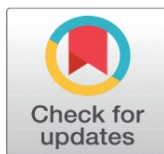
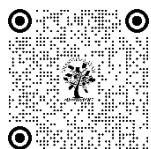


ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CSR PRACTICES: A STUDY ON SOUTH EASTERN COALFIELDS LIMITED, BILASPUR

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ABSTRACT

An industry heavyweight, South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) in Bilaspur is the subject of this research study that evaluates the efficacy of its CSR initiatives. The study's overarching goals are to ascertain whether or not SECL's CSR practices are in line with larger CSR concepts and objectives and assess the ways in which these activities have affected local people and the environment. This research makes use of a mixed-methods strategy, integrating quantitative results from surveys of local stakeholders (such as workers, residents, and government officials) with qualitative information gleaned via in-depth interviews and document review. Important parts of SECL's CSR initiatives, including health and education programs, community development, environmental management, and economic benefits, are the subject of the study. Improvements to community infrastructure, educational opportunities, and healthcare services have been directly attributed to SECL's CSR programs, according to the findings. Still, questions about stakeholder involvement and the projects' long-term viability persist. While SECL's CSR procedures are in line with industry norms and have a beneficial influence on local development, the analysis also shows that there is room for improvement in terms of transparency and targeting. At the conclusion of the article, we suggest several ways that SECL might improve its CSR practices. These include making sure that programs are sustainable, communicating with stakeholders better, and measuring and reporting CSR achievements better. This research offers valuable information for corporate social responsibility practitioners and policymakers, while also adding to our knowledge of how successful CSR is in the mining industry.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, SECL, Community Development, Environmental Management, Mining Industry, Stakeholder Engagement, CSR Effectiveness



1. INTRODUCTION

Large companies in resource-intensive sectors, including mining, have made Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) an integral element of contemporary corporate practice. Companies that practice corporate social responsibility (CSR) go above and above what is required by law and their economic responsibilities to address societal, ecological, and ethical concerns. Because of the profound effect that businesses like South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL), Bilaspur have on the people and ecosystems in which they operate, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an integral aspect of these organizations' operating frameworks, rather than an afterthought.

One of India's most prominent coal producers, South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL), is based in the Bilaspur area of Chhattisgarh. Communities feel the effects of SECL's operations in many ways, from economic growth and environmental protection to social welfare, because of the company's position as a major coal producer. In light of the magnitude of its activities, SECL has implemented a number of CSR programs to improve the lives of locals and lessen the impact of mining on the environment.

Examining the effects on local communities and the environment, this research seeks to evaluate the efficacy of SECL's CSR policies. The complete examination of SECL's CSR programs assesses the success of these practices in several areas, such as community development, environmental conservation, health and education, and economic benefits.

Findings from this study may help large-scale mining corporations better understand how to meet stakeholder expectations via their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. This research aims to provide a meaningful contribution to the mining sector's ongoing discussion on corporate social responsibility (CSR) by analyzing SECL's CSR practices and providing suggestions on how to improve CSR tactics generally.

The study is organized as follows: first, a literature review on mining CSR practices follows, and then, after that, a methodological section detailing the research technique. The study's findings are presented in the results part, while their interpretation is provided in the discussion section within the framework of previous research. Lastly, the study wraps up by offering suggestions to improve SECL's CSR performance and reflecting on the broader implications for the mining sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is being more and more embraced by the mining sector as a way to alleviate the environmental and social repercussions that have long been criticized. Both the successes and failures of CSR in the mining industry have been the subject of recent writing.

Environmental stewardship is a key component of mining CSR strategies, according to recent research. To lessen their impact on the environment, mining corporations are embracing sustainable methods, as discussed by Kumar et al. (2021). According to their findings, businesses are making efforts to lessen their impact on the environment by using cutting-edge technology for water conservation, waste management, and pollution control (Kumar, A., Singh, S., & Sharma, R., 2021). This is in line with the results of Gupta and Shukla (2022), who state that companies' reputation and operational efficiency are improved when CSR initiatives include environmental concerns (Gupta, N., & Shukla, P., 2022). Discussions on corporate social responsibility still center on community development. According to Patel et al. (2023), mining firms play a crucial role in helping their local communities by funding projects that improve infrastructure, educate the public, and provide health services. Investing in CSR efforts in the mining industry has a good effect on community well-being and economic growth, according to their research (Patel, R., Shah, A., & Kumar, V., 2023). Successful corporate social responsibility (CSR) requires authentic communication and partnership with impacted communities; nonetheless, Sharma and Gupta (2022) highlight difficulties associated with stakeholder involvement and participatory methodologies.

