

## **An Investigation of Practicing Carroll's Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility in Developing Countries: an Example of Bangladesh Ready-made Garments**

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**Abstract:** *This study has been conducted to explore the present scenario of implementing corporate social responsibility in our garment industry by using Carroll's (1991) pyramid. Garments sector is one of the most important sectors of industries in our country. Practicing CSR in this industry is very much necessary. This paper aims to investigate that what level of CSR activities are practiced by our garment industry. This study also identifies to what extend Carroll's (1991) pyramid is understood by the corporate body of our garment industry. In this regard, we take interviews of 50 garments workers and top executives from the areas of Savar, Gazipur, Ashulia and Tongi. At the end of the study, we explore the implications of these findings and suggest actions to practice CSR properly in the Bangladesh garment industry.*

**Keywords:** *Bangladesh garment industry, Carroll's (1991) pyramid, corporate social responsibility.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a topic that is increasingly capturing the interest and imagination of people in the business world. Corporate social responsibility is a prominent feature of the business and society literature, corporate social performance, global corporate citizenship, and stakeholder management. It is described as a set of policies, practices, and programs that are integrated throughout business operations and decision-making processes, and intended to ensure the company maximizes the positive impacts of its operations on society (Business for Social Responsibility, 2003). As per European Commission (2001) CSR is "A concept whereby companies decide voluntarily to contribute to a better society and a cleaner environment.

CSR is a concept that has attracted worldwide attention and acquired a new resonance in the global economy (Jamali, 2006). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which was seen as corporate "Philanthropy" till 1990s is considered as a strategy today to gain competitive advantage. Today CSR is seen as a key to long term success, reputation and brand image and more and more companies are realizing that in order to stay productive, competitive, and relevant in a rapidly changing business world, they have to become socially responsible. As many as 90% of the Fortune 500 companies now have explicit CSR initiatives (Kotler and Lee 2004; Lichtenstein, Drumwright, and Bridgette 2004). According to a recent special report in Business Week (Berner 2005, p. 72), large companies disclosed substantial investments in CSR initiatives.

Now corporate bodies in the developed countries have understood the importance of practicing CSR activities and have already implemented in their society. But in the developing countries like Bangladesh it is still an emerging concept, especially in the garment industry. The garment industry of Bangladesh has been the key export division and a main source of foreign exchange for the last 25 years. Bangladesh has over 4,500 RMG factories. At present, the country generates about \$5 billion worth of products each year by exporting garments. The industry provides employment to about 3 million workers of whom 90% are women (<http://ezinearticles.com/?Overview-of-Bangladesh-Garment-Industry&id=367773>).

The garment industry of Bangladesh plays a vital role in the country's economy. But this industry has been widely criticized for their poor performance in practicing CSR. A few garments have decided to adopt CSR activities at the initial stage but those are not implemented practically. In Bangladesh, Savar, Gazipur, Ashulia and Tongi are the main garments industrialized area. However, there is no water management treatment plant in those industrial areas. It mixes liquid poison near the rivers and water is fully black in dry season, which is changing the ecological balances of the areas. Some people and animals are using this poison water which is more harmful for health. It also threat to Bangladesh's society (The daily Ittefaq, 9 February 2007).

Nkanga (2007) posited that CSR involves the commitment shown by companies to contribute to the economic development of a local community and the society at large. So whatever we can see that our garment factory do not practice CSR at all. According to Carroll's (1991) four part model, there are four CSR responsibilities- economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities. Implementing environment laws are under legal responsibilities according to this model which is not maintained by the companies. Moreover, workers working environment also not safe here.

The aim of this study is to investigate that what level of CSR activities are practiced by our garment industry. This study also identifies whether those activities fulfill the conditions of Carroll's (1991) four part model or not. Using this synthesized framework, the paper examines empirically the CSR performance of our garment companies and their views about practicing CSR.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be viewed as a comprehensive set of policies, practices, and programs that are integrated into business operations, supply chains, and decision making processes throughout the company and include responsibilities for current and past actions as well as adequate attention to future impacts. CSR is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis (Green Paper, 2001).

