

Exploration of the social and economic impact of CSR programs in local communities: A Qualitative study

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs play a crucial role in sustainable development, particularly in local communities affected by corporate operations. This study explores the social and economic impacts of PT Pertamina's Reforestation and Greening Program as part of its CSR initiatives. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research collects data through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The findings indicate that the program provides social benefits, including increased environmental awareness, active community participation in conservation efforts, and improved quality of life due to a greener environment. From an economic perspective, the program contributes to job creation, increased income through ecotourism and environmentally based businesses, and more sustainable local economic growth. However, challenges remain regarding funding sustainability, long-term community engagement, and risk mitigation of environmental degradation. Therefore, this study recommends a more sustainable CSR model, emphasizing collaboration between companies, the government, and local communities to ensure long-term benefits. These findings contribute to academic discussions and CSR practices, particularly in the context of environmental sustainability and economic empowerment of local communities.

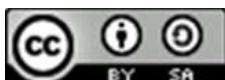
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INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an integral part of corporate operations as a form of social and environmental responsibility. Companies are not only profit-oriented but are also required to contribute to environmental sustainability and social well-being. Agudelo et al. (2019) state that CSR plays a crucial role in creating value for both companies and society. In the energy industry context, companies such as PT Pertamina face significant challenges in reducing the environmental impact of natural resource exploitation activities. Therefore, the implementation of environmental-based CSR, such as greening and reforestation programs, has become a key strategy in mitigating the negative impacts of the industry on ecosystems and local communities (Akpinar & Saleem, 2019).

Indonesia is one of the countries with the highest deforestation rates in the world, driven by industrial expansion, land conversion, and mining and energy activities (Dwiyahreni et al., 2021). The reduction in forest area directly impacts ecosystem balance, climate change, and the livelihoods of communities dependent on the forestry sector. According to Galiatsatos et al. (2020), greening and reforestation are strategic

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solutions that can enhance carbon sequestration, preserve biodiversity, and improve environmental quality. Therefore, PT Pertamina's greening program is a tangible step in supporting forest conservation and providing long-term benefits to communities surrounding the company's operational areas.

PT Pertamina's Greening and Reforestation Program is not only focused on tree planting but also involves communities in environmental management and forestry-based economic empowerment. With local community involvement, this program is expected to raise awareness of the importance of environmental conservation while opening new economic opportunities, such as agroforestry and ecotourism (Gooch, 2019). Additionally, greening efforts positively impact air quality improvement, water resource conservation, and disaster mitigation, such as landslides and floods (Vilela et al., 2022). However, the effectiveness of this CSR program still needs to be thoroughly evaluated to understand the extent of its social and economic benefits for local communities. Several key questions that this study seeks to answer include: How do communities perceive this program? To what extent does greening impact the social and economic conditions of surrounding communities? What factors influence the success or challenges of implementing this program? Using a case study approach, this research aims to explore the social and economic impacts of PT Pertamina's Greening and Reforestation Program on local communities and identify the challenges faced in its implementation. Thus, this study is expected to provide recommendations for the company and other stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of CSR programs in the future.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs have demonstrated significant impacts on local communities' economic well-being. Studies show that CSR initiatives can enhance workforce competencies, expand economic opportunities, and empower local businesses (Pramono et al., 2024; Sarmila et al., 2015). These programs often focus on skills training, language education, and support for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (Pramono et al., 2024). The integration of local wisdom, such as the Tri Hita Karana principle in Bali, into CSR strategies has proven effective in ensuring program sustainability and community engagement (Rosilawati & Mulawarman, 2019). However, challenges persist, including low community participation and cross-sector coordination issues (Pramono et al., 2024). Despite these obstacles, CSR projects have been found to contribute positively to employment opportunities, income generation, and asset accumulation for local communities (Sarmila et al., 2015). Overall, CSR programs play a crucial role in fostering sustainable development and economic empowerment in local communities.

