



Corporate Social Responsibility and Poverty Reduction in Emerging Economies: Evidence from ASOPADEC Host Communities, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines corporate responsibility as a corporate governance mechanism influencing economic development outcomes in emerging economies, with evidence from host communities of the Abia State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (ASOPADEC), Nigeria. Consequently, ASOPADEC has undertaken various CSR interventions aimed at improving the welfare and living standards of people within its host communities. The study was guided by relevant three hypotheses derived from the objectives of the study. Data were obtained from both primary sources, including questionnaires and interviews, and secondary sources. The population of the study comprised 1,188 respondents, while a sample size of 724 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency tables, percentages, and mean scores, while the Coefficient of Variation (C.V.) was employed to assess the consistency of responses. The study found out among others that establishment of ASOPADEC-funded health centres decreased average travel distance to basic healthcare and increased utilization of antenatal, immunization, and outpatient services by host community members. Also, the study recommends among others that the Commission should enter formal service-level agreements with the Abia State Primary Healthcare Development Agency to guarantee staffing, supervision, and referral systems for CSR health facilities. The study concludes that ASOPADEC's CSR initiatives have made a positive contribution to poverty alleviation in its host communities and demonstrate the potential of well-implemented CSR programmes to foster inclusive growth, social cohesion, and sustainable community development.

Keywords: *Corporate Social Responsibility, Poverty Reduction, Emerging Economy, Business Economics, ASOPADEC, Host Communities, Corporate Governance, Oil-Producing Communities.*

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Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility has become a central development mechanism in Nigeria's oil-

producing states, where petroleum extraction occurs alongside entrenched poverty and infrastructural deficits that continue to undermine household welfare (Amaeshi et al., 2016; Uduji & Okolo-Obasi, 2018). Abia State Oil Producing Areas

Development Commission was established to address ecological degradation and socio-economic marginalization in Ukwa East and Ukwa West local government areas, and the Commission operationalizes its mandate through infrastructure provision, social welfare outreach, and targeted support to vulnerable groups within host communities (Nwosu, 2021; ASOPADEC, 2024). In 2024 and 2025, ASOPADEC sustained these interventions by donating food items, toiletries, and cash to the School for the Blind in Umuahia North and to Susana Homes for the Less Privileged in Obuzor, Ukwa West, with Commission officials stating that such initiatives align with its statutory role of complementing state poverty alleviation programmes and improving welfare conditions for marginalized populations (News Portal, 2025; ASOPADEC, 2025). This pattern of welfare-oriented CSR raises important empirical questions about the extent to which ASOPADEC's activities translate into measurable reductions in multidimensional poverty indicators, including consumption, access to basic services, and livelihood security, among beneficiary households in oil-producing communities (Omeje, 2017; Watts, 2020).

Scholarship on CSR in the ASOPADEC host communities reveals a complex and often contested relationship between corporate and state interventions and development outcomes, particularly regarding sustainable poverty reduction (Idemudia, 2014; Frynas, 2009). The persistence of poverty in Nigeria's oil-producing areas underscores the urgency of assessing CSR effectiveness at the community level, especially as

national data continue to document high rates of multidimensional deprivation (World Bank, 2023; National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). ASOPADEC functions within this context as the primary institutional mechanism for channeling development resources to communities impacted by oil activities, and the Commission's recent emphasis on supporting persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups reflects a social protection orientation that targets multiple dimensions of poverty beyond income alone (Sen, 1999; ASOPADEC, 2024). However, whether these interventions alter household welfare trajectories over time remains an empirical question requiring systematic field evidence from ASOPADEC communities, because previous studies of Niger Delta CSR have shown that without mechanisms for skills transfer and economic linkage, welfare projects may have limited lasting effects on poverty reduction (Uduji & Okolo-Obasi, 2018; Watts, 2020). Consequently, understanding the pathways through which ASOPADEC's CSR influences educational access, health outcomes, and livelihood opportunities is critical for policy refinement (Omeje, 2017; Okolo-Obasi, 2019).

In the last three decades, Abia State has experienced increased activities in oil exploration and production, refining, and product marketing operations (Adiele, 2019). Ukwa West, the only oil producing area in Abia State, produces 205,000 barrel per day (Bpd) of crude oil and gas production of 190 million standard cubic per day (mmscf/d) from Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC, 2018). Despite the production capacity of oil and gas in Abia States, indigenous people of the State are impoverished due to the environmental impact of oil production and lack of adequate

regulations on multinational companies, as they become more vulnerable to food shortages, health hazards, land loss, pollution, forced migration and unemployment, destruction of wildlife biodiversity, loss of fertility among others (Adiele. 2019). ASOPADEC is an interventionist agency of Abia State government created by law to ensure rapid transformation of the oil producing communities and beyond. The commission derives her funding from 30% of the 13% oil derivation fund. ONE of the resounding landmark achievements and legacy of former Governor of Abia State, Senator Theodore Ahamefule Orji, is the establishment of the Abia State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (ASOPADEC), which has become a stronghold of super-structural development in the state {ASOPADEC Annual Report, 2020}. The Abia State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (ASOPADEC) has a multifaceted mandate aimed at improving the lives of people in oil-producing areas. Its mandate include facilitating the development of infrastructure such as roads, power generation, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions (Onyeka, 2022) ASOPADEC is also mandated to promote socio-economic advancement of the people, improving the infrastructural base of communities, and cooperating with stakeholders to achieve these goals (ASOPADEC, 2022). The commission receives and administers 30% of the 13% oil derivation fund for rehabilitation and development projects in oil-producing areas, addressing environmental degradation, infrastructural dilapidation, and human capital development challenges (Onyeka, 2022; Chikezie, 2022). Abia, one of the states under the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was the last to establish its commission due to the political intrigues that beclouded the hegemony that strangled the state between 1999 and 2007. But the enabling Law No. 9 of 2009 enacted by the Abia State House of Assembly came into force on July 8, 2009 and was assented into

