

**KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION OF BENEFICIARY COMMUNITIES
ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) PROJECTS: AN
ANALYSIS OF PROJECTS BY KENYA ELECTRICITY GENERATING
COMPANY (KENGEN)**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my original work and has not been presented for any other degree in any other university.

Signed: 

Date: 28th November 2023

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University Supervisor.

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DEDICATION

I humbly dedicate this work to the people who have been instrumental in my academic journey. To my beloved sister and my dad, who have always been my pillars of strength and inspiration, thanks for the love and immense support.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to analyse knowledge and perception by beneficiary communities regarding CSR projects by KENGEN. Specifically, it sought to: i) determine knowledge and awareness levels of beneficiary communities on KENGEN Corporate Social Responsibility projects; ii) examine the form and nature of CSR practice among beneficiary communities of KENGEN Corporate Social Responsibility projects; iii) analyse the experiences and perspectives of beneficiary communities on KENGEN Corporate Social Responsibility projects. Stakeholder and excellence theories guided the study. A descriptive design deemed appropriate was used with the location being West Koguta sub-location in Kisumu County. Data was collected from ten purposively selected key informants and three focus group discussions. Braun's and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis was used. The findings revealed awareness by the beneficiary groups on the corporate social responsibility activities through their local community leaders, interactions with the KENGEN team and through their friends. That, although the CSR projects tried to address the needs of the society, this was not addressed adequately. It was established that the water projects led to increased diversification of crops and livestock in the area, enrolment of girls in schools and improved income. The study concluded that there was awareness on the projects though such projects were yet to adequately fulfil expectations by local communities. Therefore, the recommendations for organisations is to develop communication plans that enhance inclusivity and transparency with the beneficiary communities to enhance direct awareness and contribute to positive relationships. The local community leaders could also be empowered and facilitated by companies implementing CSR projects as they are found to be beneficial and could be their agents in reaching out to communities with adequate information. The study also recommends formulation of a well thought out implementation plan that aligns with available resources to avoid over promising that would result to negative feeling from communities.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KENGEN – Kenya Electricity Generating Company

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Overview

The section introduces the study and covers various aspects such as the study background, problem statement, research objectives, questions, significance, scope, limitations, and operational definitions of key terms.

1.2 Background of the Study

CSR as a concept has captured the attention of a wide range of individuals (Carroll & Brown, 2018). An organization's projects are established within a society, and their success relies on the well-being of the society. Consequently, society expects projects to fulfil certain responsibilities. Thus, CSR has become a significant aspect of corporate policy formulation (Latapí Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir & Davídsdóttir, 2019). According to Xiong & Luo, (2021) CSR matters have become a global topic in both academic and media spaces. To remain competitive in today's dynamic market, firms have been forced to rethink their survival strategies not only relying on maximizing profits but also social responsibility around their project implementation. As projects cannot function in isolation unless within the societal context, it is imperative that they make a positive contribution to the societal development in which they are situated (Ahmed, Mohammad & Kute, 2020).

The energy industry holds up a central part of Kenya's economic system. Energy firms operating in the Kenyan economy are required to document and share details of expenditure on CSR and their contribution towards environmentally sustainable development on a yearly basis (ERC, 2021). Many organisations aim to fulfil the needs of philanthropic organizations, governmental bodies, religious institutions, and tertiary bodies in their drive for successful project

implementation. Project success is critical to the project manager and his entire team. Projects can be deemed successful if they fulfil the business goals within the prescribed timeline and conducted effectively using the budgeted resources and achieves the desired return on investment and overall value (Mrzygłocka-Chojnacka, Stanek & Kuchta, 2021). Authors have noted that positive community perceptions are a key factor in successful projects (Zahidy, Sorooshian & Abd Hamid, 2019; Vrchota, Řehoř, Maříková & Pech, 2020). CSR projects are expected to have a high level of community support through provision of workforce as well as, allow the CSR project to be implemented within the community. This reduces cases of project delays and other challenges which enhances project success.

In East Africa, the Kenya Electricity Generating Company (Kengen) is known to be leading in production of electricity. The company was established in 1954 in accordance with the Kenyan Companies Act with the mission to produce electricity via the establishment, administration, and management of power facilities. The energy sector in Kenya has implemented projects across the country for a very long time. Some of the ongoing projects include Kenya Electricity Generating Company (Kengen) Energy Park, Ngong Wind Farm as well as Olkaria rehabilitation project (ERC, 2021). In addition, Kengen as the company with majority of the energy projects in Kenya, conducts various Corporate Social Responsibility activities across the country as a way of giving back to the society in which the company and projects exist. They have contributed towards education programs, environmental programs like tree planting as well as economic programs in Kenya. The objective of this study was to examine how beneficiary communities perceive Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives in the energy sector, with a focus on Kengen projects.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Despite the numerous studies on CSR, not much is known about the knowledge and perceptions of the beneficiary communities, yet the low level of success of such projects is often attributed to the prevalence of negative perceptions thus firms aim to influence stakeholder perceptions through establishing signals that reflect their core values (Tetrault, Sirsly & Lvina, 2019). The negative perceptions may result from an event that contradicts these signals and engender negative feelings or lack of knowledge about the projects and processes. Wang and Zhu, (2020) proposes a further investigation to understand the psychological process involved in the formation of the negative perception on CSR. Scholars note the scarcity in research evidence on the factors that make up the management of CSR programs from a sustainable perspective (Schidmpeter, 2014).

According to Chaoyuan (2019) organisations must balance the demands of different stakeholders to avoid negative perceptions. The Kenya Electricity Generating Company has over the years made considerable investment towards education sponsorship, enhancement of infrastructure, supply of water, electricity and availing means of transportation in places where it operates (Kengen Website @copyright 2022).

Even though existing literature provides ample evidence on impact of CSR on financial performance, there is limited knowledge regarding ways in which corporate social responsibility activities are beneficial and of value to other stakeholders like employees, communities, and the environment's sustainability, resilience, and biodiversity as observed by Barnett et al., (2020). The main problem lies with the overemphasis on the output rather than outcome, creations of required report and documentation on the expenditure made on such activities as evidence of its investment towards becoming a socially responsible organisation. Nonetheless, outputs do not necessarily

reflect the results for diverse beneficiaries or whether any overall improvement in social or ecological circumstances has been achieved (de Bakker et al., 2020). In reality, companies can generate impressive corporate social responsibility outputs without delivering significant outcomes, thereby concealing their actual impact on society (Wickert and Risi, 2019).

Moreover, outcomes are frequently long-term, non-linear, and challenging to quantify. Thus, the unclear impact that corporate social responsibility activities, as it is currently implemented by several firms, has on specific societal or environment related circumstances necessitates a transition in our perception of CSR beyond a never-ending journey to one which depicts its tangible social outcomes and effects, as perceived by beneficiary communities (Wickert and Risi, 2019, p. 73). Nonetheless, scholars face the difficulty of substituting the prevalent business-case rationale for practicing corporate social responsibilities with a societal and ethically justifiable case for organisations (Maher et al., 2021; Reinecke & Donaghey, 2021). Although earlier research highlighted some of the advantages of "soft" law, including self-regulation and consented agreements within industries, there is a growing realization that these measures have been ineffective in addressing the critical global challenges within the society and the environment that directly impact beneficiary communities (e.g., Maher et al., 2021; Reinecke & Donaghey, 2021).

1.4. Research Objectives

The study sought to investigate the knowledge and perceptions of beneficiary communities towards corporate social responsibility projects by the Kenya Electricity Generating Company.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

- i. To determine the knowledge and awareness levels of beneficiary communities on KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects.
- ii. To examine the form and nature of CSR practice among beneficiary communities of KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects.
- iii. To analyse the experiences and perspectives of beneficiary communities on KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects.

1.4.2 Research Questions

- i. What are the knowledge and awareness levels of beneficiary communities on KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects?
- ii. What is the form and nature of CSR practice among beneficiary communities of KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects?
- iii. What are the experiences and perspectives of beneficiary communities on KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects?

1.5. Rationale of the Study

Corporate social responsibility is an idea that is continuously gaining prevalence as an approach to sustainability of any organisation. According to the International Organization for Standardization (IOS, 2021), corporate social responsibility refers to a firms' role and accountability to its choices and undertakings in the community and its environs, making the firm to conduct its business ethically with high level of transparency for sustained economic development. This calls for consideration of the communities' needs and beliefs as well as the general welfare of the environment and the community while complying to existing legal and global standards that ought to guide the organizational processes. According to PwC's 2021 Global Consumer Insights Pulse Survey, results showed fifty three percent of individuals go for organizations they perceive to have established ethical standard, those that demonstrate total dedication to righteousness in their undertaking. Similarly, in a consumer survey conducted in America, seventy-seven- percent shared similar views about righteousness as seventy-four percent among consumer in the United Kingdom considered a company's brand value in their purchase decisions (PWC, 2021). Understanding of community perception on company activities is therefore a topical area in current studies.