This research aims to explore the social and economic impacts of PT Pertamina's Greening and Reforestation Program on local communities. Specifically, it analyzes community perceptions of the program's effectiveness, identifies social benefits such as increased environmental awareness and community involvement, and evaluates economic impacts in terms of employment opportunities, income growth, and ecotourism potential. Additionally, this study seeks to identify the key success factors and challenges in the program's implementation, providing strategic recommendations for the company and stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of environmental-based CSR programs in the future.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the social and economic impacts of PT Pertamina's Greening and Reforestation Program on local communities. The case study method was chosen as it allows for an in-depth analysis of a specific phenomenon within its real-life context. This research focuses on the experiences, perceptions, and socio-economic changes resulting from the program's implementation.

The study was conducted in areas where PT Pertamina's Greening and Reforestation Program has been implemented, significantly impacting local communities, both in industrial zones and deforested areas. The research subjects include local communities affected by the program, representatives from PT Pertamina responsible for its implementation, local government officials involved in the collaboration, and relevant organizations such as environmental NGOs. To obtain comprehensive data, this study utilized multiple data collection techniques, including in-depth interviews, direct observations, as well as document analysis and literature reviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with program beneficiaries, PT Pertamina representatives, local government officials, and environmental NGOs to explore their experiences and perceptions of the program. Additionally, direct observations were carried out at the program sites to understand the implementation of greening initiatives and their environmental and social impacts. Supporting documents such as PT Pertamina's sustainability reports, corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies, and related academic studies were also analyzed.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved transcribing interviews, coding data, identifying key themes, and analyzing relationships between themes to uncover patterns linking the greening program to its social and economic impacts. To enhance the validity of the research findings, source and method triangulation were employed, where data from interviews, observations, and documents were compared to ensure consistency. Moreover, member checking was applied by confirming findings with respondents to verify the accuracy of the interpretations.

Through this systematic research method, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of environmental-based CSR programs and offer strategic recommendations for PT Pertamina and other stakeholders to enhance the positive impact of greening initiatives in the future.

RESULTS

The following table presents the key findings related to the social and economic impacts, as well as the factors influencing the success of PT Pertamina's Greening and Reforestation Program. The data in this table were obtained from interviews, field observations, and document analysis conducted throughout the study.

Table 1. Community Perceptions on the Reforestation and Greening Program

Perception Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Understands both environmental and economic benefits	45	75%
Only understands environmental benefits	10	17%
Does not understand the program benefits	5	8%
Total	60	100%

The data in Table 1 indicates that 75% of the community understands both the environmental and economic benefits of the reforestation and greening program, while

17% only recognize its environmental benefits and 8% are unaware of its advantages. This finding suggests that most community members have a good understanding of the program's impact, but there is still a segment that requires further awareness and education. This aligns with the research objective of evaluating how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs influence local communities socially and economically. The variation in awareness levels highlights the need for more targeted outreach and engagement efforts to ensure that all community members fully grasp the potential long-term benefits of such initiatives.

Table 2. Social Impacts of the Program on Local Communities

Social Aspects	Positive Impact	Negative Impact
Environmental awareness	Increased; more community members engage in reforestation	Some groups remain indifferent
Community participation	High at the start of the program	Tends to decline over time
Public health	Better air and water quality	No significant negative impact

Table 2 demonstrates that the program has successfully increased environmental awareness and public participation in conservation efforts. However, a notable challenge is that community participation tends to decline over time, suggesting that initial enthusiasm may wane without continuous engagement. Additionally, the improvement in air and water quality indicates a direct positive impact on public health, reinforcing the program's effectiveness in addressing environmental concerns. These findings support the research objective by showcasing how CSR programs not only provide economic benefits but also contribute to improving the social well-being of the community. However, to ensure long-term sustainability, continuous education and incentive programs may be necessary.