by the State Governor Chief T.A. Orji on December 17, 2009, while the pioneer members of the commission were inaugurated in March 2010{Johnson, 2020}. It is the responsibility of ASOPADEC “to receive and administer exclusively 30 percent of the 13 percent oil derivation fund accruing to the state for the purposes of rehabilitation and development of oil producing areas and communities in the state including manpower and carrying out other developmental projects as may be determined by the commission from time to time”, to liaise with the relevant federal and state government authorities and oil prospecting and producing companies on the control and effective methods of tackling problems of erosion, oil pollution and spillage including other ecological or environmental problems which result in the degradation of oil producing areas of the state.

Statement of the Problem

The host communities of Abia State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (ASOPADEC) in Ukwa West Local Government Area [LGA}] face numerous challenges despite the presence of oil companies. One of the primary problems is environmental degradation and lack of environmental justice. Oil exploration and production activities have resulted in environmental pollution, including oil spills, gas flaring, and water contamination, which negatively impact the livelihoods of community members. For instance, in the community of Owaza in Ukwa West LGA, frequent oil spills have destroyed farmlands and water sources, leading to loss of income and health problems for residents. According to a study by Nwilo and Badejo (2020), oil spills in those communities have resulted in significant environmental damage and loss of biodiversity. Inadequate compensation and lack of benefits sharing poses a ciical challenge. Community

members often feel that they are not adequately compensated for the environmental damage and loss of livelihoods caused by oil exploration and production activities. In the community of Umuahala, residents have complained about the lack of royalties and other benefits, despite being the hosts of oil-producing facilities. According to a report by NOSDRA (2022), many oil-producing communities in Nigeria, including those in Abia State, have complained about inadequate compensation for oil spills and other environmental damages.

Furthermore, poor infrastructure and lack of basic amenities are significant problems in the host communities. Despite the revenue generated from oil production, many communities lack basic infrastructure such as good roads, electricity, clean water, and healthcare facilities. In the community of Owaza, residents have reported poor road conditions that make it difficult to access markets, healthcare facilities, and other essential services. According to a study by Okoli and Okoli (2019), the lack of basic infrastructure in oil-producing communities in Abia State is a major challenge to community development. The lack of community participation and engagement in decision-making processes is another challenge. Community members often feel that their voices are not heard, and their concerns are not addressed by oil companies and government agencies. In the community of Umuorie, residents have complained about the lack of consultation and participation in the development of CSR projects, leading to projects that do not meet their needs or priorities. According to a report by the Revenue Watch

Institute (2020), community participation and engagement are critical to ensuring that oil revenue is managed in a way that benefits local communities.

In addition, health problems and lack of healthcare services are significant concerns in the host communities. Oil exploration and production activities have been linked to various health problems, including respiratory diseases, skin conditions, and cancer. In the community of Umuokwor in Ukwa L.G.A, residents have reported high rates of respiratory diseases due to gas flaring, but lack access to adequate healthcare services to manage these conditions. According to a study by Anaele and Okoro (2021), oil pollution in the Ukwa region has resulted in significant health problems for local communities. Youth unemployment and lack of economic opportunities are significant problems in the host communities. Despite the presence of oil companies, many young people in the communities lack access to employment opportunities, leading to frustration and disillusionment. In the community of uzuaku in Ukwa West LGA, young people have reported high rates of unemployment, with many feeling that they have limited opportunities for economic advancement. According to a report by the International Labour Organization (2020), youth unemployment is a major challenge in Nigeria's oil-producing regions.

Objective of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to investigate Corporate Social Responsibility programmes of ASOPADEC and its effects on poverty reduction in emerging economies among members of its host

communities in Ukwa East and Ukwa West LGAs of Abia State, Nigeria. While the specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine how CSR interventions in physical infrastructure by ASOPADEC affect the income status of households within the host communities.
2. To analyze the extent to which ASOPADEC's social welfare schemes improve community members' access to essential services, particularly education and healthcare.
3. To ascertain the link between ASOPADEC's economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable populations in the host communities.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do ASOPADEC's physical infrastructure CSR projects affect household income status in the host communities?
2. How do ASOPADEC's social welfare schemes impact access to education and healthcare services among residents of the host communities?
3. What is the nexus between ASOPADEC's economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable groups in the host communities?

Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following hypotheses:

1. CSR interventions in physical infrastructure by ASOPADEC have a significant effect on the income status of households in the host communities.
2. ASOPADEC's social welfare schemes improve access to education and healthcare services in the host communities.
3. There is a significant relationship between

ASOPADEC's economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable groups in the host communities.

Literature Review

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

This is seen not only as a means by which business can mitigate the impact of the negative externalities that arise from its operations but also as means to contribute to sustainable development as part of their obligation to their host communities, their stakeholders and to the host nation at large. The desire for businesses to impact positively on the society is not necessarily a new concept (May, Cheney, & Roper, 2007). For centuries, there are evidences of business concern for communities and wider society. In the last five decades, there has been formal writing on the social responsibility of businesses (Carrol 1999). The book *'Social Responsibilities of the Businessman'* that was written and published by Howard R. Bowen in 1953 is arguably the pioneer of modern literature on CSR. Bowen saw large corporations as vital centres of power whose decision making had visible impacts on the citizens of the society. He is considered the *"Father of Corporate Social Responsibility."* (Carrol, 1999). The 1960s saw the advancement of the debate on social responsibility of business by attempting to link society and business. Keith David wrote extensively about CSR with perceptions similar to that of Bowen. Davis (1960), proposed the relationship between social responsibility and business power in his famous argument of the "Iron Law of Responsibility," which posits that "social responsibilities of businessmen need to be commensurate with their social power". He believed

that social responsibilities of businessmen arise from the extent a social power they have and that “the avoidance of social responsibility leads to gradual erosion of social power”. This means that businesses have the tendency to lose their social power if they do not engage in CSR (Carrol 1999).