In the recent times, individuals and organizations have been experiencing several issues which have resulted to a shift of focus from looking at the advantages of corporate social responsibility to the organisation, to looking at societal gains realized from corporate social responsibility activities. Dmytriyev et al., (2021) noted the expansion of CSR studies away from the focus on maximizing the value of shares owned to a focus on broader groups and the entire community. Dmytriyev et al. (2021) highlight the significance of comprehending the relationships between

organizational performance and social performance in management literature, based on stakeholder theory. However, they argue that a more comprehensive understanding of CSR necessitates considering the perspectives of other stakeholders. Moreover, there is increasing recognition that corporate social responsibility activities haven't successfully addressed urgent global societal and environmental issues such as climate change that continue to threaten human existence (Maher et al., 2021; Reinecke & Donaghey, 2021). This indeed points to a need in further studies focusing on stakeholders and how CSR is addressing the current stakeholder needs as in the present investigation that aims at understanding views and perception regarding KENGEN CSR projects by beneficiary communities.

Additionally, governments have re-entered the CSR landscape due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been demonstrated in studies such as Crane and Matten (2021), whereby the COVID-19 pandemic had shifted the focus back to governments as the primary players in addressing major global issues, contradicting the portrayal of governments as increasingly ineffectual in the field of CSR. Although COVID-19 has impacted almost every aspect of life, it has also presented new obstacles in researching organizational roles in society and corporate CSR efforts.

Moreover, the pandemic has highlighted the interconnectedness of various crises, some of which have been exacerbated by the effects of COVID-19. Such crises as climatic changes, displacement, economic issues, and that of critical consciousness have been accentuated by the pandemic's impact (Wickert et al., 2021). Several scholars have emerged to address the interconnectedness of numerous crises. According to Bansal et al. (2021), management studies should employ a systems approach which recognizes the recurrent, robust, and wide-spread characteristics of societal,

environmental, and economic structures. These perspectives, aligned with current global challenges, has significantly broadened the range of concerns aggregated as part of corporate social responsibility and has directed greater focus towards significant issues, like the potential impact of individual business choices in addressing major issues in the society such as world disparity and its intersection with climate change (Gümüşay et al., 2021). This points to a need for researchers to investigate further the context of CSR and stakeholders in order to understand their perceptions in line with current trends of rise in CSR activities.

China has acquired both economic and political power at a global level, including in Kenya. This development highlights the need for increased research into how firms operating within these environments address issues of societal and environmental responsibility, especially as state governments play an even more prominent and autocratic role, often neglecting the opinions and perceptions of local communities (Zhang et al., 2020; Li & Lu, 2020). The question remains on the implementation of these CSR projects, if at all they take into account the perceptions of the beneficiary communities amidst Government influence. Gaps have therefore been identified in application of CSR and incorporation of needs, views and aspirations of the beneficiary communities with Galvão et al. (2019) arguing that communities should show positive attitudes to organizations offering CSR programs, for instance that students must show a positive attitude to companies that promote quality of education. This study attempts to bring to light the perceptions of beneficiary communities on KENGEN CSR projects as an attempt to bridge the gap in knowledge by generating increased comprehension of beneficiary communities as key stakeholders in CSR projects.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The current investigation could help in significantly establishing the role played by perception of beneficiary communities on CSR activities thus might help to create an understanding on the role that stakeholder perceptions play in CSR project. Scholars could also use the current study as a basis to execute further research.

Additionally, the study could provide some understanding on how to implement CSR projects that resonate with the beneficiary community needs and aspirations by creating an understanding of their perceptions. This could help to steer the course of organisations as they pursue strategies for profitability and enhanced success of its CSR projects. The outcome of the study could likely offer more effective approaches for formalization, implementation, and maintenance of corporate social responsibility programs that align with community perceptions.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The current research aimed at assessing knowledge and perception of beneficiary communities towards CSR projects with specific reference to KENGEN. This study was therefore carried out in West Koguta Sub-County, Kisumu County focusing on the household beneficiaries of KENGEN CSR water projects in the host areas (KENGEN Website, © 2022 KENGEN). Water is fundamental to health, survival and livelihood, hence attracts international concern (Hutton, 2017). Issues of climate variability and increasing population growth have resulted in water scarcity in many countries (Mulwa et al., 2021) thus threatening nearly 80% of the world's population (Vallino et al., 2020) and increasing poverty level (Mulwa et al., 2021). With Kenya's population increase since 1948 to date, and growth projections by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics to about 53 million by end of 2022, water is definitely a major concern particularly in rural areas that

rely on the natural resources for survival (KNBS, 2019). It's in this regard that a study by Nyanchama recommended further studies on CSR water projects by KENGEN (Nyanchama, 2016). The critical nature of water in health and sanitation during this period of covid necessitated the choice of this project among the four pillars of KENGEN CSR: education, environment, sanitation and water.

While the data might not be fully generalizable due to the focus on a single organisation and one project in the energy sector, the study could contribute to expanding the research on this important industry, which is currently under examined despite its economic significance. The results could guide future research within the energy sector along the lines of Corporate Social Responsibility. Researchers in communication and corporate social responsibility could also use this study's findings to inform and shape their future research.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Corporate Social Responsibility	This entails a set of policy guidelines and practices adopted by companies to achieve a positive impact on society alongside their primary goal of profit-maximization.
Philanthropic activities	These entail activities directed towards promoting the welfare of a society. They may encompass providing funds for education related activities, healthcare support programs, donations and community support for environmental programs.
Economic activities	These are activities that seek to improve the wealth of a community. In this study it relates to an activity which entails striking a balance between the demands of business, the need to protect the environment, and the desire to engage in philanthropy.
Environment activities	This refers to any task that is directed towards natural environment. In this study it relates to CSR activities of KENGEN that seeks to improve the environment around the country through planting trees, cleaning the environment by collecting garbage among others.
Project Success	This is the extent to which the project ultimate objectives are attained, in this case it's with relation to energy projects are.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Overview

This section reviews literature pertinent to the study and viewpoints expressed by different scholars, authors, and writers regarding perception and corporate social responsibility. It also looks at theoretical issues related to the study.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

There have been increased attempts to analyze and understand the intricate and ever-evolving concept of corporate social responsibility alongside the views of the beneficiary communities. This is elaborated on the sections below.

2.2.1 Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility

According to Dahlsrud's (2014) definition, Corporate Social Responsibility refers to the responsibility of organizations to adopt policies, make decisions, and take actions that align with the societal objectives and values. Organisations should undertake corporate social responsibility for both business profitability and societal benefits. Such a focused CSR is what would result in a mutually beneficial relationship between the community members and the organisation as a key factor in business success. Dobers (2015) posits that organisations are obligated to contribute to the communities in which they operate by identifying stakeholders and their expectations. Identification of needs and expectations help to bridge the gap in understanding which could result in conflicts and hinder smooth and successful implementation of the projects.

Philanthropic CSR as an optional act of benevolence undertaken for the betterment of societies (Obalola, 2012). These actions could be in form of financial donations and often demand for time and resources with an aim of driving social change. Bronn and Vrioni (2017) in their study

demonstrate that organisations integrate their corporate and philanthropic departments to enhance their reputation, increase research and development (R&D) expenditures, boost employee productivity, and ultimately gain a competitive advantage. However, a broad perspective of CSR encompasses ethical obligation as an organisation whose decisions affect the entire community in which it operates. According to Adams (2014), employees play a critical role in driving the success of a company. In addition, Carroll (2016) argues that organizations have an ethical obligation to compensate their employees fairly based on the value of their labour, foster a workplace that is free from discrimination and dehumanization, and ensure the safety of the work environment by providing appropriate equipment to mitigate hazards. This will allow them to translate this positive experience to the stakeholders that they deal with in the company resulting in positive perceptions about the organisation.

Environmental responsibility is one of the principal components of social responsibility. Lodhia, Jacobs and Park, (2012) describe Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) as the integration of environmental responsibility principles into an organization's public agenda. Fortes (2015) suggests that the success of environmentally responsible behavior is dependent on four factors: the implementation of environmental policies in corporate plans and daily operations, employee awareness, an increase in the quantity and scope of environmental responsibility concerns, and the integration of environmental responsibility into the organization's values. Therefore, CSR activities ought to be well thought out to be able to benefit both the community members and the organisation.

The CSR outlook is massive and as such firms have a greater responsibility in supporting sectors such as the educational, healthcare, sanitation sectors among others. Organisations currently strive to create greater societal influence within educational landscape even as they pursue their own business goals (Khanna & Gupta, 2011). The cultural values of a company ought to incorporate CSR as an integral part of the success in every organisation including the educational institutions (Angelidis & Ibrahim, 2016). This ensures that the initiative is driven even at the employee level thus achieving high success rates.