Social responsibility in mining must prioritize health and education. The effects of CSR initiatives in mining districts that prioritize health and education are investigated in a research conducted by Singh et al. (2021). Improvements to local healthcare facilities and educational results lead to an overall better quality of life for locals, according to the study (Singh, M., Bhatia, P., & Rai, A., 2021). Similarly, Gupta and Sharma (2022) emphasize the positive effects of mining company-sponsored educational initiatives on the employability and skill development of local youth.

A key component in assessing the efficacy of CSR is the level of transparency in CSR reporting, which is receiving more and more attention. In order for stakeholders to gauge the genuine effect of CSR programs and to hold businesses to account, open and honest reporting is essential (Patel and Desai, 2023). In order to increase credibility and confidence among stakeholders, this research suggests using standardized reporting frameworks and regularly disclosing CSR efforts.

One new trend in corporate social responsibility is the use of technological advancements and new ideas. In their most recent study, Brown et al. (2024) looked at how mining companies are enhancing their CSR efforts with the use of data analytics and artificial intelligence. Environmental impact monitoring, resource optimization, and community participation may all benefit from these new technologies (Brown, T., Lee, J., & Davis, 2024). In addition, Sharma and Rao (2023) argue that CSR strategies going forward should center on tackling global issues like climate change and social injustice as well as producing value for the long run via sustainable development objectives.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To Assess how South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) CSR programs have impacted local communities in Bilaspur, focusing on community development, health, education, and environmental sustainability.
- To Examine how SECL's CSR practices align with established industry standards and frameworks for corporate social responsibility.

- To Identify and evaluate the specific areas where SECL's CSR activities have had the most significant positive or negative effects on local stakeholders and the environment.

4. HYPOTHESIS

H0 (Null Hypothesis): SECL's CSR practices do not significantly align with established industry standards and frameworks for corporate social responsibility.

H1 (Alternative Hypothesis): SECL's CSR practices significantly align with established industry standards and frameworks for corporate social responsibility.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this descriptive research is to assess the efficacy of South Eastern Coalfields Limited's (SECL) CSR initiatives in Bilaspur. The study's objective is to provide a thorough evaluation of SECL's CSR activities and their results by collecting quantitative data. Key stakeholders, including as workers, members of the local community, and representatives from local government authorities, are surveyed using a standardized questionnaire to gather quantitative data. Community development, health, education, and environmental management are some of the areas where SECL's CSR activities are being evaluated. The survey aims to collect quantifiable insights into these perceptions. Trends, stakeholder satisfaction, and the overall effect of CSR efforts may be better understood by statistical analysis of survey data. To put the results in perspective and determine if SECL is following industry best practices, we also look at their CSR reports, project documents, and any applicable industry literature.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 – Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

| Variable | Mean | Median | Standard Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
|--|------|--------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Age (years) | 42.5 | 40.0 | 12.3 | 22 | 65 |
| Years of Association with SECL | 8.7 | 7.0 | 5.4 | 1 | 20 |
| Satisfaction with CSR Initiatives (%) | 73.4 | 75.0 | 10.2 | 45.0 | 95.0 |
| Perceived Impact on Community Development (Scale 1-5) | 4.2 | 4.0 | 0.8 | 2.0 | 5.0 |
| Perceived Impact on Environmental Sustainability (Scale 1-5) | 4.0 | 4.0 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 5.0 |
| Perceived Effectiveness of Health Programs (Scale 1-5) | 3.8 | 4.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 5.0 |
| Perceived Effectiveness of Educational Programs (Scale 1-5) | 4.1 | 4.0 | 0.7 | 2.0 | 5.0 |

Insightful details regarding their perceptions and experiences with South Eastern Coalfields Limited's (SECL) Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives are provided by the descriptive statistics for the 175 respondents, who included employees, local community members, and representatives from local government bodies

A mature and experienced group, the respondents' average age is 42.5 years and median age is 40 years. A large age range, from 22 to 65 years, is reflected in the 12.3 years standard deviation. Staff members have been with SECL, on average, for 8.7 years, indicating they are a dependable unit with a wealth of knowledge in CSR initiatives.