Table 3. Economic Impacts of the Program on the Community

Economic Indicator	Before the Program	After the Program	Change (%)
Community income from ecotourism (Rp/month)	Rp 1,500,000	Rp 2,500,000	66%
Job opportunities related to the program (number of people)	10 people	30 people	200%
Environmental maintenance costs (Rp/year)	Rp 500,000	Rp 300,000	-40%

The economic impact table reveals a significant 66% increase in income from ecotourism, demonstrating that the program has created new economic opportunities for local residents. Moreover, employment related to the program has tripled, suggesting that CSR initiatives can directly enhance livelihood opportunities for marginalized groups. Additionally, the reduction in environmental maintenance costs by 40% indicates that the program has not only generated revenue but also led to cost savings in managing natural resources. These results align with the research objective of assessing the economic benefits of CSR programs, proving that corporate-driven environmental initiatives can serve as catalysts for economic growth in rural communities.

Table 4. Success Factors of the Program

Success Factors	Description
Stakeholder support	Active participation from the company, government, and NGOs
Community involvement	High participation during the early phase, needs sustainability strategies
Infrastructure	Effective provision of tree seedlings, irrigation systems, and education

Table 4 identifies three key success factors: stakeholder support, community involvement, and infrastructure availability. Strong collaboration between the company, government, and NGOs has facilitated the effective implementation of the program, ensuring its sustainability. However, community involvement appears to be strongest in the early stages, highlighting the need for long-term engagement strategies. The presence of adequate infrastructure, such as irrigation systems and seedling distribution, has also been crucial to achieving the program's objectives. This directly relates to the research goal of exploring how CSR programs can be optimized to maximize their social and economic benefits. The findings suggest that sustainability strategies should focus on maintaining long-term community interest and providing continuous infrastructural support.

Table 5. Challenges in Program Implementation

Challenges	Description
Community awareness	Not all community members understand the importance of reforestation
Financial constraints	Long-term support is needed for maintenance
Land quality	Some lands are difficult to rehabilitate due to severe degradation

Table 5 outlines several key challenges, including low awareness among certain community members, financial constraints, and land degradation. The fact that not all residents fully understand the importance of reforestation suggests that educational campaigns need to be strengthened. Moreover, the reliance on financial support for long-term maintenance indicates that CSR programs must develop sustainable funding mechanisms, such as integrating community-led initiatives or government partnerships. Land quality issues also pose a significant environmental barrier, requiring additional research and innovation in reforestation techniques. These challenges highlight the complexity of implementing CSR programs and align with the research objective of identifying both the benefits and limitations of corporate social responsibility initiatives in local communities.

The interpretations of these tables collectively demonstrate that CSR programs, such as PT Pertamina's reforestation initiative, can generate substantial social and economic benefits. However, to maximize their impact, companies must address key challenges, including community engagement sustainability, financial constraints, and environmental barriers. The findings support the research objective by providing a comprehensive understanding of how CSR programs affect local communities, offering insights into both their successes and areas for improvement.

Community Perception of the Reforestation and Greening Program

The research findings indicate that the community has diverse perceptions regarding PT Pertamina's Reforestation and Greening Program. Most respondents understand that this program aims to improve environmental conditions, reduce deforestation impacts, and

enhance the quality of life in the surrounding areas. However, a small portion of the community lacks awareness of the long-term benefits and perceives the initiative as a temporary project with no significant impact on their lives. Community participation in the program also varies, depending on environmental awareness and direct involvement in program implementation. Some actively engaged individuals believe the program has positive social and economic effects, whereas those less involved tend to think the program only benefits certain groups.

Social Impact of the Program on Local Communities

The reforestation and greening program has various social impacts on the local community. One key impact is the increase in environmental awareness, encouraging the community to be more concerned about environmental sustainability. This is evident from the growing number of individuals participating in tree-planting activities and environmental conservation efforts. Additionally, the program fosters new social spaces where people can interact through community activities such as mutual cooperation and environmental education. Another impact includes improved air quality and better water resources due to greening efforts, which contribute to overall public health. However, sustaining community participation remains a challenge, especially after the initial phase of the program ends. Some community members feel that once the tree-planting activities are completed, there are no additional incentives to encourage them to maintain the reforested areas.