Additionally, the concept of corporate social responsibility as pointed out by Kurniatama et al., (2021) is strongly grounded on environmental conservation as well as social responsibility in a way that provides solutions to issues facing societies. Generally, such projects are meant to benefit the community members where they are implemented, bring significant change in their daily activities, contribute to an overall improvement of their livelihood as well as to conserve the environment. In this regard, Nadanyiova (2021) posits that the implementing corporate social responsibility programs overtime has developed into a primary focus for organisations to attain competitive advantage. Scholars such as Islam et al., (2021) have overtime proven that organisations that implement corporate social responsibility programs have been successful in dealing with environmental impacts and have embraced it as a central focus for all sectors of operation including marketing, strategy, financial outlook as well as civic education.

Even though the concept of CSR has become fundamental today, many of these activities existed in the old days just as practiced today. Therefore, CSR is a concept that has been around and dates back in the years. The pressure from stakeholder and the public has risen of the last few years forcing organisations to rethink their CSR practices and adopt behaviours that reflect

environmental and social consciousness. A distinction between the various stakeholders and their interest areas is provided by Haleem et al. (2021). However, other than the type of stakeholders, other studies such as Haleem et al. (2021) and Nadanyiova (2021) show a direct link between implementing sustainable CSR activities and the pressures exerted by these stakeholders. Understanding the stakeholders, their needs and expectations is a critical factor towards realising success with any CSR activity.

Corporate social responsibility outlook encompasses three aspects including the environment, individuals and profitability thus the calling for responsible behaviour by firms in all these dimensions while dealing with socio-economic and problems within the environment. Most scholars tend to focus more on environment in their studies than the societal context (Haleem et al., 2021). The concept denotes that it is inappropriate for an organisation to focus on maximisation of profits. According to Kurniatama et al. (2021) employee awareness and general societal wellbeing as well as conservation of the environment ought to be a priority. Presently CSR is largely implemented by multinational and large companies such as KENGEN (Haleem et al., 2021), across all CSR dimensions whereas small scale and medium enterprises only adopt a small bit of CSR. A study by Metzker et al. (2021) also points to the fact that CSR is dependent on the country of operation. Therefore, the existing policies and regulations as well as the economic condition in the country are some of the factors which could impact CSR practices.

In recent times, the concept of CSR has received notable criticism from a number of scholars. For instance, Milton's assertion as cited in Nadanyiova (2021) is that organisations only implement CSR for profit maximization. This implies that CSR should only be implemented to the extent to which it generates profits for the company. Reich also claims that CSR is the role of the

government thus organisations are incidentally taking the work of the government when they decide to implement corporate social responsibility programs as in Kurniatama et al. (2021). This leaves the obligation of supporting and improving livelihood of communities as well as conserving the environment solely to the Government. Organisations should focus on not only addressing individuals but also the broader societal interests if they must create an impact with their CSR activities. Such strategic groups comprise of company staff, customers, those who supply them with goods and individuals in the society (Kurniatama et al., 2021). However, other studies like Brieger et al. (2020) have countered the critics of CSR with a better outlook whereby organisations attain high level of loyalty, trust and individual perceptions.

From an organisation perspective, CSR is seen to encompass the well-being of employees as proposed by Vagner (2021). According to Golob & Podnar (2021) corporate social responsibility culture results in employee motivation, engagement and hence better performance. Involving employees in such activities results in highly engaged employees as they feel part of the company. CSR also influence job satisfaction, and thus it also affects life satisfaction. Glavas (2016) notes a positive impact of CSR on employee-job satisfaction whereas Golob and Podnar (2021) and Vveinhardt and Sroka (2021) points to reduced employee turnover and attracting of great talents in the organisation as an overall result of CSR practices.

2.2.2 Concept of CSR and Perceptions

Corporate social responsibility, even though widely defined share similar prerequisites as voluntary in nature while the programs are conducted far above the legal requirements (Nadanyova, 2021). Scholars such as Vagner (2021) emphasized the organizational role towards environmental consciousness of the general public by creating awareness through their staff, consumers and other individuals who are directly involved with them.

According to Musova et al. (2021) who did a study on reasons for environmentally responsible consumers, they revealed that one primary drive is self-convictions, desire to be portrayed as a good example in the society and need to protect environmental resources prone to depletion. On the other hand, a study by Boccia et al. (2019) advanced that even with consumers inclined towards environmental responsibility, the cost of goods and services is still an integral part of their purchase decision. Other studies in countries such as Slovak republic by Musova et al. (2021) revealed the lack of public trust on organisational efforts towards environmental protection.

Other interesting studies focused on the age of individuals as a factor for studying their environmental inclination (Moisecu and Gica, 2020). The findings demonstrated that the X-generation have social inclination whereas the Y-generation have environmental orientation. Other scholars in their studies focused on challenges with implementation of corporate social responsibility programs (Stojanovic et al., 2020). They pointed to lack of understanding, poor organisational culture as well as lack of management buy in among other factors. The findings revealed that as much as reports on corporate social responsibility activities is important in achieving positive brand image, a strategic way of implementing these programs that encompass stakeholder engagement is integral to its success.

In this current era characterised by globalization and increased competition, customers are often confused when it comes to identification of better producers. Many studies prove perception as a key factor in successful CSR which is seen to positively impact consumer purchase decisions and brand loyalty as they tend to associate the quality of an organisation's product with environmental and social orientation of companies just as observed by Moisescu and Gica (2020) and Bardos et al. (2020). Additionally, where public viewpoint is articulate largely with standardization of products and markets with high competition, there is greater consumer satisfaction (Bardos et al., 2021). According to Metzker et al. (2021) the on-return purchase is directly related to the overall perception of the public. CSR influence is seen dynamically in consumer views and perception and greatly impact success or failure of organisations. Additionally, studies have revealed that CSR practices are key determinants of decline in organisational performance (Alhouti et al., 2021) resulting from poor implementation. Similar findings were observed by other researchers positing the need for practicing CSR to curb negative perceptions and enhance consumer trust amidst a crisis situation (Kang et al. (2021).

According to Sirsly & Lvina (2019), organisations have the ability to inform consumer views and attitudes regarding the company. This in return results to a positive corporate reputation of the organisation. To maintain its reputation, a company must strive to keep its ethical, social and environmental values as this form the basis of consumer viewpoints which can be negatively influenced by a slight change in how the organisation conducts its operations along these lines (Janney and Gove, 2011)

Local research on success of projects show that research gaps exist in the study area. Migwa and Wanjala (2019) researched some of the elements that influence the feasibility of CSR at the Kenya Electricity Generating Company. The study found that stakeholder engagement was one of the factors that influenced success of CSR projects. The results therefore pointed to a need for understanding and involving the host communities during CSR project implementation. Even though the study focused on factors influencing CSR projects at KENGEN, the findings depict a gap necessitating the current study on perceptions of beneficiary communities as part of the stakeholders.

In another study, focusing on the elements that influence feasibility of Safaricom foundation's CSR activities (Masiga, 2013), the results showed that employee involvement was integral in success of such programs and long-term viability. The study also pointed to external support thus recommending the need for and improved community perceptions as a critical factor in CSR projects whose main beneficiaries are the community members. This further calls for a study to understand these perceptions in order to ensure sustainable relationship with the project implementers.

2.2.3 KENGEN's CSR Activities

KENGEN has for a long time strived for community relations in the regions where they have established projects. The collaboration has often been centred on enhancing the living standards of the individuals in the community through offering support for educational programs, providing access to clean water and environmental conservation activities such as tree planting.

Continuous and growing interest by the Kenya Electricity Generating Company is visible in its understanding and vision of scaling up its support programs across the country though with specific focus around its stations. In fact, it is along these lines that the organisation established a Foundation in 2012 to enhance strategic implementation of its CSR programs. The major focus by KENGEN has been around educational support programs like scholarships, environmental conservation activities like tree planting and clean water supply. The strategies as documented in KENGEN's website are in line with the country's vision and sustainability agenda (KeGen Website, Copyright © 2022)

Over the years, the company has sponsored a number of individuals through its yearly scholarship programs that have been of help to rural, underserved areas. This has given them a chance to compete in the global academic landscape. Additionally, they also directly support developmental works in the schools around its power stations and have so far contributed to expansion of several schools by supporting construction work. Interestingly, they also provide classroom equipment for smooth and enhanced learning process. The local communities face several challenges including access to clean water thus the organisation has allowed them to breathe a sigh of relief by enhancing access to clean water as a key aspect of its CSR activities dating back to 2005. They also encourage environmentally friendly activities (KeGen Website, Copyright © 2022).

Overall, the organisation is looking at building and promoting a positive relationship with the people living in areas where they operate as this has over time proven to be critical for their success. This kind of relationship is reciprocal in nature and ensures beneficial outcomes for all the parties concerned. Since corporate social responsibility is a communication's responsibility, it is largely spearheaded by the public relations and communications department. The decision to

engage in a certain CSR activity therefore follows an evaluative process that includes critical evaluation of the target community and its environs to determine whether a suitable program would be along the lines of education, environmental or other important area (KeGen Website, Copyright © 2022).

KENGEN operations are often guided by laid down policies and approval processes just to ensure successful implementation. Therefore, the organisation sets aside a part of its profits or resources dedicated to CSR programs centred on enhancing standards of living and overall socio-economic and environmental gains.