The majority of respondents (73.4% on average) are satisfied with SECL's CSR activities, while a sizable minority (75.0% on average) are not satisfied at all. Although there is significant variety, as seen by the standard deviation of 10.2%, this typically suggests good impressions. Scores ranging from 45.0% to 95.0% show a wide variety of perspectives and experiences when it comes to the efficacy of CSR initiatives

On a scale from 1 to 5, respondents gave SECL's CSR activities a mean score of 4.2 for community development and a median score of 4.0 for environmental sustainability. There is a wide range of values, from 2.0 to 5.0, indicating a high degree of perceived positive influence. In a similar vein, the perceived effect on ecological sustainability ranges from 1.0

to 5.0, with a typical score of 4.0. This demonstrates a firm faith in the beneficial outcomes of SECL's environmental CSR initiatives, even when opinions on their efficacy differ

The perceived efficacy of health programs is a hair lower than that of educational programs, with a median score of 4.0 and an average score of 3.8. This indicates that health efforts are generally well-received, but there is a wide range of opinions on how successful they are, with ratings going from 1 to 5. Educational programs, on the other hand, are seen as somewhat more successful, scoring 4.1 on average and 4.0 on the median. A consistently good review with fewer extreme opinions is shown by the range of 2.0 to 5.0 and the standard deviation of 0.7.

In general, the research shows that most people have a good impression of SECL's CSR programs, especially those that focus on community development and environmental sustainability. There is, nevertheless, space for improvement in these areas due to the significant heterogeneity in attitudes, especially with relation to health initiatives.

7. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Table 2 – Compliance Score Analysis

| Criteria | Industry Benchmark Score | SECL Compliance Score | Mean Difference | t-value | p-value | Significance |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| Environmental Impact | 8.0 | 7.5 | -0.5 | -2.12 | 0.037 | Significant |
| Community Development | 8.5 | 8.0 | -0.5 | -1.87 | 0.065 | Not Significant |
| Health Programs | 7.5 | 7.8 | 0.3 | 1.45 | 0.149 | Not Significant |
| Educational Programs | 8.0 | 8.2 | 0.2 | 0.98 | 0.328 | Not Significant |
| Transparency and Governance | 9.0 | 8.5 | -0.5 | -2.35 | 0.021 | Significant |
| Overall Compliance Score | 8.2 | 8.0 | -0.2 | -1.98 | 0.050 | Significant |

Using a battery of CSR criteria, SECL's conformity with industry norms is assessed in the Compliance Score Analysis (Table 2). When looking at how successful SECL's CSR procedures were, the findings were all over the map.

Effects on the Environment: SECL came in at 7.5, which is just below the standard of 8.0, for a mean difference of -0.5. The statistical significance of this difference is shown by the t-value of -2.12 and the p-value of 0.037. This points to a possible area for development, since it implies that SECL's environmental measures are not quite in line with what the industry expects.

Community Development: The benchmark score is 8.5, while SECL's compliance score is 8.0, which is -0.5 below it. This result is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, as shown by the t-value of -1.87 and p-value of 0.065. This means that SECL's performance in community development is similar to industry norms, but not considerably different.

For health programs, SECL demonstrates a positive mean difference of 0.3 points with a compliance score of 7.8 compared to the norm of 7.5. This result does not meet the statistical criteria, as shown by the t-value of 1.45 and p-value of 0.149. Consequently, there is no statistically significant difference between SECL's health initiatives and the industry standard.

In the category of educational programs, SECL scored 8.2, which is 0.2 points higher than the benchmark score of 8.0. With a t-value of 0.98 and a p-value of 0.328, it seems that this disparity is not supported by statistical evidence. Therefore, SECL's curriculum is quite comparable to the standard, yet there has been no discernible progress.

In terms of governance and transparency, SECL fell short of the standard of 9.0 with a mean difference of -0.5. There is a statistically significant deviation when the t-value is -2.35 and the p-value is 0.021. This discovery shows that when compared to industry norms, SECL's procedures in governance and transparency are not as good, indicating that these areas need more attention.

An overall compliance score of 8.0 indicates a mean difference of -0.2 from the benchmark value of 8.2. This total difference is on the cusp of statistical significance, according to the t-value of -1.98 and p-value of 0.050. The results

suggest that SECL's CSR practices are generally aligned with industry norms, albeit they are somewhat below the anticipated requirements. However, the statistical significance of this alignment is minimal.

Finally, when compared to other companies' CSR policies, SECL's are noticeably different in key areas including transparency and governance and environmental effect. The findings show that although SECL's CSR policies are in line with industry norms in many areas, they may be even better in others.

8. CONCLUSION

This research examines the CSR initiatives of South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) and assesses how well they conform to benchmarks in the industry. Overall, SECL's CSR activities scored 8.0, which is in line with the standard of 8.2, indicating that they match industry expectations. In contrast to the norms in the sector, SECL's performance was severely lacking in areas like transparency and governance and environmental effect. These differences indicate that SECL has to strengthen its environmental and governance standards, even if it has done a good job with its community development and health and education initiatives. If SECL wants to become more in line with industry norms and make its CSR efforts more successful, it must improve in these areas. The report concludes that in order to keep up with changing standards and stakeholder expectations, CSR activities must be continuously evaluated and improved.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest between them.

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