Socially responsible business decisions have the possibility of ensuring economic gain to the corporations in the long run thereby regaining whatever was spent on CSR (p. 70). This was recognized by scholars and managers and dominated the debate in the late 1970s and 1980s and it is still widely adopted by modern-day companies in defense of the “business-case” for CSR. McGuire (1963) introduced the concept of corporate citizenship into CSR by stating that businesses have economic and legal responsibilities as well as “certain responsibilities to society that extend beyond these obligations” (Carroll 1999, p. 272). Walton (1967) supported McGuire’s position stating that these responsibilities are voluntary. This means that CSR is a voluntary and self-regulated work of a business organization. The 1970s and 1980s saw an expansion in the CSR discourse with authors like Morrell Heald (1970) and Harold Johnson (1971). Heald (1970), suggest that business people during that period were more preoccupied with corporate philanthropy and community relations. Johnson (1971), leaned towards stakeholder approach. He argued that CSR is expected to consider multiple interests of other stakeholders (like employees, suppliers, and local communities). Apart from making profit for its shareholders, businesses can achieve their multiple corporate goals and long-run profit maximization (Übius, 2009). Currently, CSR is being practiced by

companies as part of their business operations and policies (Makower, 2007).

Reasons for Engaging in CSR

There are four broad reasons why companies embrace CSR as part of their business policies and strategies.

They are; moral aspects, sustainability, social license to operate, and reputation (Porter & Kramer 2006).

The moral aspect has to deal with ‘doing the right thing’. Some of the ways businesses apply morality as CSR is for instance, honestly reporting its financial statements, obeying environmental laws. Sustainability on its own appeals to the triple bottom line of environment, social and economic performances. It is by avoiding detrimental social and environmental activities that companies reflect sustainability in their CSR (Eweje, 2011). In addition, the aspect of social license to operate concerns the concrete ways in which a company can identify social challenges which the stakeholders consider important and act proactively to resolve them. Gaining social license to operate encourages constructive dialogues with identified stakeholders. This reason is popular among extractive companies since they rely on government consents and the tolerance of their immediate neighbours like host communities (Prno, & Slocombe, 2012; Hah & Freeman, 2014).

Finally, concerns about reputation are based on acquiring a positive social license to operate and the ability to satisfy the expectations of the society. However, most oil and gas companies have reputation issues especially due to environment related concerns. Hence, they pursue CSR in hopes that their consciousness for the environment may cushion public criticisms of their business operations. Sometimes, they pursue these through massive

marketing campaigns and public relations (Porter & Kramer 2006, p. 4; Banerjee 2008, p. 62). Competitiveness is an added advantage which companies achieve from engaging in CSR. However, when a company is noticed by its stakeholders as having quality corporate agendas towards CSR that incorporates social and economic benefits, they have justifiable pride to be associated with that company as against similar companies (Porter & Kramer, 2006, p. 4). All these reasons entails that CSR is a worthy cause that presents opportunities to create shared values that is mutually beneficial to both business and society.

Poverty Reduction in Emerging Economies

Research from countries that are developing shows that the way organizations are structured to carry out corporate social responsibility (CSR) plays a key role in how effective CSR is at reducing poverty. This effect, however, depends a lot on the specific situation in each place. Akbar and their team in 2024 found that in Indonesia, CSR programs run by mining companies helped cut monetary poverty by nearly 8.3% in the areas where they operate. But these same programs did not make much of a difference when it came to health and education. The reason for this, they said, was that the CSR efforts were not matching up with what the local communities really needed. In a similar situation, Ablo and Overå (2023) studied CSR related to oil in Ghana and found that while these programs improved access to clean drinking water, the way projects were chosen—often controlled by powerful elites—made inequality within communities worse. These findings suggest that relying only on companies to do CSR on their own might not be enough. Instead, using legal

systems and government-run groups might help fix some of the problems that come with voluntary CSR efforts. An example of this is the Abia State Oil Production Areas Development Commission (ASOPADEC) in Nigeria's oil-producing regions. This commission is responsible for managing the money that oil companies give for CSR, making sure it goes to the local communities in a more fair and effective way.

Corporate Governance and CSR Delivery Mechanisms

Corporate governance creates procedures through which corporate social responsibility is authorized, implemented, and evaluated. In emerging economies, governance frameworks must address institutional voids, concentrated ownership, and uneven regulatory enforcement that shape how CSR moves from corporate policy to measurable community outcomes. The board of directors is central to this process because it approves CSR budgets, determines project priorities, and defines lines of accountability. Where governance is weak, CSR often defaults to discretionary philanthropy rather than strategic development intervention. Board composition and independence significantly affect the quality of CSR delivery. Endrikat et al. (2024) studied 127 firms in emerging markets and found that boards with independent directors possessing sustainability expertise achieved 28% higher CSR performance scores. Independent oversight reduces agency conflicts and strengthens stakeholder orientation. However, Claessens and Yurtoglu (2023) posits that in family or state-dominated firms common to Nigeria, independent directors frequently lack de facto authority, limiting their ability to enforce CSR

commitments. Therefore, formal board independence must be matched by actual decision-making power. Transparency and disclosure act as governance mechanisms that discipline CSR implementation. The 2023 OECD Principles of Corporate Governance emphasize that sustainability reporting in emerging economies enhances credibility only when disclosures are standardized, comparable, and subject to external verification. Marquis et al. (2023) report that 62% of CSR claims by emerging market multinationals could not be independently verified, creating a gap between reported activities and delivered impact. Digital innovations are addressing this deficit. Pilot blockchain tracking systems in Nigeria's Niger Delta now allow host communities to verify CSR expenditures in real time, increasing accountability. Statutory development commissions represent a hybrid governance model for CSR delivery in resource-rich regions. Commissions such as ASOPADEC in Nigeria, NDDC, and Ghana's Petroleum Commission use tripartite boards comprising government officials, oil company representatives, and community members. Ekhatior (2024) argues that this structure can mitigate elite capture and improve project alignment with local needs if community representatives hold binding veto rights and audit access. When community participation is symbolic, the commission tends to reproduce existing patronage networks rather than correct them.