2.3 Theoretical Foundation of the Study

The chapter gives a detailed examination of the theories employed in the study including Stakeholder theory and Excellence theory in relation to corporate social responsibility.

2.3.1 Stakeholder Theory

Freeman in his 1984 works, resulted in the stakeholder theory which documents factors that drive firms to practice corporate social responsibility. The concept of Corporate Social responsibility is directly related to the stakeholder theory. Whereas CSR describes the role that organisations owe to the society, stakeholder theory specifies the lines of accountability by organisations in their business practices.

The theory helps to justify the need for stakeholder views and perceptions currently under study on CSR activities. In this regard, there are 3 critical stakeholder functions in corporate social responsibility which include sharing their views and beliefs, they are the ones impacted by these activities and they are also the ones who evaluate the process (Wood and Jones, 1995). The current study adopted stakeholder theory to guide in collecting and analysing CSR data on KENGEN's CSR projects just as observed by Wood and Jones (1995) that many scholars have adopted this approach in running their empirical studies. The theory provided a theoretical foundation for looking at KENGEN as an organisation while establishing the ways in which CSR is impacted or impact the beneficiary communities (Wood & Jones, 1995).

As a concept, stakeholder theory places emphasis on the direct and indirect relations that occur among several stakeholders of an organisation such as those who invest in the business, the consumers among others as posited by Jansson (2005). It's easily applied in CSR studies since it places emphasis on the societal value while stakeholder theory seeks to enhance mutual relations

between the organisation and its stakeholders as highlighted by Freeman and Dmytriiev (2017). The current study adopted this theory to investigate how these ideologies could be best positioned to enhance both organisational and societal gains. Kakabadse, et al. (2005) posits that a key characteristic of corporate social responsibility is that organisations ought to be answerable to the shareholders and the community members who are impacted by the firm's choices.

This theory further emphasizes on the need for companies to generate valuable outcome for the key stakeholders often impacted by the company's actions and not only those who have shares with the company. The study sought to tap into the three perspectives of this theory as: those who impact the firm's operations, the impact of these connections on the organisation's stakeholder and the impact of stakeholder views on overall performance of the organisation (Bonnafeous-Boucher & Rendtorff, 2016). In this case the study approached the stakeholders as the beneficiary communities. This helped to draw conclusions on how organizations can plan and execute CSR projects to effectively address the needs of the concerned parties while still remaining competitive in the market.

Several organisations have encountered challenges of community resistance among others while trying to implement corporate social responsibility projects. Such issues can be avoided by placing the frameworks of stakeholder theory at the centre of any CSR activity. This will allow organisations to work closely with the local communities while listening and addressing their views in CSR plans. According to Harrison, et al., (2019) this concept also tackles other issues such as low awareness levels on the value of corporate social responsibility thus proper alignment with CSR activities will yield maximum advantage to the society by enhancing developmental programs. The theory as posited by Nikolova & Arsić (2017) also helps in creating good working

environments where employees are motivated and self-driven, enhanced brand value, high profit margins as well as happy customers. CSR is therefore an integral part of corporate responsibility which involves the participation of its various stakeholders for its successful implementation.

Finally, the study employed stakeholder theory to reinforce the recent evolution of CSR as an all-inclusive activity that takes into consideration diverse stakeholder groups and ensures that organisations operate in a way that fosters ethics and sustainability in line with the assertions of Tsutsui & Lim (2015), and a focus beyond profit maximisation to value and benefit administration to communities (Dmytriyev et al., 2021). Carey (2019) advances that a key tool towards better relationships with stakeholders would ideally revolve around activities that create visible impacts in the community while enhancing value for the organisation as well as realising benefits in the socio-economic and environmental space. Previously, scholars such as Harrison, et al. (2019) have observed that insincere disclosures by organisations regarding their undertakings in the society have created mistrust and misunderstanding between the community members and the organisation thus the need for alignment of such programs with stakeholder theory.

2.3.2 The Excellence Theory

Excellence theory is a public relations theory originally advanced by James Grunig, with a focus on organisational and societal matters. According to Grunig (2008), firms ought to behave in ways that create sustainable value to its key stakeholders while still meeting the overall corporate objectives. The theory was therefore relevant in this research that aimed at understanding perspectives, opinions, views, and perceptions given by beneficiary communities regarding KENGEN's CSR projects. It formed a basis for analysing the projects based on how the community individuals see them in line with solving their existing problems.

According to Excellence theory, organizations should investigate the environmental situation before implementing CSR programs in order to understand individuals likely to be impacted by the choices they make and understand their desire for decision making to involve community problem solving. Kent & Taylor (2002) identifies a two-way-symmetrical communication approach as the best method of reaching out to stakeholders, listening to their views and enhancing effectiveness of CSR programs. According to Kent and Taylor (2002), communicative dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholder results to mutual relationships and reciprocation while creating an open environment for negotiating and sharing ideas. Public relations programs such as CSR then becomes paramount for realisation of business success. Grunig et al. (2002) further recommends the use of a two-way-symmetrical method of communicating with stakeholders to eliminate gaps and ensure give-and-take kind of relationship. On this basis, the theory provided a framework for analysing the communication process during implementation of CSR projects by KENGEN to understand the awareness levels by the beneficiary communities and how these contribute to their perceptions.

Additionally, this theory reinforces the need for PR programs for realisation of both organisational and societal good. In this regard, organisations like KENGEN have widely adopted CSR programs as a PR strategy to enhance its relationship with communities for the success of its projects. Such programs result in sustainable relationships between organisations and their stakeholders, a critical component of overall success of the company. Grunig (2013) further adds that the feasibility of CSR activities could be determined by looking at how the organisation relates with the local communities and other stakeholders. The theory was applied to guide the study in understanding the role played by KENGEN and the beneficiary communities and reinforce the need for

organisations to behave socially by identifying its various stakeholders that could be persuaded by their decisions.

Despite being criticized and projected as unrealistic (Van der Meiden, 1993), it still stands as a useful framework in implementing CSR projects. Other scholars have contended that excellence theory could reinforce power imbalance by proposing monoculturalism and regulated framework which may undermine the traditional ways of communicating, individual differences and overall focus on societal benefits as pertains CSR (Julian, 2016). Villittis and Charitou (2012) reinforces this concept of Excellence theory, recommending the need to adjust the communication of CSR activities in line with the organisation and its publics. This theory therefore provided a useful framework for analyzing the themes and aspects of the current study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The section presents study design, site, the approach used, research method, the target population, sampling technique, data types and respective sources. The section further highlights the process of data analysis and presentation and ways in which aspects of validity and reliability were tackled in the study.

3.2 Study Design

A study design also called a research strategy, is a plan to answer a set of questions. According to McCombes (2019), a study design refers to the plan devised with specific questions to be answered in mind. The researcher took into consideration the various designs available, their strength and weakness in order to select one that balances off the strength and weakness in line with the problem being studied. Based on these criteria, a descriptive design was considered suitable and adopted. This study aimed at gaining participants' perceptions regarding KENGEN CSR activities thus the choice of a descriptive design was appropriate since it's often used when the problem being studied is known and the researcher is therefore seeking to establish particular themes from the participants.

According to Siedlecki (2020) descriptive design aims to generate narrations, understandings, illustrations facts and accurate interpretation of the information, characteristics and connections between the variables under study. This method was considered suitable since this study was focused on outlining existing views and perception of beneficiary communities in relation to KeGen's CSR projects. Descriptive design assisted in developing a comprehensive illustration of

the application of CSR by firms in the energy industry and raise awareness levels and the resultant influence on individual perception on CSR projects.

3.3 Study Site

West Koguta sub-location in Kisumu County was the study site while focusing on KENGEN CSR water projects (KENGEN Website, © 2022 KENGEN). This is due to the fact that water is fundamental to health, survival and livelihood yet issues of climate variability and increasing population growth have resulted in water scarcity in many countries (Mulwa et al., 2021) thus threatening nearly 80% of the world's population (Vallino et al., 2020) and increasing poverty level in rural areas (Mulwa et al., 2021). By examining the knowledge and perception of beneficiary communities in West Koguta, the study aimed to shed light on how these communities view and interpret CSR efforts related to water projects. Since water scarcity is a global concern affecting a large portion of the world's population, the research findings from this specific location could have broader implications and contribute to the global comprehension of the importance of CSR projects towards tackling societal as well as environmental challenges.

The study's relevance to KENGEN's CSR initiatives aligned it with the organization's efforts to address water-related challenges in the region. This alignment facilitated better collaboration and support from KENGEN during the research process, increasing the potential for impactful solutions. By examining KENGEN's CSR water projects in a real-world setting, the study held the promise of identifying best practices and strategies that can be replicated in other regions facing similar water scarcity issues, making a meaningful contribution to rural development and poverty alleviation.

3.4 Research Approach

Qualitative methods as posited by Korstjens (2017) is a study approach which gives an exploration and comprehensive look at world issues. The method was deemed appropriate since it allows the researcher to gather participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior which cannot easily be put in numerical data (Cleland, 2017). According to Timonen (2015), qualitative approach has the capabilities of exploring behavioral characteristics of humans which would otherwise not be possible with quantitative methods.

