

# AWARENESS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AMONG SELECTED COMPANIES IN MALAYSIA: AN EXPLORATORY NOTE

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*The purpose of this paper is three-fold. First, to explore whether companies in Malaysia are aware of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Second, to explore managers' awareness of CSR, and third, to explore the managers' perceptions of the extent to which CSR initiatives are being implemented by companies in Malaysia. The study was carried out with managers from a sample of public-listed companies in Malaysia. The primary insight is that the companies and managers generally have some understanding of the concept of CSR. However, though some companies have implemented certain CSR initiatives, the number is still low. A substantial percentage of the respondents feel that while these initiatives are considered to be important by their respective companies, no implementation is being planned. One major area for future research is to investigate the reasons why very few companies in Malaysia are implementing CSR initiatives despite the survey suggesting that companies have some awareness of the concept of CSR.*

**Keywords:** *corporate social responsibility, corporate social responsibility initiatives, awareness, managers*

## Introduction

Operating in an emerging market economy, characterized by rapid advances in information and communication technology, globalization and liberalization, businesses in Malaysia are faced with stiff challenges to survive and maintain a competitive edge. One of the biggest challenges of businesses today that will have an impact on profitability in the long run, is that of fulfilling the rising expectations of society of being responsible corporate citizens. A business, however, will not succeed in its attempt to be socially responsible if it does not fully understand the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Based on a mail-questionnaire survey, the present study explores the following research questions. First, are companies in Malaysia aware of CSR? Secondly, are managers aware of CSR? Finally, to what extent are certain CSR initiatives being implemented by companies in Malaysia?

This study has implications for company decision makers and policy makers for a number of reasons. First, studies on awareness of the concept of corporate social responsibility are almost nonexistent. Previous studies on corporate social responsibility have largely focused on the level and type of disclosures and the decision usefulness of corporate social responsibility information (See for example, Belkaoui, 1980; Bowman, 1973; Ernst and Ernst, 1978; Guthrie and Parker, 1990; Nik Ahmad, Sulaiman and Siswantoro, 2003; Thompson and Zakaria, 2004; Tsang, 1998). Very little research has investigated other aspects of CSR, particularly, from the perspective of companies and managers. Most previous research has examined the stakeholders or the users of CSR information. Additionally, there is very limited published research in the area of CSR in developing countries. As Williams [(1998), as cited in Williams and Ho, 1999: 390] argues, there is very limited research on CSR in the Asia-Pacific region. Accordingly, the present study fills a gap in the literature by examining awareness of the concept of CSR and the extent to which different CSR initiatives are being implemented in Malaysian public listed companies. From the practical perspective, exploring corporate awareness of CSR will allow us to decide if companies need to be further exposed to this emerging concept, in order to ensure that businesses fulfill societal expectations of their role as good corporate citizens. In other words, the findings from this study will help in an attempt to identify needs for education and training, both within companies, as well as for consideration by business schools of institutions of higher learning. This is of particular importance given that a recent survey by ACCA Malaysia finds that companies listed on the Main Board of Bursa Malaysia "...have little regard for the potential of corporate social responsibility (CSR), with only one company having had integrated its social responsibility to its vision..." (The Edge Daily, n.d.). Finally, the results from the present study will prove to be beneficial for the policy-makers in their decision-making on whether there is a need to make certain CSR programs mandatory at the company-level.

This paper is organized as follows. The following section provides a discussion of the background and presents a review of related research. Section three discusses the methodology. This is followed by a discussion of the results and interpretation. Finally, the last section provides concluding remarks and suggests possible areas for future research.

## Background and Literature Review

CSR has been defined by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, as, "the continuing commitment by businesses, to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large" (WBCSD, n.d.: <http://www.wbcsd.com>). Similarly, Gray, Owen and Maunders (1987: 4) state that "[s]ocial responsibilities are the responsibilities for actions which do not have purely financial implications and which are demanded of an organization under some (implicit or explicit) identifiable contract".