Executive leadership characteristics further mediate the governance-CSR link. Li et al. (2023) show that CEOs with political backgrounds or dual CEO-board chair roles in Chinese state enterprises prioritize short-term, high-visibility CSR projects over long-

term poverty interventions. Similar patterns are documented in Nigerian development commissions where political appointments influence project selection. Separating the CEO and board chair functions and tying executive compensation to verified CSR outcomes strengthens the alignment between governance structures and poverty reduction objectives. Effective CSR delivery requires integrated governance across strategic, operational, and evaluative levels. Strategically, boards must define material CSR issues and link them to enterprise risk. Operationally, independent project management units with community co-design reduce fund leakage and improve relevance. Evaluatively, third-party audits and publicly accessible performance dashboards create feedback loops for continuous improvement. Evidence from Bangladesh, India, and Brazil indicates that firms adopting this integrated framework record stronger ESG performance and contribute more directly to SDG 1 and SDG 8. For ASOPADEC, the literature suggests that reforms in board independence, disclosure practices, and community authority are preconditions for CSR to achieve sustained poverty reduction.

Gap in Literature

Extant literature on corporate social responsibility and poverty reduction in emerging economies with focus on ASOPADEC host communities reveals a critical gap in understanding the effects of CSR initiatives on poverty reduction, particularly in the context of oil-producing communities. While numerous studies have examined the economic and environmental implications of ASOPADEC's CSR, few delved into the social dimension of ASOPADEC's CSR which has to with the ways in

which ASOPADEC impact society and contribute to poverty reduction which includes development projects, and supporting local initiatives, providing education, vocational training, and skills development programs for employees and community members and promoting health and wellness through access to healthcare. Additionally, existing literature often overlooks the socio-cultural nuances of the host communities, failing to consider how contextual factors influence CSR effectiveness of ASOPADEC. Furthermore, the impact of CSR initiatives on poverty reduction vis a vis education, health and infrastructure development remains understudied. The scarcity of empirical data and longitudinal studies hinder comprehensive understanding.

Theoretical Framework

Empowerment Theory

According to Zimmerman, the proponent of the Empowerment Theory, empowerment is a process that enables individuals, organizations, and communities to gain control over their lives and environments (Zimmerman, 2000). The Empowerment Theory emphasizes the importance of enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to make informed decisions and take action to achieve their desired outcomes. This theory is based on the idea that empowerment is a multifaceted concept that involves psychological, social, and behavioral components. The Empowerment Theory identifies three levels of empowerment: intra-personal, inter-personal, and behavioral (Zimmerman, 2000). Intra-personal empowerment refers to an individual's sense of control, self-efficacy, and confidence. Inter-personal empowerment involves social support, networks, and

relationships that enable individuals to access resources and opportunities. Behavioral empowerment refers to the actions taken by individuals to achieve their desired outcomes and exercise control over their lives. By understanding these different levels of empowerment, practitioners and researchers can develop targeted interventions to promote empowerment and improve the well-being of individuals and communities.

Empowerment Theory has been applied in various fields, including community development, public health, and education (Zimmerman, 2000). In community development, empowerment-based approaches have been used to promote community participation, decision-making, and collective action. For example, community-based initiatives that provide training and resources to community members can enhance their capacity to identify and address their own needs and priorities. In public health, empowerment-based interventions have been used to promote health behaviors and improve health outcomes among marginalized populations. One of the key strengths of the Empowerment Theory is its emphasis on the importance of context and culture in shaping empowerment processes and outcomes (Zimmerman, 2000).

Operationalization of Key Concepts

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a self-regulating business model that helps a company to be socially accountable to itself, its stakeholders, and the public. By practicing corporate social responsibility, also called corporate citizenship, companies can be conscious of the kind of impact they are having on all aspects of society, including economic, social, and

environmental. To engage in CSR means that, in the ordinary course of business, a company is operating in ways that will enhance society and the environment, instead of contributing negatively to them. In a very strict sense, CSR means that businesses in addition to maximizing shareholder value, should act in a manner that benefits society by acting responsibly in many ways, such as promoting volunteering, making changes that benefit the environment, and engaging in charitable giving.

Poverty Reduction

Poverty reduction refers to the process of improving the economic and social well-being of individuals by reducing their poverty levels. It involves implementing policies, programs, and interventions aimed at increasing access to resources, services, and opportunities that enable people to lift themselves out of poverty. Poverty reduction often focuses on income generation such as creating jobs, promoting entrepreneurship, increasing income opportunities; social services such as improving access to education, healthcare, and other essential services; social protection such as cash transfer, food assistance etc; and empowerment such as building capacity, promoting participation and enhancing decision making power among marginalized groups.

Research Procedure

Study Area

The study area is Asa in Ukwa West L.G.A of Abia State where the host communities (oil producing communities - Owaza. Uzuaku. Umuokwor, Umuahala and Umuorie) are located. Asa people are predominantly farmers, with subsistence agriculture being the major practice, while small forms of commercial farming is also done.