The research problem required comprehensive examination of individual perspectives, experiences while looking at their meaning in the context of CSR. Owing to the strengths of qualitative methods, it was used to bring out fresh and innovative ways of looking at the issue under investigation. Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) point out the need to look at issues from the participant's perspectives and the socio-environmental setting which is often ignored when information is presented in quantitative, hence the adoption of qualitative methods in the study.

3.5 Data Needs, Types and Sources

The primary source of data for the study was information collected from participants in the field thus the study relied heavily on primary data even though secondary data was also gathered by reviewing several works by different researchers around CSR and used to complement the data collected from the field.

3.6 Target Population

Cooper and Schindler (2016); and Kothari (2014) describes target population as the selected group of individuals identified to be studied by the researcher to come up with conclusions based on the observed phenomenon.

The household beneficiaries of KENGEN's CSR water projects in West Koguta sub-location in Nyanza formed the target population for the current study. West Koguta is one of the five regions in West Nyakach, Kisumu County with a population of 26,403. Based on qualitative methods, the study collected data from selected households to saturation. Participants included household heads, local national government administrative officials, and traditional leaders (tribal elders).

3.7 Sampling Procedure

Mugenda & Mugenda (1999) describes sampling as selection of individual participants that will conclusively represent the views of the entire population. The study adopted purposive sampling technique whereby individuals were carefully selected based on their experiences and ability to articulate their views. This type of sampling technique is often applied to allow the researcher to select participants in the sample with similar characteristics thus result in in-depth analysis of the individuals as well as allowing the researcher to choose participants who are deemed to have the information sought for in the study (Saunders et al., 2000). In addition, the selected individuals ought to be easily accessible, be willing and have the ability to communicate their viewpoints in a logical manner (Bernard, 2002).

3.8 Data Collection

A comprehensive understanding of the theoretical underpinning of the study requires the researcher to embark on data collection (Benard, 2002). The data collected for this study was qualitative thus allowed the participants to expressively share their perspectives, narrations and ideas. This helped in gaining diverse viewpoints from the collected information.

Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in order to generate data for the study. The interviews involved collection of data from 10 individuals who were deemed to have special

information or perceptions that would otherwise be unavailable if the researcher interviewed randomly. The researcher selected individuals who had adequate information to respond to the study questions based on their level of involvement, being directly involved in the water project implemented by KENGEN, having the capacity to logically share own perspectives and those whose opinions are likely not to be influenced by other external factors. The participants were able to explain their experiences and perception, the way they know it from their experience and not from external influence or interaction. The researcher used a combination of physical and online space to achieve the desired results.

For focus group discussions, three focus groups of 8-12 participants each were carried out, one group each for women, youth and men drawn from CSR project beneficiaries. The researcher used field notes and a recorder to capture data. The decisions on the data were made inductively by the researcher after synthesis and analysis of the data collected. The group interviews allowed for interactions between participants and stimulated them to state feelings, perceptions and beliefs which they would not reveal if they were interviewed individually. This helped to generate more accurate data; as participants criticized each other's views, they exposed a variety of information to enable an assessment of variability of data. The study therefore drew from the strengths of focus group discussions and its versatility to compliment the key informant interviews.

3.8.1 Sample Frame

Participant Category	Reason
Key Informants Two (2) Community leaders (Area Chief and village elder)	They are the gatekeepers of the community. they are often sought for approval, validation and reinforcement of any projects that are done in the community thus contributed valuable insights to the study.
Five (5) Community Members	These were members who have been actively involved in the project thus able to give an account of every detail as regards the research objectives
Three (3) Members of the Water Committee	They are the ones who sit in discussions regarding the implementation and evaluation of water projects. They also act as mediators between KENGEN and the community members.
Participants for FGDs Thirty-five (35) Community members	The local residents were the key, and expressed their views, experiences, needs and expectations for comprehensive analysis and conclusion regarding the problem under study.

3.9 Research Instruments

The study employed interview guides as the main tools for collecting data. Consequently, semi-structured interview guide was adopted to ensure sequence and flow during interview sessions and group discussion. This was deemed appropriate because its flexible and allows for adjustment of interview questions in line with the prevailing circumstances at the time of data collection while adequately responding to the study questions. According to MacNamara (2009) such flexibility is needed in qualitative studies to ensure standardization of data collected in the critical research areas while still allowing for interactive approach where the researcher has the ability to change and adopt to the participant setting when collecting the data.

The interview sessions covered the questions that were detailed in the guide. The questions were structured in a way that covered all the key variables and the primary goal of the study which was the perception of beneficiary communities on KENGEN CSR projects. The researcher also utilized

audio recorder to ensure accuracy of information collected. The textual data was recorded in the notebook. The information was then transcribed at the analysis stage.

3.10 Pilot Testing

The researcher conducted pilot testing aimed at establishing gaps and problems that could be encountered at the actual time of data collection. The process involved going through the interview guide, looking at the questions, trying to check on any difficulties that the study individuals may encounter while trying to respond, checking for mistakes and the overall sequence of the guides. This was carried out a week prior to the scheduled interviews and group discussion to generate data for the study. This allowed adequate time for incorporation of results of the pilot test in modification of the research tools in readiness for data collection.

According to Bell and Waters (2014), pilot testing is important specifically to check on the tools for data collection before the actual exercise and that it's necessary to proceed up to the analysis phase in order to determine if the instruments will adequately respond to the study objectives and where necessary, to initiate the necessary modifications. Consequently, the six step model proposed by O'Leary (2014) was adopted whereby the researcher proceeded through the entire stages of data collection while reviewing the instruments.

3.11 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis followed the six-step thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is a less complicated way of analyzing data. In step one, the researcher read and listened to all the collected sets of data more than once until she was familiar with the data and meanings. This was followed by transcription of recording from interviews and group discussions then coding using the NVIVO software. NVIVO is a computer application which is used in organizing, analyzing

and making meanings out of data that is less structured. In this process, information gathered is uploaded to the software through the creation of a new NVIVO analysis project unto which data is attached. Finally, data underwent close examination and coding to nodes that proved useful when coming up with overall themes.

The parameters for analyzing the data incorporated key words and themes comprising of narrations corresponding to all the study questions and related to corporate social responsibility. The parameters were also useful to the researcher in drawing evidence-based conclusions. The researcher checked to ascertain that all the themes had sufficient supportive data. Eventually the researcher developed a report based on the findings while linking this with the overall study objectives.

3.12 Data Presentation

After coding, the researcher checked on data validity and reliability. This was followed by exploration of data characteristics and establishing connections while uncovering any relations in the data sets. Excerpts from the data were also utilized in giving a closer presentation of the study results.

Accordingly, the final study results were expressed in narrative format which included the information derived from inductive analysis of the collected data from both key informant-interviews and focus-group discussions.

3.13 Validity and Reliability

As posited by Silverman (1993), the use of semi structured interview guides enhanced the validity and data reliability as all the interviews were conducted in a systematic way while still giving the researcher freedom to change and adopt the guides to the circumstances at the time of study. This

further provided an assurance that the information generated was free of influence by the interviewer and the interview environment (Silverman, 1993). To attain validity and reliability, the researcher should ensure the data is thorough, dependable and of great quality (Golafshani, 2003).

To achieve stability, consistency and predictability, the interviews and group discussions were prolonged to allow the researcher to constantly probe the participants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Additionally, the researcher was keen on ensuring all the data collected including the recording are used to draw conclusions and final report.

Informed consent, requiring the participants to confirm willingness to be part of the study prior to the interview was adopted by the researcher for ethical and practical reasons. In this case, the participants were each issued with a letter of introduction explaining that the research was meant for academic purposes and assured of their identities being kept as unknown. According to (Wiles et al, 2007), he noted that the signed consent helped to shield researchers in the event that participants made any claims. The researcher was also keen on confidentiality where the data was coded, and each participant assigned a unique number.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the findings regarding knowledge and perceptions of beneficiary communities towards CSR activities by KENGEN. It seeks to offer an extensive account of the perspectives as well as experiences of the beneficiary communities regarding KENGEN's CSR projects. Qualitative method was employed in this study, whereby the data was gathered via comprehensive individual interviews and focused-group discussions (FGDs) with diverse groups represented by both male and female members of the community. The study focused on KENGEN's water project in West Koguta sub-location in Nyanza, Kisumu County.

The analysis and findings presented in this chapter are based on the perspectives of the beneficiary communities who participated in the study. Their views and experiences are central to understanding the overall value of corporate social responsibility activities carried out by Kenya Electricity Generating Company and their overall societal impacts. This section offers a thorough examination of the information collected, which includes knowledge and awareness levels of the beneficiary communities on KENGEN's CSR projects, the form and nature of CSR practice, and the perceived outcomes of the projects.