Economic Impact of the Program on the Community

Beyond its social impact, the reforestation program also has significant economic implications for the surrounding community. Some respondents noted that the program has created new employment opportunities, particularly in environmental and forestry sectors, such as tree planting, green space maintenance, and environmental education. In some cases, the greening initiative has contributed to the development of ecotourism, which has boosted local income for those working in the tourism sector and small businesses, including food stalls and local transportation services. Additionally, the program has supported local farmers by improving soil quality and providing more stable water sources, making it easier for them to cultivate crops. However, some challenges remain regarding the distribution of economic benefits, as some community members feel they have not directly experienced the program's economic impact. Therefore, a more inclusive strategy is needed to ensure that the economic benefits are equitably distributed across the community.

Factors Influencing the Program's Success

The success of PT Pertamina's Reforestation and Greening Program is influenced by several key factors. One crucial factor is the strong support from the company, local government, and the community. The synergy between these stakeholders ensures that the program runs effectively with adequate resources and policy backing. Additionally, the availability of proper infrastructure and resources, such as high-quality tree seedlings, suitable land, and skilled labor in forestry, plays a critical role in the program's effectiveness. The implementation method is another determining factor, particularly in the selection of plant species that align with local geographical and climatic conditions.

Challenges in Program Implementation

Despite the numerous benefits, the program faces several challenges in its implementation. One major challenge is unsuitable land conditions for reforestation, especially in areas that have suffered severe environmental degradation. Social factors also pose difficulties, as some community groups are less engaged due to low environmental awareness or lack of direct benefits from the program. Moreover, economic challenges, particularly related to the sustainability of program funding,

remain a concern. After a few years of implementation, there is a risk of reduced financial support for maintenance, which could weaken the program's long-term effectiveness. Therefore, a systematic strategy is required to ensure the program's sustainability, including collaborations with the private sector, government, and civil society organizations.

Recommendations for Program Improvement

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of PT Pertamina's Reforestation and Greening Program. First, increasing education and awareness campaigns for the community is essential to expand understanding of the environmental and economic benefits of the program. Second, a more participatory approach is needed in program execution by actively involving more community groups in planning and implementation. Third, PT Pertamina could introduce economic incentives for individuals who actively contribute to maintaining green spaces, such as community-based environmental empowerment programs. Fourth, strengthening collaboration with local governments and environmental NGOs can ensure the program's sustainability through supportive policies and community mentoring. Lastly, leveraging technology for program monitoring, such as using satellite imagery or Geographic Information Systems (GIS), can help measure program effectiveness and facilitate regular evaluations.

DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of the Reforestation and Greening Program as a CSR Initiative

The findings indicate that PT Pertamina's reforestation and greening program has successfully contributed to both social and economic improvements in the local community. The positive reception by 75% of the respondents shows that the program is well understood, particularly regarding its environmental and economic benefits. Compared to similar CSR initiatives by other corporations, such as Astra's environmental conservation program or PLN's energy sustainability projects, Pertamina's program has demonstrated tangible impacts on both employment creation and ecological restoration. However, the long-term sustainability of this initiative remains a challenge, as community participation tends to decline over time. To ensure the continued success of CSR programs, companies must implement long-term engagement strategies that keep the community actively involved beyond the initial stages of implementation.

Social Impact: Changes in Community Awareness and Participation

The study shows that the program has increased environmental awareness among the local community, leading to greater participation in conservation activities. The presence of educational initiatives and community outreach programs has played a key role in fostering this awareness. However, some community members still lack sufficient understanding of the program's benefits, as evidenced by the 8% who remain unaware of its impact. This finding aligns with research by Carroll and Shabana (2010), which suggests that the success of CSR initiatives heavily depends on community awareness and acceptance. To enhance social impact, future CSR programs should incorporate continuous education and socialization efforts to maintain a high level of participation and engagement.