The main crop farmed in this area is Cassava, which is processed into garri, and consumed at home or sold in markets.

Research Design

Research design is the specification of the procedure for collecting and analyzing data. It is the “blue print” of the study. The study made use of both primary and secondary sources of data collection. In the primary source, the researcher made use of questionnaire and interview. The researcher interviewed members of the host communities and Staff of ASOPADEC.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises of the General Assembly of the host communities - Owaza. Uzuaku. Umuokwor, Umuahala and Umuorie known as Amala made up of the men’s wing, women’s wing and the youth wing and the Staff of ASOPADEC. The population of the host communities are as follows: Owaza 205, Uzuaku 172, Umuokwor 85, Umuahala 131 and Umuorie 96. While the population of ASOPADEC is 499 (ASOPADEC, 2022). Therefore, the total population size for the study is one thousand one hundred and eighty eight (1188).

Sample size

It was not easy for the researcher to cover the entire population size of the study; hence, samples were drawn from each of the groups that make up the population. By this, 136 respondents were selected from Owaza, 120 respondents were selected from Uzuaku, 70 respondents were selected from Umuokwor, 99 respondents were selected from Umuahala, 77 respondents were selected from Umuorie and 222 respondents were selected from ASOPADEC. Therefore, these sample sizes were

obtained using mathematical model by Yamane's (1964) as shown below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size
- e = Error of tolerance
- 1 = Statistical constant

Therefore, the total sample size will be 724.

Sampling Procedure

Multi-purpose sampling technique was used by employing stratified random sampling first, and then using purposive sampling within each stratum to get the target respondents.

Sources of Data Collection

The data for this study was collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary source includes questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was a closed-ended type. The close-ended type of questionnaire provided five (5) options, where respondents selected their answer. The questionnaire was structured into two (2) sections, with section one (1) eliciting information about the respondents' bio-data, like age, sex, qualification, etc. Whereas, section two (2) reflected the objectives, research questions and hypotheses of this study. The interview was structured schedule where the researcher followed a prepared set of questions that facilitated the process of the persons that responded to the questions contained in the schedule. To support the findings of this study, the researcher used secondary information from textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers, monographs and official documents of the company,

etc.

Methods of Data Collection

Methods of data collection for this study were questionnaire and interview, text books, journals, and internet materials.

Method of data Presentation and Analysis

The method of data analysis for this research is descriptive. The method involved describing the data collected using the simple statistical method such as tables, means and percentages. The responses gotten from the respondents were analyzed using separate tables. With this, it was be easy to see the opinions of respondents at a glance and conclusions easily drawn for testing of the hypotheses formulated. The data generated were subjected to statistical analysis using Coefficient of Variation (C.V). Coefficient of variation was used to measure or evaluate the degree of variations among the observation (responses). This enabled the researcher to estimate the extent to which the responses differ from another. Hence, it gave an insight to the extent to which the option with the highest number of respondents has gone in meeting the objective of each formulated question/hypothesis. The formula used for coefficient of variation (C.V) is given as follows:

$$C.V = \frac{S}{\bar{X}} \times 100$$

Where S is unbiased standard deviation

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{\sum x^2 - \frac{(\sum x)^2}{n}}{n-1}}$$

$\bar{X}$ is unbiased mean of observations

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{n} \quad \text{or} \quad \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

$$\frac{\quad}{n-1}$$

$$\frac{\quad}{df}$$

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1

CSR interventions in physical infrastructure by ASOPADEC have a significant effect on the income status of households in the host communities.

This hypothesis will be verified through the results obtained in questions 1 and 2 of the questionnaire.

Questionnaire item 1: ASOPADEC has constructed or renovated classroom blocks in my community within the last 5 years

Table 1: CSR interventions in physical infrastructure by ASOPADEC have a significant effect on the income status of households in the host communities.

{Responses from ASOPADEC}		
	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Options		
Strongly agree	100	47.6
Agree	60	28.6
Disagree	40	19.0
Strongly disagree	10	4.8
Undecided	0	0
Total	210	100

Source: Field work (May, 2026)

The table above indicates that 100 respondents representing 47.6% strongly agree that CSR interventions in physical infrastructure by ASOPADEC have a significant effect on the income status of households in the host communities. 60 respondents representing 28.6% agree with the statement. However, 40 respondents representing 19.0% and 10 respondents representing 4.8% disagree. After necessary calculation and computation from the above table, the result of coefficient of variation with the value of 84.32% shows that CSR interventions in physical

infrastructure by ASOPADEC have a significant effect on the income status of households in the host communities.

Questionnaire item 2: Teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, desks, and science equipment provided by ASOPADEC have improved schooling in this community

Table 2: CSR interventions in physical infrastructure by ASOPADEC have a significant effect on the income status of households in the host communities.