By providing an analysis of the beneficiary communities' perspectives, the overall goal is to make a contribution to the current knowledge on CSR among developing countries and provide insights on the importance of stakeholder engagement and community participation in CSR projects. The chapter also presents study limitations while highlighting general implications of the results for KENGEN and other companies operating in similar contexts. Overall, this chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the beneficiary communities' perspectives on KENGEN's CSR

projects and contributes to the ongoing discourse on contributions of corporate social responsibility in the development of communities.

4.2 Response Rate

The sample size for this study included 10 individuals comprising of two community leaders (Area chief and village elder), 5 community members and 3 members of the water committee in the area under study. Additionally, purposive sampling was used to identify individuals in the focus groups who are beneficiaries in the KENGEN water project and also among the recipients of the 70,000 cubic meters worth of water tanks distributed to 70 households in Western Region, Kisumu County (KENGEN Report, 2021). Consequently, 35 participants were selected based on their level of proximity and active involvement in the project. All the individuals who were selected as respondents were successfully contacted, (100 per cent response rate) and the outcomes were analysed according to their answers to both the interview and study questions.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The aim of the research was to identify several demographic traits of the selected beneficiaries of KENGEN water project. These factors encompassed age, gender, and educational attainment.

4.3.1 Age of the Respondents

In the course of the group discussion, the participants were requested to disclose their ages. The results indicated that the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 40, followed by those aged between 20 – 30 years while the least participants were those of 40years and above. Having a diverse range of age groups ensured a well-rounded representation, which increased the reliability of the gathered data.

4.3.2 Gender of the Respondents

The researcher aimed to determine the gender distribution of the respondents whereby, results revealed that majority of the participants were male. However, it is important to note that the difference between the number of male and female participants was not significant, as the male participants were only slightly more than the female participants. This information was useful in interpreting the results of the study, as it pertains gender differences in the responses and perspectives of the participants. The findings therefore indicate that men are more involved in community development activities in western Kenya and were readily available for the interviews and focus group discussions. However, a representation by women was also notable and an indication of a balanced representation. This suggests that achieving gender equality is a crucial aspect in achieving progress towards community development.

4.3.3 Level of Education

The researcher asked the participants to share their educational background, which plays a significant role in shaping their level of awareness and expression of their views. The results showed the majority having secondary level qualification followed by Primary level qualification. The participants with university and college qualifications were the least represented. This information was important in interpreting study findings, as education of participants could potentially impact their knowledge, perspectives, and understanding of the research topic. However, the educational background of the participants was not used to undermine their views and opinions on the study and all views were represented. The appreciation of the different educational levels and a majority at Secondary school level could be attributed to the policy implemented in 2008 where individuals accessed Secondary school without paying fee thus giving a chance to high enrollment levels in the rural areas.

4.3.4 Period of Residence in the Area

Participants were asked to share details on the period of residence in West Koguta Sub- County. These findings revealed that most of the participants had lived in those areas where CSR were implemented between 5-10 years whereas those who had lived in the area for 1-5 years were the least represented. This information is relevant to the study as it indicates that most of the participants have a relatively long-term experience of living in the area and may demonstrate a good comprehension of the issues experienced by the community members as well as some of the perceived benefits. It is possible that the CSR projects implemented by KENGEN may have had a greater impact on these long-term residents than those who had lived in there within a shorter period. The duration of residency in the locality is a pertinent factor to consider in relation to this research, as it relates to familiarity with the events under investigation. The findings therefore confirm that participants in the study were well versed with events in the area, having stayed there for a longer duration.

4.4 Knowledge and Awareness Levels on KENGEN CSR Projects

The first study objective aimed at determining knowledge and awareness levels of beneficiary communities on KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects. The researcher's main concern was to determine the level of awareness of KENGEN CSR activities, how they discovered the projects alongside their description of CSR. Knowledge and awareness of these projects was an important aspect of being able to effectively contribute to the study objectives. The findings below represent views from the ten key informants and the three focus group discussions.

All the participants in the interviews and the three FGDs agreed to be aware of KENGEN CSR activities. This was important as they could not take advantage of the project benefits if they are

not aware or do not have any details of the same. However, the study established that the members of the community differed on how they discovered the projects. The study established that some of the participants had the knowledge on KENGEN CSR activities through their local community leaders who had been keen on continuously providing the members of the community with important information as a way to better their lives,

“The area leader often goes round the community to talk to us on what is happening and that’s how I learned about this water project although it’s a bit far from my home,” Said PP3

The participants in the FGDs also confirmed the same with one of the participants in FGD3 stating that after learning about the water project, he told everyone that he had a chance to interact with so that they can benefit from it.

“Given the occurrence of these issues, I deemed it crucial to raise awareness among the community members and equip them with the ability to take advantage of the opportunities provided by KENGEN projects, particularly water that has been a great problem, added K1”.

The study also established that KENGEN CSR projects were discovered by the beneficiary communities through interactions with the KENGEN team,

“KENGEN team often visited and said that because they had benefited from positive community relations with residents of West-Koguta they feel they owe it to us to come up with projects that would benefit the community,” explained K2 with K5 adding that *“that was how I discovered the water project.”*

Further the study established that some individuals acquired information about KENGEN's corporate social responsibility initiatives through their acquaintances. Participants in all the three

FGDs confirmed that water had been a problem in the area for a long time and that most of them now tell each other once they discover such projects like the KENGEN project to help them benefit from the same.

“I grew up in this village with lack of facilities especially water. Thus, I know the water project will help lots of girls who often go to the stream in the morning and in the evening after school. They still walk long distances and sometime miss school or are often late. I prefer showing them the water points close to their homes if at all they aren't aware.” Said PP1

The community members from the FGD1 and FGD2 recommended that KENGEN needs to consult more with the community members before and even after implementing such projects to understand their concerns and ensure the projects are satisfactorily meeting their needs.

“Myself, I learnt about this project one time as I was walking to the market. By good luck I met a man who introduced himself as one of the team members from KENGEN. He is the one who told me about the water project. I don't think I would have known. But if only they can find away to share the information with everyone.” Said PP8 in FGD1.

These results corroborated with those found by Wheeler and Elkington, (2001) who posited that CSR conversations fail to effectively involve key stakeholders like organisation's employees, their customers, investors, suppliers as well as the surrounding communities. The sources of information on ongoing KENGEN projects are barely from KENGEN as an organisation thus the company is yet to take full advantage of this just like other companies who are yet to realise the full potential of such communications (Schönborn et al., 2019).

4.5 The Form and Nature of CSR practice among KENGEN Beneficiary Communities

The second objective looked at the form and nature of CSR practice among beneficiary communities of KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects. Corporate social responsibility is anticipated to yield reciprocal advantages for both the company and the society. Community members revealed that they see CSR activities by organisations as charity work that is done to improve the lives of people living in an area. From the views and expressions of the local community they expect fair treatment from the KENGEN and that projects would help solve their community problems. Though they could not specify what in their opinion is fair treatment, their views were that KENGEN was doing very little to support the community.

“I cannot explain much but our desire is to experience a greater magnitude of their positive influence and have a community where everyone is aware of such beneficial projects. Right now, the projects do not have wide reach and one may not benefit due to lack of awareness,” said K1.

This implies that even though KENGEN operations have been there for long, they are yet to reach the entire community. The host communities might have expected to enjoy more benefits than what they currently have and this to them contributes to unfair treatment.

Even though the respondents felt that the nature of KENGEN CSR projects were such that they always tried to address the needs of the society, some of the participants in the FGDs felt that this was not addressed adequately. They felt that the company implemented projects from their own assessment without consulting the community and often resulted in conflicts.

‘There has always been a sort of quarrels between the KENGEN and some members of the community, I believe it's not a secret anymore. The government often makes a plan to prevent violence, but if they don't take us seriously, these incidents may keep happening,’ said PP4.

Similarly, FGDs elicited various reactions around KENGEN CSR projects where other participants felt that the projects were not for community benefits but for conformity with the laws and that often, it felt like the company was being compelled to do them.

“I doubt that these projects are for our benefit. Most of the time they take photos and post to show that they are supporting us, and I think this is how they show the need for having their projects here yet they barely follow to see our concerns.” Said PP8

Further, the study found that most of the water projects by KENGEN included water points, access to education and health facilities. Contrary to their expectations, most members of the community suffered from construction projects by KENGEN largely health issues yet residents still experience shortage in the supply of water and electricity. The key informants revealed that the company has only reached a small percentage of the total households in the area adding that,

“In its recent supply of water tanks, KENGEN only reached 70 households out of the over 1,500 local households who rely on water to sustain their livelihood,” said K9.

Additionally, participants in the focus group discussions added that,

“We expect improvement in lives, support in our education and health system and even in terms of food production. The company should come through and meet these needs for us to feel any benefits from their presence here,” added PP1.

The findings imply that organisations ought to prioritize and apply strategic ways of communicating and implementing CSR projects. If the company does not work to build trust with local communities, they risk falling into the category of the notion that communication practices mostly of CSR projects are viewed as disingenuous and solely used for validation or even deceptive marketing (Lock & Araujo, 2020).