In the early 60s of the last century different scholars tried to define the concept of corporate social responsibility. This term "corporate social responsibility" is often used interchangeably with corporate responsibility, corporate citizenship, social enterprise, sustainability, sustainable development, triple-bottom line, corporate ethics, and in some cases corporate governance. Bowen's (1953) initial definition of CSR is the obligation of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of actions which are desirable in terms of objectives and value of society.

Keith Davis (1973) expands the idea of CSR and mentioned it is beyond the narrow economic, technical and legal requirements of the firms that means responsibilities begin where the law ends.

CSR has been defined in general terms as 'the obligation of the firm to use its resources in ways to benefit society, through committed participation as a member of society, taking into account the society at large and improving the welfare of society at large independent of direct gains of the company' (Weile et al., 2001: 288).

Corporate social responsibility according to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2001) is defined as the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families and the local communities.

In 1979, Carroll proposed a four-part definition of CSR that was embedded in a conceptual model of CSP. In this model, Carroll (1979) differentiated between four types of corporate social responsibilities: economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary. He also presented the argument that firms wishing to effectively engage in CSP needed to have (a) a basic definition of CSR; (b) an understanding of the issues for which a social responsibility existed; and (c) a specification of the philosophy of responsiveness to the issues.

In 1991, Carroll revisited his four-part definition of CSR and organized the notion of multiple corporate social responsibilities in a pyramid construct (Figure 1). By this time he referred to the discretionary component as philanthropic. In this pyramid, economic responsibility is the basic foundation and philanthropic is the apex. The pyramid of CSR depicted the economic category as the base ( the foundation upon which all others rest), and then built upward through legal, ethical, and philanthropic categories (Carroll, 1991).



Source: Carroll (1991, p. 42)

**Figure-1: The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility ( Carroll, 1991)**

Carroll (1991) model entails that all business responsibilities rely upon the economic responsibility, which includes maximizing profitability and maintaining a strong competitive position. The legal

responsibilities state firm's compliance with laws and regulations while doing business. Ethical responsibilities replicate societal standards, expectations and norms that have not been specifically legislated. Finally, philanthropic responsibilities comprise actions that are in response to society's expectation that businesses be good corporate citizens. These are distinguished from ethical responsibilities in that they are of a charitable nature and, as such, a company is not considered unethical if it does not provide them (Carroll 1991).

This revisited conceptualization implies that the four responsibilities are aggregate in the sense that corporations that want to be ethical for example must be economically and legally responsible. From this perspective, economic and legal responsibilities are socially required, ethical responsibility is socially expected, while philanthropy is socially desired (Windsor, 2001) and each of these responsibilities comprises a component of the total social responsibility of a firm.

### **1.1. CSR IN BANGLADESH RMG**

The concept of CSR emerged in the 1950s and gradually developed over the last five decades. In the recent years CSR concept has come across many debates and shaped with a strong theoretical and empirical base. In today's competitive market environment, corporate social responsibility (CSR) represents a high-profile notion that has strategic importance to many companies. But in Bangladesh, CSR is still emerging as a way of doing business. Many companies in our country still view CSR as philanthropic activities. Others are investing in the communities in sustainable ways but view it as a natural extension of traditional practice rather than new ways of doing business. But practicing CSR activities by companies is very important for developing countries like Bangladesh, especially in our garment industry.

The garment industry of Bangladesh started to practice CSR in the mid 90s when international buyers put pressure on the suppliers to be more responsive to the employees. Gradually, this sector has taken some safety and security measures at workplace and some measures against child labor. A few garments have established health care and child care center. Analyzing the trend of CSR practices in this sector, it can be said these practices were adopted due to pressures either externally or internally or both which is still a dilemma of the sector to practice CSR voluntarily. For this reason, the working environment of our garment factory is still unsafe.

While improvements have been made over the years, the safety record of the Bangladesh RMG industry remains poor. Fires have been a persistent problem in the country's ready-made garment (RMG) industry for over a decade. Fire broke out on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2012, in the Tazreen Fashion factory in the Ashulia district on the outskirts of Dhaka, Bangladesh. At least 117 people were confirmed dead in the fire, and at least 200 were injured, making it the deadliest factory fire in the nation's history ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012\\_Dhaka\\_fire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Dhaka_fire)).