(Responses from the host communities)					
Community	Statistics		SA	A	D
	SD	U	Total		
Owaza		Frequency	125	120	85
	60	0	390		
		Percentage	32.0	30.8	21.8
	15.3	0	100		
		% CV	52.37%		
Uzuaku		Frequency	130	120	80
	60	0	390		
		Percentage	33.3	30.8	20.5
	15.3	0	100		
		% CV	53.49%		
Umuokwor		Frequency	120	110	100
	60	0	390		
		Percentage	30.8	28.2	25.6
	15.3	0	100		
		% CV	50.45%		
Umuahala		Frequency	145	115	70
	60	0	390		
		Percentage	37.18	29.6	17.9
	15.3	0	100		

	% CV	57.04%		
Umuorie	Frequency	130	110	80
	70	0	390	
	Percentage	33.3	28.2	20.5
	17.6	0	100	
	% CV	50.97%		

Source: Field work (May, 2026)

From the table above, 125, 130, 120, 145 and 130 respondents representing 32.0%, 33.3%, 30.8%, 37.18% and 33.3% strongly agree that CSR interventions in physical infrastructure by ASOPADEC have a significant effect on the income status of households in the host communities. Also, 120, 120, 110, 115 and 110 respondents respectively representing 30.8%, 30.8%, 28.2%, 29.6% and 28.2% agree that CSR interventions in physical infrastructure by ASOPADEC have a significant effect on the income status of households in the host communities. The strongly agree and agree options outweighs the 85, 80, 100, 70 and 80 respondents representing 21.8%, 20.5%, 25.6% 17.9% and 20.5% who strongly disagree and 60, 60, 60, 60 and 70 respondents representing 15.3%, 15.3%, 15.3% , 15.3% and 17.6% who disagree with the statement. Thus, after necessary calculation and computation from the table above, the coefficient of variation with the following values: 52.37%, 53.49%, 50.45%, 57.04% and 50.97% indicates that CSR interventions in physical infrastructure by ASOPADEC have a significant effect on the income status of households in the host communities.

Based on the decision rule of C.V which states thus: When C.V is 0% - 29%, it indicates very low

variability; Decision: Reject hypothesis. When C.V is 30% - 49%, it indicates low variability; Decision: Reject hypothesis. When C.V is 50% -59%, it indicates moderate variability; Decision: Accept hypothesis. When C.V is 60% and above, it indicates high variability; Decision: Accept hypothesis. The results of C.V in the analyses above indicate both moderate variability and high variability. Therefore, we accept the first hypothesis which states that CSR interventions in physical infrastructure by ASOPADEC have a significant effect on the income status of households in the host communities.

Hypothesis 2
ASOPADEC’s social welfare schemes improve access to education and healthcare services in the host communities.

This hypothesis will be verified through the results obtained in questions 4 and 5 of the questionnaire
Questionnaire item 4: ASOPADEC has provided or equipped a functional health centre that serves my community.

Table 3: ASOPADEC’s social welfare schemes improve access to education and healthcare services in the host communities

Options	{Responses from ASOPADEC}	
	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	90	42.9
Agree	80	38.1
Disagree	30	14.2
Strongly disagree	10	4.8
Undecided	0	0

Total	210	100
Source: Field work (May, 2026)		
The above table indicates that 90 respondents representing 42.9% strongly agree that ASOPADEC’s social welfare schemes improve access to education and healthcare services in the host communities. 80 respondents representing 38.1% agree with the statement. However, 30 respondents representing 14.2% and 10 respondents representing 4.8% disagree with the statement. The high number of strongly agree and agree outweighs the strongly disagree and disagree that ASOPADEC’s social welfare schemes improve access to education and healthcare services in the host communities. Hence, after necessary calculation and computation from the table above, the result of coefficient of variation with a value of 78.15% shows that ASOPADEC’s social welfare schemes improve access to education and healthcare services in the host communities.		

Questionnaire item 5: The availability of drugs and medical personnel in ASOPADEC-supported health facilities has improved in recent years.

Table 4: ASOPADEC’s social welfare schemes improve access to education and healthcare services in the host communities.

(Responses from the host communities)				
Community	Statistics	SA	A	D
Owaza	SD			
	U			
	Total			
	Frequency	125	120	85
60	0	390		
	Percentage	32.0	30.8	21.8
	15.3	0	100	

	% CV	52.37%
Uzuaku	Frequency	135 130 70
	55	0 390
	Percentage	35.1 33.3 17.6
	14.0	0 100
	% CV	57.63%
Umuokwor	Frequency	126 120 90
	54	0 390
	Percentage	32.3 30.8 23.1
	13.8	0 100
	% CV	53.47%
Umuahala	Frequency	124 124 79
	65	0 390
	Percentage	31.8 31.3 20.3
	16.7	0 100
	% CV	52.07%
Umuorie	Frequency	127 123 85
	85	0 390
	Percentage	32.6 31.5 21.8
	14.1	0 100
	% CV	54%

Source: Field work (May, 2026)

From the table above, 125, 135, 126, 124 and 127 respondents representing 32.0%, 35.1%, 32.3%, 31.8% and 36.6% strongly agree that ASOPADEC’s social welfare schemes improve access to education and healthcare services in the host communities. Also, 120, 130, 120, 122 and 123 respondents respectively representing 30.8%, 33.3%, 30.8%, 31.3% and 31.5% agree that ASOPADEC’s social welfare schemes improve access to education and healthcare services in the host communities. The strongly agree and agree options outweighs the 85, 70, 90, 79 and 85

respondents representing 21.8%, 17.6%, 23.1% , 20.3% and 21.8% who strongly disagree and 60, 55, 54, 65 and 55 respondents representing 15.3%, 14%, 13.8% , 16.7% and 14.1% who disagree that ASOPADEC’s social welfare schemes improve access to education and healthcare services in the host communities. Thus, after necessary calculation and computation from table 21 above, the coefficient of variation with these values: 52.37%, 57.63%, 53.47%, 52.07% and 54% indicates that ASOPADEC’s social welfare schemes improve access to education and healthcare services in the host communities.

Based on the decision rule of C.V which states thus: When C.V is 0% - 29%, it indicates very low variability; Decision: Reject hypothesis. When C.V is 30% - 49%, it indicates low variability; Decision: Reject hypothesis. When C.V is 50% -59%, it indicates moderate variability; Decision: Accept hypothesis. When C.V is 60% and above, it indicates high variability; Decision: Accept hypothesis. The results of C.V in the analyses above indicate both moderate variability and high variability. Therefore, we accept the second hypothesis which states that ASOPADEC’s social welfare schemes improve access to education and healthcare services in the host communities.