CSR emerged in the developed countries, in the 1960s. At that time the prime area of concern was human rights and equal employment opportunities (Gray et al., 1987). Rising public concern, then, on social justice issues such as discriminatory hiring practices, caused a paradigm shift in societal perceptions of the role of businesses. Milton Friedman's (1962) thesis that the social responsibility of businesses is confined to maximizing profits

for shareholders or that “the business of business is business” was rebuked and challenged. Instead, the public demanded that businesses be responsible corporate citizens to a wider group of constituents, encompassing shareholders, employees, consumers and the general public. In the 1980s and 1990s, due to rising concern over the adverse impacts of business operations on the natural environment, environmental issues became the core issues of concern in CSR. In response to these societal pressures, businesses in the developed countries began to embrace CSR. Many large corporations went a step further by implementing various CSR programs/initiatives at the company level. For instance, Zairi and Peters (2002) cite Royal Mail as an example of best practice social responsibility. Royal Mail, one of the largest employers in the UK, states that it has two major aims in its community policy. Its first aim is to support and encourage employees to participate in community services. Second, to show to the community, that the company strives to preserve the natural environment and to enhance the opportunities available for the people in the community. Meanwhile IBM has launched its ‘Reinventing Education Program’ to assist the instruction of non-English speaking children in their native language. This teaching model has been implemented in the Philadelphia school system and uses a voice-recognition technology (O’Brien, 2001).

Another example of a multi-national company, which takes CSR seriously, is Coca-Cola. One of the CSR programs that the company has been involved in for some time is investment in community education. The company has invested heavily in schools and libraries. Recently, the company has also implemented CSR programs in its overseas operations. For example, Coca-Cola spent more than \$350 000 in water conservation projects in China. These include tree-planting and other efforts, which are aimed at halting desertification and depletion of ground water (O’Brien, 2001). These examples serve to illustrate how seriously companies in developed countries view the issue of CSR.

This paradigm shift, however, is less apparent in the developing countries. Studies have shown that despite what appears to be an increased public awareness and concern for businesses to be socially and environmentally responsible, businesses in these countries have been slower in responding to the CSR agenda. This situation is reflected somewhat, in the low levels of social and environmental responsibility disclosures in company annual reports in such countries like Jordan, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Singapore (See for instance, Abu Baker and Naser, 2000; ACCA (2004); Andrew et al., 1989; Belal, 2001; Nik Ahmad and Sulaiman, 2004; Nik Ahmad et al., 2003; Thompson and Zakaria, 2004). In the case of Malaysia, for example, the country has undergone tremendous development and economic affluence, bringing about, higher levels of education for the people. This has, in turn, brought about increased public awareness and consciousness on social and environmental issues (USAEP, n.d.). Public interest in environmental-related issues has also been re-kindled by several recent incidents of haze over Malaysia (UNESCAP, n.d.). Active non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including the Environmental Protection Society of Malaysia, *Sahabat Alam Malaysia* and Consumers’ Association of Penang, have also played a crucial role in highlighting the need for businesses to be responsible corporate citizens. All these factors have resulted in an increased societal concern and awareness of the importance of the concept of CSR (USAEP, n.d.).

However, businesses in Malaysia do not appear to be seriously responding to these societal pressures. The other factor that appears to reflect this ‘luke-warm’

response is the fact that a cursory examination of company annual reports reveals that CSR in the developing countries have been largely confined to philanthropic community activities such as charitable donations to orphanages and the like. Most references to corporate social responsibility would be made in the context of cash and other charitable donations to other organizations. Very rarely is CSR discussed in the context of other aspects, for example, minority hiring, product safety, and establishment of CSR committees. Williams and Ho (1999), for example, in their content analysis of company web-sites in four countries in the Asia-Pacific region reported that the three highest-ranked topics under the community theme of companies in Malaysia, are ‘donations to community groups and charitable bodies’, ‘funding scholarship programs and activities’ and ‘supporting national pride/government-sponsored programs’. This may be taken to suggest that companies do not fully understand the CSR concept and the fact that it extends beyond philanthropic activities. This lack of corporate awareness of CSR was also alluded to by the ACCA Malaysia head, Tay Kay Luan. To quote an article in an online newspaper, “Tay said CSR was not just about giving charity amid claims by many organizations in Malaysia of having played a part in CSR through fund raising and charitable activities” (The Edge Daily, n.d. : [http://www.theledgedaily.com/cms/content.jsp?id=com.tms.cms.article.Article\\_7](http://www.theledgedaily.com/cms/content.jsp?id=com.tms.cms.article.Article_7)). This seemingly paradoxical situation provides the motivation for the present study.