There is some disagreement about the number of worker deaths in the industry. According to the Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies, 431 workers died in 14 major fire incidents between 1990 and 2012. However, according to the Bangladesh Fire Department, 414 garment workers were killed in 213 factory fires between 2006 and 2009 alone.

Again another deadliest incident happened in Bangladesh. On 24<sup>th</sup> April 2013, an eight-story commercial building Rana Plaza collapsed in Savar, a sub-district near Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. At least 1,125 people died as of 12 May, many people were still missing. It housed a number of separate garment factories employing around 5,000 people, several shops, and a bank. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013\\_Savar\\_building\\_collapse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013_Savar_building_collapse)). Garment's owners as well as the building owner are responsible for this terrible incident.

Several steps have been taken after that accident to reduce this type's of situation. But we can say if organizations maintain proper safety policy for their employees then this type's deadliest accident can be removed from our industrial arena. This case shows that CSR is not well exercised matter in this industry. According to Carroll's (1991) model, workplace safety is legal activities which should be obeyed by our garment factories. Those factories also violent environment protection laws. So it is important for us doing a study to find out to what extend CSR is practiced in our country. But very few studies are available on the CSR practices in developing countries.

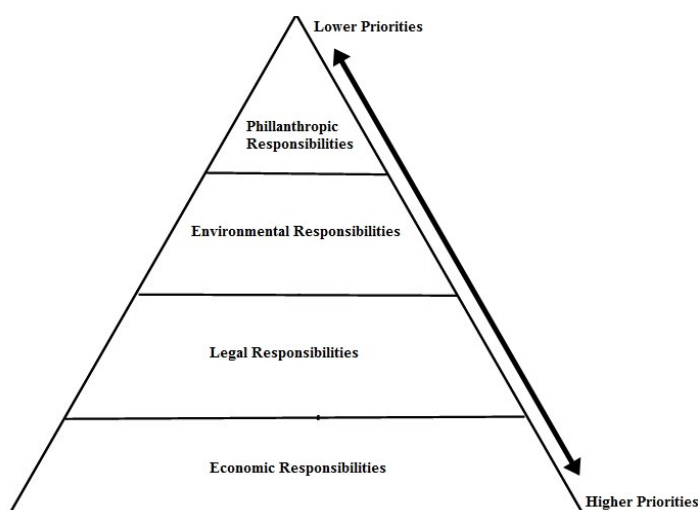
Belal (2001) depicts that most of the CSR studies conducted so far have been in the context of developed countries such as Western Europe, the USA, and Australia. Basically in the context of Bangladesh we can see that the practice has not been found widely (Belal, 2001). A study has been taken on corporate social responsibility practicing in multinational garments of Bangladesh (Masud et al. 2013). But in that study, CSR activities has been described of only one garments named Hop Lun (BD) and no model has been used in that study.

### **1.2. PROPOSED MODEL FOR PRACTICING CSRS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

Despite the plethora of CSR definitions over the last 50 years, Carroll's four-part conceptualization has been the most durable and widely cited in the literature (Crane & Matten, 2004). But like all models, there is also a criticism of Carroll's (1991) four part model.

Carroll's pyramid is created in an American context, which is criticized by several people (Matten et al. 2005: 338, Visser 2006: 36). It is not fully applicable in the context of developing country. In the article "Revisiting Carroll's CSR Pyramid, An African perspective" of Visser (2006), he uses Carroll's CSR model to explore the nature of CSR in Africa. He found that the hierarchy of the pyramid is economic, philanthropic, legal, and ethical. He also states that this model has been used to survey in different countries and the importance of the hierarchy of the pyramid has been found different. So Carroll's CSR pyramid may not be the best model for understanding CSR in general.

Despite his criticism, Visser (2006) understands Carroll's model as "a durable and useful model for defining and exploring CSR." The different criticisms of Carroll's CSR pyramid have been taken into account, we modified this model in the context of developing countries.