4.6 Experiences and Perspectives on KENGEN Corporate Social Responsibility Projects

The third objective was to analyse the experiences and perspectives of beneficiary communities on KENGEN CSR programs. Participants from the three FGDs revealed that KENGEN's CSR water projects led to increased diversification of crops and livestock in the study area. In western region maize, beans, sorghum, cassava, sweet potatoes and millet were the main food crops in the area relying on rainfall before CSR water projects were implemented. However, the participants from the interviews and FGDs revealed that KENGEN water project has opened up the region to new crops including tomatoes, watermelon, sugarcane and other vegetables like pumpkin leaves. Further, the members of the community interviewed also stated that availability of water has resulted in construction of fishponds and increased poultry farming. The enrolment of girls in schools and income was also found to have improved considerably.

“Everybody needs water; water helps to promote community development, so by giving us water and tanks to retain rainwater, KENGEN has literally provided us with life, as they have given us water which is essential for our survival,” said PP10.

Participants in the other FGDs also agreed to this adding that the school enrolment rate particularly for girls had improved after the implementation of the water project.

“If they continue providing us with water, our girls can stay in school and learn. They often go to far away streams late in the evening after school and is very risky” added PP4

Another member of the FGD3 also added that she is happy with the project and that she now allows her children to go to school with the hope that they will learn more about their society and gain the necessary knowledge to support their family in getting a better life.

“Before the project, my children missed school a lot but now I allow my children to go to school with the hope that they will learn get a good job and support our family in getting a better life.” Said PP9.

Participants from the interviews also agreed to the fact that the project had led to more enrolment and retention of girls compared to previously, with one of the participants stating that,

“I have been a teacher in this village for more than 10 years now, am happy that we now have more girls in school than back in the days,” said K3.

Additionally, the participants were of the opinion that their income had increased after KENGEN CSR projects were implemented. They suggested that KENGEN should continue doing such projects saying that their lives will never be the same again.

“As famers, we relied on maize and sometimes the market had everyone selling maize thus low prices. Now we have adopted other crops like myself, I now have a small fishpond and often sell fish in the local market to supplement my income,” said PP5.

Another participant from FGD1 happily told his story of how he is now able to feed his children and grandchildren comfortably, thanks to the projects by KENGEN. He stated that,

“Initially it was difficult to feed my family of 8 children and 5 grandchildren but now my wife plants vegetables in our garden and water them during dry seasons and we can comfortably feed,
added PP7.

The study also established that as much as the participants appreciated the CSR projects by KENGEN, some of them felt unhappy with KENGEN. The participants were of the opinion that the assistance provided by KENGEN through its CSR activities did not aid in enhancing the rapport between KENGEN and the neighbouring community.

“We seriously require basic necessities like accessible roads, access to clean water, electric power, proper health and education facilities to enjoy life comfortably like other communities; It's also critical to end pollution of the water and land to allow our community to sustain the customs of our forefathers and ensure our families are adequately nourished. KENGEN projects alone are not sufficient to provide jobs for everyone, even the water and water tanks they have provided are still not enough for the whole community.” Said K5.

Another member of the community from FGD2 expressed gratitude to KENGEN for their projects which had led to a transformation in their society saying.

“I can't thank KENGEN enough for what they are doing in our community. At least we have something to smile about as we look at our day-to-day life and the changes that I have seen.”
Said K1.

The participants in the FGDs were also of the opinion that KENGEN projects were not of substantial benefit to their lives. The concern was that these projects have changed how they used to live and this to them was not so good. One of the participants from FGD1 pointed that,

“Before KENGEN started its projects, I remember my grandfather’s usual saying of the beauty of life. Every individual was able to practice their skills and earn a living by doing either pottery or farming since we also practiced farming, I feel KENGEN is only increasing our issues rather than offering solutions.” Said PP5

Another participant also added that.

“These people lied to us that they will compensate us, we have been waiting and it seems to be taking long and it’s not very good,” said PP8.

Interestingly, some of the focus group participants emphasized the importance of addressing local needs and prioritizing urgent needs pointing that this is often hindered by lack of involvement of local communities at the inception stages of the projects.

“We have had cases of violence against KENGEN staff by community members. This violence will continue to exist as long as there is lack of consistent communication between the company and us, the members of the community,” PP5.

Another participant from FGD 2 lamented that,

“Yes, the projects are important to us, but the company needs to take into consideration our views before coming up with them. They also need to communicate such projects directly to us so that we can all benefit from them,” added PP1.

The findings imply that the local beneficiaries appreciate all benefits drawn from KENGEN activities. However, a lingering issue of mistrust to the company implementing the project is

depicted, an aspect that according to Anderson and Jack (2002) would likely occur due to failure to adhere to social norms and a lack of understanding of the community.

4.7 Discussion of Findings

This study's primary goal was to investigate knowledge and perceptions of beneficiary communities towards CSR activities conducted by KENGEN. This study was centred around KENGEN water project in West Koguta sub-location in Nyanza, Kisumu County. The study provided views of diverse groups represented by both male and female who had been residing in the area under study for 1- 15 years and above with an age group ranging from 20 -40 years and above. This was to allow the researcher to get diverse views on the topic and study from members of the community who had lived there long enough to articulate issues. The ability to adequately respond to the research questions was affirmed by their level of education with secondary school level having a larger representation even though the views were also gathered from primary school and college/university level participants. This depicted a level of understanding of CSR and issues pertaining to the community. The findings of the study therefore represent a balance in representation as an integral part in community development.

The findings on objective one regarding the knowledge and awareness levels of beneficiary communities on KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects revealed that the community members were indeed aware of these projects and had an already formed perception and expectations for the projects. Additionally, the study established that the participants found out about the CSR projects through different sources including their local community, through interactions with the KENGEN team while some discovered the project through their friends. The members of the community however, expressed the need for the KENGEN team to find a way of

sharing such important information with them directly as this would enhance awareness and allow most of the community members an equal chance of benefitting from the same.

The study results corroborate with those of Nikolova & Arsić, (2017) on the need for awareness on CRS projects in order to maximize the benefits by promoting social development. KENGEN has a lot more responsibility to keep sensitising the community members on such CSR projects so as to gain inclusivity and support from them. The lack of information was found to often result in conflicts between KENGEN and the local community members. This is indeed the basis of Stakeholder theory which emphasizes on the influence of key stakeholders' perspectives on the effectiveness of a company's strategic action as noted by Bonnafous-Boucher and Rendtorff (2016). Further, the issues such as lack of awareness found in the study are addressed by stakeholder theory (Harrison, et al., 2019) as an important aspect in order to generate greater satisfaction by the community from the social developmental activities (Nikolova & Arsić, 2017).

The findings on objective two regarding the form and nature of CSR practice among beneficiary communities on KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects revealed that the projects were not meeting the overall community needs in areas where they were implemented. The community members felt that the treatment was unfair and far from a mutual beneficial relationship. They expected to have improvement in livelihood, education, health and food production even though this is far from actualisation. The views of both participants from the interviews and the FGDs revealed that KENGEN was doing very little to support the community in tackling several issues of concern. Even though the participants felt that the nature of KENGEN CSR projects were such that they always tried to address the needs of the society, some of the participants in the FGDs felt that this was not addressed adequately and often resulted into conflicts. The community members

recommended a need for more interaction with them so that KENGEN can listen to them and understand what matters most to them. The study also found that most of the CSR projects by KENGEN included access to clean water, access to education and health facilities.

These findings reinforced the general belief that water is fundamental to health, survival and livelihood, often seen as an economic, social, cultural and environmental good, and a basic human right (WHO, 2010). The findings further reinforced previous studies i.e., according to the United Nations (2011) that rural water programs benefit communities by improving children's education, health of communities and promoting their income generating activities. These findings were also in line with those of other scholars who point to the primary focus of CSR as delivering impactful outcome for communities in which they are implemented (Miotto and Rom-Rodríguez, 2017). This forms the basis of understanding of the nature and form of CSR by the host communities. These findings further reinforced the principles of stakeholder theory to define the responsibilities that organisations ought to fulfil in their CSR activities while working closely with stakeholder and listening to their views and perception.

Regarding the third objective on experiences and perspectives of beneficiary communities on KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects, the findings showed that the community associated several beneficial outcomes to KENGEN's CSR water projects such as diversification of crops and livestock production, construction of fishponds and increased poultry farming. The findings also revealed an increase in enrolment of girls in schools and income levels. The findings also revealed an improvement of living standard with one of the participants pointing to his current ability to feed his eight children and five grandchildren, something he had been struggling with prior to the water project. Despite the positive perception, the study also revealed a lack of

satisfaction with KENGEN pointing to poor communication and lack of sensitization and wider reach of these projects. They pointed to the distribution of water tanks in 2020 which barely reached all the households. The study also revealed a lengthy and slow compensation process as a contribution to the negative perception, in addition to inability to address local needs and prioritizing urgent needs and a lack of involvement of local communities at the inception stages of the projects.