We propose that this situation may be largely attributed to a lack of awareness on the concept of CSR among companies and managers in Malaysia. We also suggest that this lack of awareness is also reflected in the extent to which CSR programs are implemented within companies. We suggest this because the literature on the role of company leadership and business ethics and social responsibility emphasizes that one of the responsibilities of top management is to create a climate, within, the organization, which fosters ethical and socially responsible actions and behavior (See for example, Bansal and Roth, 2000; Hitt, 1990; Minkes, Small and Chaterjee, 1999). The literature for example, argues that top management plays a critical role in promoting and establishing the notion that socially responsible actions are important elements of the managerial task. Consequently, if companies and managers are aware of CSR, this would be reflected in the activities of the company, particularly in relation to the implementation of CSR initiatives and CSR disclosures. However, from prior research on disclosures, this does not appear to be true in the case of Malaysia.

Accordingly, this paper examines the following research questions:

1. Are public-listed companies in Malaysia aware of the concept of CSR?
2. Are managers aware of CSR?
3. To what extent have certain CSR initiatives been implemented by public-listed companies in Malaysia?

## Methodology

### Questionnaire Design

The survey instrument used in the present study comprised two parts. Part A contained questions pertaining to awareness of CSR and CSR initiatives. Meanwhile, Part B sought

information on the number of employees in the company, as well as the industry sector to which the company belongs. This section also contained questions on the personal characteristics of respondents. The survey instrument was developed from a review of the literature (Fulop, Hisrich and Szegedi, 1999; Minkes, et al., 1999). The instrument was pilot-tested by distributing it to a number of part-time Masters students who are working as managers, as well as several lecturers in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences at the Institution where the authors are attached. Minor modifications to the wording of a number of questions were made as a consequence.

Questionnaires were sent out to the Corporate Communications managers of 250 randomly selected public listed companies on the KLSE Main Board (now referred to as Bursa Malaysia) during the period of March–July, 2002. The questionnaires were sent out after telephone contact was made to obtain the names of the companies' Corporate Communications managers. In cases where the company does not have a Corporate Communications Department, we explained the focus of the survey and requested for the name of a manager from an appropriate department or unit of the company. A total of only 15 completed questionnaires were received during the initial mailing. Due to time and cost constraints and the extremely low response rate, it was decided that for the first follow-up, we would target a smaller number of companies but would call the managers personally and appeal for response. We narrowed down the list of non-respondents to 70 companies located within the city and then personally called up the managers to appeal for response. We also volunteered to visit the company to collect the questionnaire, if necessary. This first follow-up resulted in another 14 responses. A few companies either informed by telephone or official letter that it was a company policy not to respond to surveys. This had also reduced our response rate. We were unable to proceed with another round of follow-ups due to time and cost constraints.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Demographics of Respondents**

The demographic information for the respondents is shown in Table 1. The levels of education, as well as the respondents' position within the company, appear to indicate that the respondents are competent to respond to the questions in the survey instrument. A majority of the respondents were the Corporate Communications manager in their respective companies. This implies that the respondents were the appropriate target group for a study on the awareness of managers on CSR. The table also shows that the sample of companies surveyed, though small, comprised 8 different industry sectors of the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange's (KLSE) Main Board (now known as Bursa Malaysia). The questionnaire covered three major areas; namely, company awareness of CSR, respondents' awareness of CSR, and the extent to which different CSR programs were implemented in companies. The remainder of the results section is presented below in the order of the research questions previously outlined.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

		n	%
Age	20-25	1	3
	26-35	14	48
	36-45	11	38
	> 45	6	
Gender	Male	15	52
	Female	14	48
Education Level	a) Masters	4	14
	b) Degree	20	69
	c) Diploma	4	14
	d) Secondary School		
	e) Others	1	3
Industrial Sector	a) Trading Services	5	17
	b) Hotel	0	0
	c) Infrastructure Project	2	7
	d) Finance	4	13
	e) Properties	2	7
	f) Technology		
	g) Industrial Products	4	13
	h) Plantation	2	7
	i) Construction	6	21
	j) Consumer Products	4	13