**Figure-2: Proposed Model of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Context of developing country**  
**Source: Developed by the Author**

In this model, we include environmental responsibilities as a domain, because protecting our environment is also a firm's corporate social responsibility. The world's climate is changing and it affected the developing countries in horrible ways. Bangladesh is the most vulnerable nation due to global climate change in the world according to German Watch's Global Climate Risk Index(CRI) of 2011 ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate\\_change\\_in\\_Bangladesh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_change_in_Bangladesh)). We also remove ethical responsibilities from the pyramid, because top executives cannot understand the difference between philanthropic and ethical responsibilities in developing countries. They think that both are same ideas. Moreover, many ethical issues go under legal issues and philanthropic issues. So we modified this model by replacing ethical responsibilities with environmental responsibilities.

The pyramid framework suggests a hierarchy of CSR domains. One may be led to conclude that the domain at the top of the pyramid, philanthropic responsibilities is the most valued domains and the one that all corporations should strive for, while the economic domain at the base of the pyramid is the least valued domain.

For example- Reidenbach and Robin (1991) use a pyramid to depict their conceptual model of corporate moral development, suggesting that the top of the pyramid represents the highest stage of moral development, while the base of the pyramid portrays the least advanced stage. So we indicated that the top of the pyramid represents lower priorities and the base of the pyramid portrays higher priorities.

### **III. Objective**

Our garment industry is passing critical time after the incident of Savar tragedy. So this is the high time to implement CSR properly in this industry. The objective of this study is:

- To find out to what extend Carroll's (1991) pyramid of corporate social responsibility is implemented in the Bangladesh garment industry.
- To identify to what extend Carroll's (1991) model is understood by the top management of garments factory in Bangladesh.
- To find out solutions by modifying Carroll's (1991) model and recommend some action plan on the basis of findings.

#### **IV. Methodology**

The current study is basically descriptive in nature. This is based on both primary and secondary sources of information. In this study, we took interviews of 50 garments workers including managers, officers, staffs as well as lower level employees. Our primary sources of data have been gathered by face to face conversation, and in-depth interviews. We applied the unstructured questionnaire method while interview conducted from the areas of Savar, Gazipur, Ashulia and Tongi.

We also got some secondary data with particular references from internet and various publications. Some of the information is collected from daily newspaper on the contemporary issues in CSR and some from a famous article written on CSR practices.

We used non-probability sampling technique because we used the convenience sampling method. According to

Bryman and Bell (2007) convenience sample is one that is conveniently available to the researcher with its good ease of use. This type of non-probability sampling technique has a drawback that it is not possible to generalize the results (Malhotra and Dash, 2011).

#### **V. Findings And Analysis**

Bangladesh is a developing country. There are very few industries in this country which has been booming like our garment industry. This successful export oriented industry of Bangladesh has observed the remarkable growth since its beginning late 1970s. Bangladesh exports their garments products at the cheap rate to the countries of USA, Canada and the European countries. Academics and researchers have generally attributed the remarkable growth of RMG export from Bangladesh to favorable external conditions, notably the Multi-Fiber Arrangement (MFA) bilateral quota system imposed by developed apparel countries, and low wages in Bangladesh.

But this situation is getting worse after the factory building collapsed in Savar on the month of April. The Walt Disney Company is the first brand, which has declared to stop production of its branded merchandise in Bangladesh, in response to the devastating collapse of a factory building in last April that left more than 1130 people dead and thousands critically injured ( The Daily Star, 1 June, 2013). We know that our garment industry has to cut costs to remain competitive in the international market by offering their products at cheap rate. So they could not increase workers' wages, improve the working conditions and so on. But if this type of massive disaster continues then the future of this industry will be in danger as well as our country's economy. So this is the high time to do something to save our garment industry and in this case practicing CSR can be a good strategy for us.

In our study, we found that most of the garments try to comply with the minimum legal requirements and Social Accountability (SA) 8000 standards as applicable in case of employment and other related activities. Where organization's considerable requirements are:

- i) Child labor
- ii) Forced labor or compulsory labor
- iii) Health & safety
- iv) Freedom of association & right to collective bargaining
- v) Discrimination
- vi) Disciplinary Practices
- vii) Working hours
- viii) Remuneration
- ix) Management Systems

But in reality, a few regulations are obeyed. Some of the examples are- they try to give the minimum workers' wages (3,000 tk per month), restrict child labor, follow equal opportunity in employment etc. We also found that the understanding of CSR in our context thus seems to be anchored in the context of voluntary action, with the economic, legal, and ethical dimensions assumed as taken for granted. When we interviewed all the executives adhered to a voluntary action or philanthropic type conception of CSR. We asked them about the type of CSR performed, all companies consistently referred to philanthropic type activities and programs, with no mention of the importance of ethical conduct, legal compliance, or economic viability. Moreover, lower level of employees have never heard the concept of CSR. So when we make them understand about CSR, they inform us that a few garments do philanthropic activities to green wash the eyes of people or nothing.

