibility for Organizations, 1st Edition, Ithra for Publishing and Distribution, 2019, p162.

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such as customers, dealers, suppliers, government, media, the environment, and society in general.

Institutions have realized the importance of forming positive relationships with these public groups. This is done through the social responsibility activities established by the public relations agency, which are as follows¹:

- Contribute to the support of the infrastructure of the community.
- Creating new and continuous job opportunities.
- Initiative to contribute to disaster relief work.
- Adherence to the texts and regulations during waste disposal.
- Supporting educational, cultural, social, sports, women's and other

institutions.

- Respecting the customs, traditions and public morals prevailing in society.

Investing in the external public through social responsibility programs is one of the best investments that the institution can make, it helps enhancing its positive image in the minds of those who deal with it, and suggests that the interest of society is a priority for the institution.

The United Nations went there with a set of principles on which social responsibility is based, and they are as follows:

- 1 -Commitment to the implementation of the issuance of various quality certificates, such as ISO 14000.
- 2 -Commitment to implementing codes of conduct.
- 3 -Commitment to take decisions that take into account social responsibility.
- 4 -Designing the activities of the organizations in line with the economic situation and the cultural situation of the society.
- 5 -Carrying out voluntary charitable initiatives.
- 6 -Implementing strategies that bring profit to the community and the organization together.

Secondly: According to the target audience.

There are many public groups that the institution deals with, and this is controlled by the size of the institution and the type of its activity.

Small and medium enterprises, for example, do not have a wide network of relations of the same size as large enterprises, which sometimes have links on an international scale in the framework of cooperation or exchange of common interests.

In general, we can limit the mass segments to which social responsibility programs are directed as follows:

¹ Mehri Shafiq, Op.cit, p 83.

Table (1) : Institution’s social responsibility according to its segments

Element or slide	Management's responsibility towards it
Owners or shareholders	Achieving the greatest profit - Maximizing the value of the stock and the facility as a whole - Creating a respectable image of the facility in its environment - Protecting the assets of the facility - Increasing sales volume.
Workers	Remunerative wages and salaries - opportunities for advancement and promotion - continuous training - job fairness - suitable working conditions - health care - paid vacations - housing and transportation insurance.
Customers	Good quality products- Reasonable prices -Ease of obtaining -honest advertising -Products safe to use- Instructions for product use and disposal, or leftovers after use.
Competitors	Fair and honest competition - honest information - not to attract workers by unfair means.
Suppliers (distributors)	Continuity - fair prices - development of the use of processed materials - payment of financial obligations and integrity in dealing.
Society	Employing people with special needs - Providing new job opportunities - Supporting community activities (for children, youth and the elderly) - Taking care of the talented - Supporting the arts - Contributing in emergencies and disasters - Respecting the prevailing customs and traditions.

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<p>The environment</p>	<p>Reducing air, water and soil pollution - optimal use of resources, especially non-renewable ones - developing and maintaining resources - afforestation and increasing green spaces.</p>
<p>The government</p>	<p>Commitment to legislation, laws and government directives - Paying fees and not evading them - Contribute to research and development - Contribute to solving economic and social problem.</p>

Source: Ajeilat Faris Nabil, Social Responsibility in Public Relations in Jordanian Telecom Companies, Master's Thesis in Media and Communication Sciences, College of Mass Communication, Middle East University, 2012, p28.

SECOND REQUIREMENT: The inevitability of social responsibility programs in the field of public relations

It is intended in this part to explain the significance of social responsibility programs in public relations activities.

The application of social responsibility programs is part of the public relations strategy, which is also part of the general strategy of the institution as a whole, as adopting such activities brings many benefits to the institution, At the forefront of which is "Strengthening the mental image of the institution".

They have friendly tendencies and positive feelings towards it, which makes them pay attention to all the information and news issued by the institution, so they follow its activities and accept the acquisition of its products or services, which leads to maximizing its profits.

The social role of the institution is not limited to moral profit only, but it can raise the material profits of the institution as well, as it is considered an indirect marketing tool aimed at strengthening the competitive advantages of the institution and enhancing its position in the market.

Social responsibility also contributes to narrowing the gap between the institution and society, making it closer and more integrated with its members, and more able to understand their needs and requirements.

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This is done with the help of periodic research conducted by those in charge of public relations in order to investigate the areas of need of members of society, so that the institution can write its programs in the light of them.

In this context, the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) annually sponsors and supports social, educational, cultural and sports activities¹.

In the field of education, the company provides the community with qualified national cadres through the scholarship system, the (ADNOC) Institute for Training, the Petroleum Institute, and the Distinguished Oasis Program. ADNOC also provides financial support to several groups in society, including: the center for the disabled, educational institutions and sports clubs.

Through such activities, the level of awareness of individuals increases and the incidence of pests and social problems decreases, which contributes to the upgrading of society and the improvement of the quality of life.

Social responsibility programs directed to the internal audience are equally important, as the privileges granted to employees contribute to breaking the barriers between them and the management and increasing job satisfaction among them. Resulting in raising the pace of production.

These programs also help to break out of the Taylorist intellectual trend and to adopt a more open pattern based on encouraging a culture of dialogue within the organization and providing employees with a unified behavioral pattern in harmony with the goals of the institution.

Among the companies that pay attention to investing in the human element, SAS Institute, one of the largest software companies in the world, clearly cares about its employees, as its employees at its headquarters in North Carolina in the United States of America receive many benefits such as on-site health care and facilities Sports and kindergarten for their children. This company also has a low turnover rate.

Based on the foregoing, we conclude that adopting the philosophy of social responsibility has become a necessity in the midst of consumer awareness and wide knowledge of what is happening in his surroundings, as it is considered one of the bets that all institutions calling for creativity and excellence should take.

¹ Moghaddam Wahiba, The extent to which business organizations in Algeria respond to social responsibility, PhD thesis in management sciences, Faculty of Economics, Commercial and Management Sciences, Oran University, 2014, p87.

Conclusion:

This research paper sought to shed light on the importance of social responsibility programs in public relations. As a result of the rapid changes in the business environment, the outlook and ways of dealing with the institution's internal and external audiences have changed.

Thus, the focus on the social role of the institution in particular grew, and it sought to strike a balance between the interests of customers or the masses dealing with them in general and the interests of the institution and trying not to violate any of them.

Here, the role of social responsibility programs that are drawn up and implemented by those in charge of public relations emerges as a means of expressing the social performance of the institution.

Through a series of activities and principles that are adopted in dealing with the public, society, and the environment, which reflect the economic, moral, legal, and discretionary responsibility towards these segments.

It has become imperative for today's institutions to adhere to the principles of social responsibility due to the advantages they provide on both the short and long term levels.

The previous proposition leads us to two important conclusions; The first: that social responsibility as a theory and a social and economic orientation is still in the process of formation, and that all the attempts that are made to frame and define it, have no goal in the end except to reach a compromise solution that achieves profit and effectiveness for both business organizations and society.

As for the second result; They are the ones that represent that social responsibility is a necessity and an obligation; A commitment from it towards society to fulfill its duties, and a necessity for this society, which is in dire need of overcoming its problems and crises, the causes of which are these same industrial organizations.

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