### Companies' Awareness of CSR

The first research question pertains to the managers' perception on their companies' awareness of CSR. Question one asked respondents to rate, on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Not at all aware to 5 = Highly aware, their rating of their companies' degree of awareness of CSR. The results are as shown in Table 2. It can be seen from the table that more than half of the respondents (58.6%) feel that their companies are highly aware of the concept of CSR. Another 34.5% felt that their companies were aware of CSR, while only 6.9% were not sure. Interestingly, no respondent felt that their companies were either "not aware" or "not at all aware" of CSR. Additionally, the mean of 4.52 suggests that the respondents were inclined to feel that their companies are either aware of, or highly aware of, the concept of CSR. This result is fairly surprising given that previous studies on levels of CSR disclosure in company annual reports report low levels of disclosure. This finding may be taken to imply that there are other factors which drive CSR disclosure, other than companies' awareness of CSR. This provides some support for previous studies which suggest that the most important reasons for disclosure of social and/or environmental information include factors related to regulatory threats (Wilmshurst and Frost, 2000), the lack of government pressure to report and the lack of

Table 2: Companies' Awareness of CSR

	Not aware at all 1	Not aware 2	Not sure 3	Aware 4	Highly aware 5
<i>n</i>	0	0	2	10	17
<i>%</i>	0	0	6.90%	34.50%	58.60%

*Mean* = 4.52  
*Std Dev* = 0.63

pressure from other stakeholders (Thompson and Zakaria, 2004). Alternatively, another possible explanation is that awareness of a concept does not necessarily result in action. Bebbington et al. (1994), in their study in U.K. on accountants' attitudes towards environmental issues, also found that awareness does not necessarily lead to action. The authors suggest that other factors such as "situational or internal constraints" may be present, which prevent individuals from translating their attitudes into behaviour (p. 118).

The next question also revolved around the respondents' perception of their companies' awareness of CSR and was stated as follows: "In your opinion, how does your company rank the following groups of people in terms of importance?" The three groups listed were consumers, employees and the general public. The assumption that we made here is that companies which operate by the profit maximization rule would generally rank consumers as the most important group to them. On the other hand, companies which are aware of the concept of CSR and the notion that companies have obligations to many stakeholders and not shareholders, alone, would consider all groups – consumers, employees and the general public as being important stakeholders to their businesses. As Table 3 shows, as many as 72.4% of the respondents ranked consumers as most important. This is followed by employees, with 34.5% of respondents ranking them as the most important stakeholder group. Finally, only a mere 17.2% of respondents ranked the general public as most important. This is consistent with the prior literature (<http://www.csreurope/>). The results though not unexpected, appear to imply that businesses are more concerned with consumers, perhaps due to the profit maximization

Table 3: Importance of Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholders	Ranking					
	1		2		3	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Consumers	21	72.4%	7	24.1%	0	1.0%
Employees	10	34.5%	13	44.8%	6	20.7%
Public	5	17.2%	5	17.2%	19	65.5%

(1 = Most important)

motive, rather than a concern for all the ‘relevant publics’ of a business entity. In other words, attempts by researchers and academics in CSR to push the notion of the social contract and the idea of multiple stakeholders appear to have not been influential. The results suggest that there exists a need for education and training programs to further expose current and future managers to the expanded role of business and the need for a business to fulfill its responsibilities towards multiple stakeholder groups.

### **Results on Respondents’ Awareness of CSR**

The second research question involves an examination of the managers’ awareness of CSR. Two questions related to the respondents’ awareness of CSR. One question asked respondents to tick, what they feel are examples of the lack of social responsibility on the part of businesses. A total of four items were listed. These items are damage to the natural environment, advertising of harmful products, unethical advertising and discriminatory hiring practices. The results indicate that a significant majority i.e. 96.6% of the total respondents agreed that damage to the natural environment was an example of the lack of social responsibility on the part of businesses. This result is expected, given the current widespread public concern for the detrimental effects of business operations on the natural environment. Surprisingly, though, only 41.4% of respondents felt that advertising harmful products was an element that reflected the lack of social responsibility. Meanwhile, 72.4% of respondents agreed that unethical advertising implies the lack of social responsibility and 44.8% felt that discriminatory hiring practices meant the lack of social responsibility. These results appear to suggest that what respondents understand as CSR may differ from one individual to another. Again, this result is supportive of previous studies which have argued that CSR is a complex concept and that various parties have contradictory perceptions of the concept (See O’Dwyer, 2003). To quote, one respondent in O’Dwyer’s study made the following remark:

“Does corporate social responsibility have any concrete meaning? Is it possible to [ever] define it?” (p. 549).