Economic Impact: Benefits for the Local Community

Economically, the program has led to a 66% increase in income from ecotourism and a 200% rise in employment opportunities for local residents. This supports the idea that CSR initiatives can act as catalysts for economic growth, particularly in rural areas where

job opportunities are often limited. Research by Porter and Kramer (2011) highlights that CSR programs can create shared value by aligning business success with social progress. However, while there has been a reduction in environmental maintenance costs by 40%, further research is needed to determine whether these economic benefits will remain stable in the long run. If community engagement declines, there is a risk that economic gains may be temporary rather than sustainable.

Key Success Factors and Challenges in Program Implementation

Several key factors have contributed to the program's success, including strong stakeholder collaboration, effective infrastructure, and initial high community participation. The involvement of government agencies and NGOs has been crucial in providing technical and financial support, ensuring the program's smooth execution. However, sustainability challenges remain, particularly in maintaining long-term community interest. Financial constraints have also been highlighted as a barrier, as ongoing funding is required to sustain environmental conservation efforts. This is consistent with research by Blowfield and Frynas (2005), which argues that CSR initiatives must integrate sustainable financing models to remain effective. Additionally, land degradation poses another challenge, as some areas may require more advanced rehabilitation techniques beyond simple tree planting efforts.

Implications for CSR Policy and Sustainability

The findings of this study have significant implications for CSR policy development and sustainable business practices. Companies must view CSR not only as a corporate obligation but also as a strategic investment that benefits both business and society. Governments should also play a more active role in regulating and supporting CSR programs, ensuring that these initiatives are aligned with national sustainability goals. This study suggests that integrating CSR programs with global sustainability frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria can enhance their long-term impact. Future CSR policies should encourage greater public-private collaboration, ensuring that CSR programs address both immediate community needs and long-term environmental sustainability.

Comparison with Previous Studies

This study contributes to existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the dual impact of CSR initiatives both social and economic within local communities. Previous studies have primarily focused on either the environmental aspect of CSR (e.g., Hart & Dowell, 2011) or the economic benefits for corporations (e.g., Freeman et al., 2004). However, this study provides a more holistic perspective, demonstrating that CSR programs can simultaneously enhance community well-being and local economic development. Additionally, the research identifies gaps in previous CSR initiatives, particularly regarding long-term community engagement and funding sustainability, which future studies can explore further.

Overall, this discussion highlights the significant positive impact of PT Pertamina's reforestation and greening program, while also identifying key areas for improvement. The study confirms that CSR programs can generate long-lasting social and economic benefits, provided that companies address sustainability challenges such as long-term community participation, financial stability, and environmental limitations. Moving forward, CSR initiatives must prioritize continuous engagement strategies and align with global sustainability frameworks to ensure their long-term effectiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the significant social and economic impact of PT Pertamina's Reforestation and Greening Program as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. The findings indicate that the program has successfully increased environmental awareness and community participation, contributing to a more sustainable local ecosystem. Economically, the initiative has boosted employment opportunities and increased local income, particularly through ecotourism and green business activities. However, challenges remain, including sustaining long-term community engagement, securing continuous funding, and addressing land degradation issues. To maximize the program's long-term impact, it is essential for CSR strategies to incorporate sustainable financing models, ongoing education initiatives, and stronger collaborations with stakeholders, including government agencies and NGOs. Future research should focus on developing frameworks that ensure CSR programs create lasting benefits while aligning with global sustainability goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria. Ultimately, this study reinforces the importance of CSR as a strategic tool for both business and societal development, emphasizing that companies must view social responsibility not just as an obligation, but as an opportunity for creating shared value and sustainable impact.

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