Hypothesis 3

There is a significant relationship between ASOPADEC’s economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable groups in the host communities.

This hypothesis will be verified through questions 7 and 8 of the questionnaire

Questionnaire 7: ASOPADEC’s skills

acquisition or empowerment programmes have helped members of my household gain employment or start a business.

Table 5: There is a significant relationship between ASOPADEC’s economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable groups in the host communities. (Responses from ASOPADEC)

Options	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	80	38.1
Agree	70	33.3
Disagree	50	23.8
Strongly disagree	10	4.8
Undecided	0	0
Total	210	100

Source: Field work (May, 2026)

Table 5 above indicates that 80 respondents representing 38.1% strongly agree that there is a significant relationship between ASOPADEC’s economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable groups in the host communities . However, 50 respondents representing 23.8% and 10 respondents representing 4.8% disagree with the statement. The high number of strongly agree and agree outweighs the strongly disagree of 50 respondents representing 23.8% and disagree of 10 respondents representing 4.8% who were of the opinion that there is a significant relationship between ASOPADEC’s economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable groups in the host communities. After necessary calculation and computation from table 5 above, the result of coefficient of variation with a value of 68% also shows that there is a significant relationship between ASOPADEC’s economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of

vulnerable groups in the host communities.

Questionnaire item 8: Infrastructure such as roads, markets, or water projects by ASOPADEC have increased economic activities in this community.

Table 6: There is a significant relationship between ASOPADEC’s economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable groups in the host communities.

(Responses from the host communities)					
Community	Statistics		SA	A	D
	SD	U	Total		
Owaza		Frequency	127	123	85
	55	0	390		
		Percentage	32.6	31.5	21.8
	14.1	0	100		
		% CV	54%		
Uzuaku		Frequency	140	100	80
	70	0	390		
		Percentage	35.9	25.6	23.1
	17.6	0	100		
		% CV	52.5%		
Umuokwor		Frequency	130	120	80
	60	0	390		
		Percentage	33.3	30.8	20.5
	15.3	0	100		
		% CV	53.49%		
Umuahala		Frequency	120	110	90
	70	0	390		
		Percentage	30.8	31.3	20.3
	17.6	0	100		
		% CV	52.1%		
Umuorie		Frequency	140	100	80
	70	0	390		

	Percentage	35.9	25.6	23.1
17.6	0	100		
	% CV	54%		

Source: Field work (May, 2026)

From the table above, 127, 140, 130, 120 and 140 respondents representing 32.6%, 35.9%, 33.3%, 30.8% and 35.9% strongly agree that there is a significant relationship between ASOPADEC’s economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable groups in the host communities. Also, 123, 100, 120, 110 and 100 respondents respectively representing 31.5%, 25.6%, 30.8%, 28.2% and 25.6% agree that there is a significant relationship between ASOPADEC’s economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable groups in the host communities. The strongly agree and agree options outweighs the 85, 80, 80, 90 and 80 respondents representing 21.8%, 23.1%, 20.5%, 23.1% and 20.5% who strongly disagree, and 55, 70, 60, 70 and 70 respondents representing 14.1%, 17.6%, 15.3%, 17.6% and 17.6% who disagree that there is a significant relationship between ASOPADEC’s economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable groups in the host communities. Therefore, after necessary calculation and computation, the results of coefficient of variation with these values: 54%, 52.5%, 53.49%, 52.1% and 54% is an indication that there is a significant relationship between ASOPADEC’s economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable groups in the host communities.

Based on the decision rule of C.V which states thus: When C.V is 0% - 29%, it indicates very low

variability; Decision: Reject hypothesis. When C.V is 30% - 49%, it indicates low variability; Decision: Reject hypothesis. When C.V is 50% -59%, it indicates moderate variability; Decision: Accept hypothesis. When C.V is 60% and above, it indicates high variability; Decision: Accept hypothesis. The results of C.V in the analyses above indicate both moderate variability and high variability. Therefore, we accept the third hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between ASOPADEC's economic empowerment projects and the livelihood sustainability of vulnerable groups in the host communities.

Findings

1. ASOPADEC's construction and renovation of classroom blocks in host communities was associated with improved physical access to schooling and reduced overcrowding in beneficiary primary schools.
2. The Commission's scholarship and bursary scheme lowered financial barriers to education for indigent pupils, contributing to higher retention rates, particularly among female students in Ukwa East and Ukwa West.
3. Despite increased access, the impact of donated learning materials on educational quality was limited by inadequate teacher training, poor maintenance culture, and absence of utilization frameworks.
4. Establishment of ASOPADEC-funded health centres decreased average travel distance to basic healthcare and increased utilization of antenatal, immunization, and outpatient services by host community members.

5. Consistent supply of essential drugs in supported facilities correlated with reported reductions in the prevalence of malaria, typhoid, and other common communicable diseases among households.

6. The effectiveness of health interventions was constrained by critical shortages of qualified medical personnel, resulting in underutilization of facilities and reliance on periodic outreach services.

7. ASOPADEC's skills acquisition and empowerment programmes facilitated short-term income generation through the creation of micro-enterprises among trained youths and women.

8. Infrastructure projects, especially rural road construction, improved market access for agricultural produce and reduced transportation costs, thereby stimulating local trade and commerce.

9. Economic benefits derived from CSR interventions were largely transient, as absence of follow-up support, weak business management skills, and inflationary pressures undermined long-term household livelihood sustainability.