The other question presented respondents with a total of twelve areas, in five categories that constitute a part of being socially responsible. The five categories were consumers/product, employees, community involvement, environment/energy and ‘others’. The items are derived from a review of the related literature. The respondents were asked to tick all relevant areas, which they felt, constituted a part of being socially responsible. The results appear in Table 4 below.

Interestingly, two of the three areas which were ticked by the highest number of respondents (24 out of a total 29 or 82.8%) were ‘donations to support community activities’ and ‘sponsorship of public community activities’. Both of these are basically philanthropic activities. The other area is ‘proper working conditions’. Further, it is interesting to note from the table, that ‘safe products’ was ticked by only 69% of the respondents. This is somewhat surprising, as one would assume that the manufacture and/or sale of safe products would be a crucial area of corporate social responsibility. On the whole, however, it is evident from Table 4 that generally, all the twelve areas listed were considered by more than half of the respondents, to reflect socially responsible behaviour. This suggests that respondents are generally aware of the concept of CSR and understand that CSR activities



Table 4: Areas of CSR

Areas	n	%
<b>Consumers/Product</b>		
Quality of product/ services	20	69.0%
Consumer relations	17	58.6%
Safe product	20	69.0%
<b>Employees</b>		
Fair salaries	22	75.9%
Proper working conditions	24	82.8%
Training employees	22	75.9%
<b>Community involvement</b>		
Donation of cash, products or employee services to support established community activities	24	82.8%
Sponsoring public community activities	24	82.8%
Funding scholarship activities	20	69.0%
<b>Environment/ Energy</b>		
Environmental protection & preservation	21	72.4%
Environmental policy	19	65.5%
Energy conservation	18	62.1%

are not confined to merely philanthropic contributions to charities and the like. In other words, the findings here suggest that respondents do understand that CSR encompasses responsibility to multiple groups of stakeholders including employees, consumers and the society at large. However, to reiterate a point made earlier, it must be emphasised that awareness and understanding of the concept of CSR appear to vary from one individual to another and this may lead to difficulties in any attempt to disclose information unless proper and detailed reporting guidelines are provided.

### Results on the Implementation of CSR Initiatives

The third research question is to what extent have certain CSR initiatives been implemented by companies in Malaysia? Table 5 provides details of the mean responses concerning the knowledge of managers of their companies' CSR initiatives and the extent to which the company has implemented four different CSR programs within the company. These four programs are; the appointment of a manager to be in charge of social responsibility issues, the establishment of a CSR committee, the organization of CSR courses, training programs and/or workshops, and finally, the consideration of CSR aspects when evaluating subordinates' performance. Although CSR initiatives may comprise a variety of programs, we limited the list to only these four as we felt that these four initiatives represent a more structured and serious attempt by companies to discharge their social responsibility. The results from the table clearly indicate that CSR has not progressed very far in Malaysia. This is because the CSR initiative that has been implemented by the highest portion of

Table 5: CSR Initiatives

Practices/ programs	Unknown		Known but considered unimportant		Known and considered important		Implemen- tation is planned		Implemen- ted	
	1		2		3		4		5	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
The appointment of a manager to be in charge of CSR issues	3	10.3	4	13.8	6	20.7	4	13.8	11	37.9
CSR Committee	4	13.8	5	17.2	8	27.6	4	13.8	7	24.1
CSR Courses/ Training/ Workshops	4	13.8	5	17.2	11	37.9	5	17.2	2	6.9
Consideration of CSR aspects when evaluating subordinates' performance	4	13.8	1	3.4	15	51.7	4	13.8	4	13.8

companies, the appointment of a CSR manager, has only been implemented by a mere 37.9% of the total companies in the sample. Meanwhile, only 24.1% of companies have set up a CSR committee. 13.8% of companies do consider CSR aspects in the evaluation of subordinates and finally, what is most surprising and perhaps of great concern, is that only 2 companies, or 6.9% of the total sample, have conducted courses or training programs on CSR.

## Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

There are three aims of this paper. First, to explore companies' awareness of the concept of CSR. Second, to explore managers' awareness of CSR and third, to explore the extent to which certain CSR initiatives have been implemented by public-listed companies in Malaysia. Previous studies on CSR have been limited to an examination of the nature and level of CSR disclosures and much of this research has focused on the developed West. The present study is an attempt to fill the gap in the literature. The results of this study suggest several tentative conclusions regarding CSR in Malaysia. The results show that managers generally perceive that their companies are aware of the concept of CSR. Although the results suggest that the understanding of the exact meaning of CSR differs from one individual to another, there appears to be a consensus on what CSR is and what constitutes socially responsible behavior. Six items: donation of cash, products or employee services to support established community services, sponsoring public community activities, proper working conditions, fair salaries, training of employees and environmental

protection and preservation, were ticked by more than 70% of the respondents as constituting CSR. Thus, at least among the managers who participated in the survey, these areas are considered a part of CSR. The results also appear to be consistent with the findings of previous research which concludes that CSR is a complex concept to understand and perceptions of what CSR is all about may vary from one individual to another (O'Dwyer, 2003). Consequently, an attempt must be made to establish a common basic understanding of CSR, the stakeholder groups, what it encompasses, as well as the types of CSR initiatives that companies can implement.

Furthermore, if the results of the present study were to be interpreted in light of the findings of content analysis studies of the level of CSR disclosure in Malaysia (see for example, ACCA, 2004; Andrew et al., 1989; Nik Ahmad and Sulaiman, 2004; Nik Ahmad et al., 2003; Thompson and Zakaria, 2004), it appears that awareness of CSR is not translated into disclosure in company annual reports. This is particularly disturbing. Further research is needed to determine the exact reasons for this phenomenon. This awareness is also not evident in the extent to which CSR initiatives have been implemented by companies. Thus, one avenue for action is for companies to continue efforts to educate their management on the concept of CSR so that managers are not only aware of the concept of CSR, but also understand its importance and the role that they can play to ensure that their companies are committed to CSR-related efforts. Another avenue for action concerns the business schools in Malaysia. Institutions of higher learning which offer programs in business administration and management must ensure that students are given adequate exposure and understanding of CSR. This will help ensure that graduates fully understand the role and responsibilities of businesses to the wider group of constituents including employees, consumers and the community. In addition, the government too, can play a major role in promoting CSR practices by establishing a CSR Code, akin to the Malaysian Code on Corporate Governance, by which companies should be encouraged to adhere. Perhaps, such a code may be introduced initially, just as a guideline but if it appears that companies are not following it, then the government may want to consider making it mandatory. Another possible avenue for action is the introduction of Corporate Social Reporting Guidelines, similar to the Environmental Reporting Guidelines introduced by ACCA (The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) Malaysia (ACCA, 2003). The introduction of such guidelines will further educate companies on the need to be more socially responsible, as well as providing guidance on how to report CSR-related information. Additionally, research on the success factors and barriers to the implementation of CSR programs within public listed companies could prove to be fruitful. This would provide useful insights into the factors that are necessary to successfully implement CSR initiatives at the company level. Finally, one interesting area for further research is examining motivations which induce companies to be responsible corporate citizens. It will be useful to know if companies do indeed have a conscience, whether companies feel pressured to do so, whether companies are attempting to pre-empt legislation, whether companies' sole interest lies in mere regulatory compliance or whether companies are socially responsible as a result of the values of managers and other employees.

Finally, several limitations of the study must be noted. First and most important, is the very small sample size in this study, as well as the non random sample selection method. As such, it must be noted that the findings cannot be generalized beyond the

sample of 29 managers used in the study. If the present study is replicated with a larger sample size, it is possible that the results will be different. Second, with such a low response rate as was the case of the present study, there is always the possibility of a non-response bias. Accordingly, the present study should be merely considered as an exploratory study, which serves as a basis for further work in the area.

Third, the data was collected by means of a questionnaire survey. Consequently, the study has all the disadvantages normally associated with the survey method. It is also worthy to note that richer data may be obtained if the interview method was chosen, especially given the very small sample size. Despite these limitations, it is hoped that the present study has achieved its aim of providing exploratory evidence pertaining to CSR awareness in Malaysia, given the very limited research on this area to date.

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