These findings corroborated with those of Migwa and Wanjala (2019) who found that stakeholder engagement was one of the factors that influenced success of CSR projects and those of Masiga (2013) who pointed to the need for an improved community perceptions through engagement and involvement of host communities. James Grunig (2008) posits that for a business to succeed, it must act in a way that addresses issues presented by stakeholders while achieving both management and stakeholder goals. Similarly, aspects of Excellence theory by Grunig (2008) were depicted in the study which found that the host communities were looking for solution to their water, health, education and food production problems, as pointed by one of the participants. Further, excellence theory emphasizes the need for thorough research in identification of individuals that can be directly impacted by organisational choices and need to understand their desire for decision making to involve community problem solving prior to any CSR activities. This was depicted in the current study which found that even though the water project was beneficial to the community members, it was still far from solving their most urgent problems and that there was need for more consultation before implementation of such projects. The two-way communication model was reinforced by the findings of the study as a way of reaching mutuality in interactions with the host community and enhancing their appreciation of such projects, a concept emphasized by Kent and Taylor (2002).

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This section outlines the study's results, conclusions, and recommendations. The primary goal was to investigate knowledge and perception of beneficiary communities on KENGEN CSR projects in West Koguta Sub- County, Kisumu County.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

These results represent views given by diverse groups of both male and female residents of West-Koguta sub-location. These are a representation of the perspective of the beneficiary communities who are directly affected by KENGEN's CSR projects as per the objectives of the study.

The first objective aimed at determining the knowledge and awareness levels of beneficiary communities on KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects. From the findings, both the interviewees and the participants from the three FGDs agreed to be aware of KENGEN CSR activities. However, they differed on how they discovered the projects where some of the participants had the knowledge on KENGEN CSR activities through their local community, others through interactions with the KENGEN team while some got the knowledge from their friends.

Additionally, the findings on the second objective which sought to examine the form and nature of CSR practice among KENGEN's beneficiary communities revealed an unfair treatment instead of a mutually beneficial relationship. It was established that KENGEN was doing very little to support the community and that even though the local communities felt that the nature of KENGEN CSR projects were such that they always tried to address the needs of the society, they felt that this was not addressed adequately. The findings also revealed that the company implemented projects from their own assessment without consulting the community and often

resulted in conflicts. Further, the study found that contrary to the expectations of the communities, most members of the community still experienced shortage in the supply of water and electricity.

The third of objective was to analyse the experiences and perspectives of beneficiary communities on KENGEN CSR activities. It was established that KENGEN CSR water projects led to increased diversification of crops and livestock in the study area. In western region maize, beans, sorghum, cassava, sweet potatoes and millet were the main food crops grown in the area with reliance on the rain before CSR water projects were implemented. However, KENGEN water project opened up the region to new crops including tomatoes, watermelon, sugarcane and other vegetables like pumpkin leaves. The study also found that availability of water had resulted in construction of fishponds and increased poultry farming. The enrolment of girls in schools and income was also found to have improved considerably. The study also established that as much as the participants appreciated the CSR projects by KENGEN, some of them felt unhappy with KENGEN and that the assistance provided by KENGEN through its CSR activities did not contribute to enhancing the rapport between the organisation and the nearby communities. Further, the study established that a lack of involvement of local communities at the inception stages of the projects often prevented the projects from addressing their most urgent needs.

5.3 Conclusion of the Study

These conclusions are drawn from diverse views as well as perspectives shared by beneficiary communities of KENGEN CSR projects. Regarding knowledge and awareness of KENGEN CSR projects by beneficiary communities, the study concluded that there was great awareness by the local communities. The sources of information on the projects include local communities, through friends and acquaintances and through interaction with KENGEN officials.

The second objective aimed at examining the form and nature of CSR practice among beneficiary communities of KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects. The study concluded that indeed KENGEN undertakes various CSR activities aimed at responding to community needs of health, education, water and food production. However, such projects are yet to adequately meet the expectations of the local communities. This is created through involving the local communities from the inception level of such projects all the way to implementation to allow them to have ownership of the projects. The study also concluded that the benefits of KENGEN projects were yet to be felt as some of the local communities are still facing water and electricity challenges despite launching these programs and interventions by KENGEN such as provision of water tanks only reaching a smaller group of the rural households.

Regarding the experiences and perspectives of beneficiary communities on KENGEN CSR activities, the conclusion was that the community had mixed views of the CSR projects. On the positive aspect, the community associated several beneficial outcomes to KENGEN's CSR water projects such as diversification of crops and livestock production, construction of fishponds, increased poultry farming, increase in enrolment of girls in schools and improved income levels. On the negative aspect, they felt a lack of satisfaction with KENGEN pointing to poor

communication and lack of sensitization and wider reach of these projects in addition to slow compensation process.

5.4 Recommendations of the Study

Drawing from the study outcomes and analyses, the researcher proposed the following recommendations:

The study found that other than learning about KENGEN CSR projects from the company officials, the communities relied on friends and local community members for information. Further, that they were not consulted prior to implementation of such projects thus their urgent needs are often left out. Consequently, the study recommends that organisations develop communication plans that enhance inclusivity and transparency with the beneficiary communities to enhance awareness and contribute to positive relationships. Further, the study recommends that the local community leaders be empowered and facilitated by companies implementing CSR projects as they are found to be beneficial and could be their agents in reaching out to communities with information.

The study also found that the CSR activities led to improvement in livelihood of the host communities through availability of water, education and health support as well as increased food production though they were not far reaching to all the households in the community. The study therefore recommends that organisations put more efforts and investment in their CSR activities to enhance economic balance in rural areas by ensuring equal opportunities for all the households in their areas of presence.

Finally, since the study established an unequal benefit from organisation activities and that the organisation had not lived to its promise and community expectations, the study recommends formulation of a well thought out implementation plan that aligns with available resources to avoid over promising that would result to mistrust and negative feeling from the local communities.

5.5 Suggestion for Further Studies

This researcher aimed to examine the perspectives and understanding of beneficiary communities regarding CSR initiatives undertaken by KENGEN in West Koguta sub-county in Kisumu County. There are several other CSR projects by KENGEN in other regions in Kenya. Additional research could be carried out to investigate the perspectives and awareness of recipient communities in other geographical locations.

Additionally, with rising trends and practice of CSR by organisation as a way of brand positioning and maintaining relationship with their stakeholders, further research could be done on other sectors to understand the extent to which such CSR activities respond to needs and expectations of the host communities.

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APPENDIX I: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Do you know about KENGEN's Corporate Social Responsibilities?
2. What is your source of information about KENGEN's CSR activities?
3. Do you think there is adequate information on KENGEN CSR projects to the community members? Please explain
4. In your opinion, what is the form and nature of CSR practice of KENGEN's corporate social responsibility projects? Explain
5. What are your views on KENGEN corporate social responsibility projects? Explain
6. In your opinion, does KENGEN's involvement in social responsibility have any benefits to the local community?
7. In your opinion, does KENGEN's involvement in social responsibility have any negative effects on the local community?
8. Are there areas of CSR where you think the KENGEN does not live up to expectation?
Please explain
9. What do you think should be changed on the CSR Projects?

INTERVIEW TIMETABLE

	Participants	Morning (a.m.)	Transcription	Afternoon (p.m.)	Transcription
Date		10.00 – 11.00		3.00 – 4.00	
Key Informant Interviews					
27/10/2022	P1	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔
28/10/2022	P2	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔
29/10/2022	P3	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔
31/10/2022	P4	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔
1/11/2022	P5	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔
2/11/2022	P6	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔
3/11/2022	P7	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔
4/11/2022	P8	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔
5/11/2022	P9	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔
7/11/2022	P10	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔
Focus Group Discussions					
8/11/2022	FGD1	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔
9/11/2022	FGD2	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔
10/11/2022	FGD3	10.00 – 11.00	↔	3.00 – 4.00	↔

APPENDIX II: CONSENT FORM FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Informed Consent Statement by Participant

Researcher's Name: Gladys Njoroge

Contact: +254 719 756 838

Purpose of study

This research seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of the knowledge and perspectives held by beneficiary communities towards corporate social responsibility projects by the Kenya Electricity Generating Company (Kengen).

Participant's entitlements

I (participant) affirm that I have comprehended my entitlements in connection with this research endeavor. These rights encompass confidentiality and anonymity concerning the utilization of my responses, the prerogative to refrain from answering certain questions if I choose to do so, and the right to terminate my participation at any time without facing any repercussions. I also consent to the recording or transcription of my responses, provided they are maintained confidentially and utilized solely for research purposes.

In acknowledgment of the aforementioned, I hereby confirm my voluntary participation in this research and affirm that I am over 18 years of age.

Participant's Name : _____

Signature : _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX III

DEBRIEFING FORM FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Debriefing Form

I appreciate your significant contributions to this research. Your feedback will greatly contribute to illustrating the insights and perceptions by beneficiary communities towards corporate social responsibility projects by the Kenya Electricity Generating Company (Kengen).

Once the study is concluded and approved, the researcher will gladly provide you with the final report.

If you have any inquiries or additional questions about any aspect of the study, please feel free to reach out to the researcher via phone at +254 719 756 838, or email gladysnjoroge7@gmail.com