Discussions of findings

The analysis of the oral interview conducted based on questions 1 and 2, interviewees from ASOPADEC and host communities agreed that ASOPADEC's investment in classroom blocks corresponded with higher primary school enrollment figures in beneficiary communities. Head teachers reported that new structures reduced overcrowding and encouraged parents who previously kept children home due to dilapidated facilities. This aligns with Uduji et al., 2020, who observed that GMoU-funded school projects in the

ASOPADEC areas increased enrollment by 23% where infrastructure was previously inadequate. The effect is consistent with the human capital dimension of poverty reduction, as physical access is a prerequisite for educational attainment. However, enrollment gains were concentrated in communities where ASOPADEC projects were completed before 2021. Respondents indicated that ASOPADEC bursaries covered fees and levies that often force poor households to withdraw children from school. Female students particularly benefited, with community leaders noting fewer cases of early marriage linked to school cessation. This supports findings by Nwosu, 2021, that targeted educational CSR reduces gender disparity in school retention across oil-producing communities.

Based on the analysis of questions 3 and 4, while ASOPADEC supplied desks, textbooks, and laboratory sets, 60% of schools visited had broken furniture or unused equipment due to lack of technicians and storage. This echoes Idemudia, 2014, who argued that CSR hardware without maintenance systems creates 'project cemeteries' in the Niger Delta. The finding implies that educational attainment requires both access and quality inputs sustained over time. Communities with active PTA involvement reported better preservation of donated items, suggesting social capital moderates CSR effectiveness. Proximity to ASOPADEC-built health centres reduced the average distance to maternal care from 12km to 3km in sampled communities. Women reported higher antenatal visits because cost and transport barriers declined. This is consistent with WHO, 2022, which links facility proximity to improved

maternal health indicators in rural Nigeria. The result validates the health dimension of the Multidimensional Poverty Index, where access is a core deprivation metric. Still, some facilities operated only 3 days weekly due to staffing shortages [Abia State Primary Healthcare Board Report, 2023].

The interview conducted from questions 5 and 6 shows that households reported fewer self-medication episodes for malaria and typhoid after ASOPADEC health posts began regular drug supply. Community health workers attributed this to free access to ACTs and antibiotics. Similar outcomes were documented by Aaron, 2019, in Bayelsa GMoU communities, where basic drug provision cut under-five morbidity. The empirical link between CSR health inputs and disease burden is therefore substantiated. However, supply was donor-dependent and irregular after the first year of commissioning. Despite buildings and equipment, 7 of 10 ASOPADEC health centres lacked a permanent medical doctor, relying on monthly visits. Respondents bypassed these centres for general hospitals during emergencies. This reflects the broader Nigerian health system challenge noted by World Bank, 2023: infrastructure without human resources yields low utilization. The finding suggests CSR must align with state health staffing policy to achieve sustained health outcomes.

Recommendations

1. ASOPADEC should establish a statutory infrastructure maintenance trust co-managed with Abia SUBEB and community education committees to ensure long-term functionality of school facilities.

2. The scholarship programme should be restructured into a merit and needs-based scheme with academic tracking from junior secondary to tertiary levels to improve human capital outcomes.
3. All future education-related CSR must integrate teacher capacity development and instructional resource management as mandatory components of project delivery.
4. The Commission should enter formal service-level agreements with the Abia State Primary Healthcare Development Agency to guarantee staffing, supervision, and referral systems for CSR health facilities.
5. Community-managed drug revolving funds should be institutionalized in every ASOPADEC health centre to ensure continuous availability of essential medicines and reduce donor dependence.
6. To mitigate rural health-worker deficits, ASOPADEC should adopt telemedicine linkages and structured specialist outreach programmes as part of its health CSR model.
7. Empowerment initiatives should be redesigned from one-off starter packs to structured enterprise incubation programmes incorporating business registration, financial literacy, and market linkage over a 24-month cycle.
8. CSR infrastructure prioritization should be guided by participatory economic mapping to target farm-to-market roads and aggregation centres with the highest potential multiplier effects.
9. The Abia State House of Assembly should legislate mandatory independent post-implementation audits for ASOPADEC projects, with future funding tranches conditioned on verified 3-year sustainability indicators.

Conclusion

The major advocacy of this study is the effect of ASOPADEC's corporate social responsibility interventions on poverty reduction across education, health, and economic dimensions in host communities of Ukwa East and Ukwa West of Abia State, Nigeria. The evidence gathered indicates that ASOPADEC's projects have produced measurable improvements in school enrollment, access to basic healthcare, and short-term household livelihoods. Classroom construction, scholarship provision, health centre establishment, and skills acquisition programmes were associated with positive changes in community welfare indicators. These outcomes affirm the theoretical position that targeted CSR can function as a development instrument when aligned with the immediate needs of oil-producing communities. Notwithstanding these gains, the study also reveals structural limitations that constrain the depth and sustainability of ASOPADEC's impact. While infrastructure and empowerment schemes increased access to services, challenges relating to maintenance, staffing, market linkages, and post-project monitoring reduced the long-term poverty reduction effect. The paper demonstrates that improvements in education and health access do not automatically translate into sustained economic wellbeing when complementary institutional support is absent. This suggests that CSR interventions, in isolation, are insufficient to alter the multidimensional nature of poverty without integration into broader state development planning and community governance systems.

The paper argued that ASOPADEC's CSR interventions have a statistically significant but uneven effect on poverty reduction in its host communities. To enhance impact, future interventions should incorporate maintenance frameworks, human resource partnerships, and livelihood sustainability mechanisms at the design stage. Further research should employ longitudinal

approaches to track beneficiaries beyond project cycles and should compare ASOPADEC's outcomes with those of other state oil commissions to establish best practices. Thus, the research underscores that CSR can reduce dimensions of poverty when it is participatory, adequately funded, and integrated with government service delivery structures.

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