CSR in the garment industry in Bangladesh context is therefore largely understood to comprise the philanthropic contributions that business firms make over and above their mainstream activities. As articulated by Bush (2005), CSR is not just about philanthropic/charitable giving; rather it is the whole way in which a

company interacts with society. The everyday activity of business has a much more profound social impact than its small voluntary community contributions, however valuable. The realization of this profound connection between the different facets of everyday activity of companies (e.g., economic, legal) and the well-being of society seems to be less than fully appreciated in our context. Whatever we have found in our interview session, we analyze the findings and make a table of their corporate social responsibilities. In this table, the total CSR activities of our garment industry have been categorized according to Carroll (1991) four part model. With the help of this table we can understand that what type of CSR is more practiced in our garment industry.

Economic	Most of the garment companies pay taxes properly, and make payments to employees and suppliers on due time. Their financial activities help to increase the country's economic growth and decrease unemployment problem of the country. They try to produce good quality of products to sell to the suppliers.
Legal	Most of the garment companies pay a minimum salary to the entry level workers and according to higher ranks salary increases. They also pay overtime and Eid bonuses to the workers. Clean working environment, good ventilation, hygienic toilet and pure drinking water are crucial support provided by garments companies to the workers. Child labor has been banned by most of the factories.
Ethical	Most of the garments train their employees to get better output. A few garments provide transportation facilities, insurance, provident funds, and day care facilities to the employees.
Philanthropic	Some garment company gives donations to campaign against HIV-AIDS, and victims of natural disasters. All garments donate a certain amount of money to the victims of Savar tragedy. In October, 2011, the IFC reported that 12 factories involved in the pilot project, with lower water consumption by 75 million liters and achieved savings of USD 1 million in operating costs. They also work for women empowerment.

**Table-1: List of CSR Activities Implemented by Bangladesh Garments Factory**

Above table gives us the summary of CSR is practiced by our garment factory. This is a small part of CSR is practicing. A lot of things are not practiced. Like- many factory building has not built under the right code of conduct. Many factories have not enough fire exit systems. So many disasters often occur in the factories. When work load increases workers are forced to do overtime. Workers have no job security. Workers do not sign any contract. For this reason, workers can be fired at any time. Sexual harassment also takes place in the factories.

Moreover, Bangladesh garment factory do not obey environment law at all. They do not take any steps to process well the factory wastes. There is no waste management treatment plant in the garment areas of Savar, Gazipur, Ashulia and Tongi. All factory wastes are dumped nearby canals and rivers. As a result, water is polluted day by day and our ecological balance is going to be threatened.

But the most interesting part is the top management of these factors do not understand that protecting the environment, implementing rules and regulations, earning a profit- these are also the examples of CSR activities. They think that philanthropic activities like- donating money and other charitable works are only CSR activities. Another interesting part is they think that ethical activities are as same as philanthropic activities.

These two are not different. Therefore, after analyzing the findings we want to say that our corporate managers do not understand the CSR concept well. So it may be one of the causes that they do not practice CSR appropriately in our garment industry.

## **VI. Scope For Further Research**

There is a lot of scope for further research about the garments sector of the country. In this study, we could not examine the empirical test of our Proposed Model of Corporate Social Responsibility in the context of developing country for limitation of time. So there is a scope to examine the empirical acceptance of this proposed model.

## **VII. Conclusion And Recommendations**

In our research, we find that Carroll's (1991) pyramid of CSR is not implemented properly in the garment industry of Bangladesh. Actually a small part of CSR is practiced here in the factories. So many unwanted disasters are occurring and many valuable lives are lost. But the most disappointing part is that the top management level does not understand the concept of CSR well. They have various kinds of misconceptions about CSR. CSR practices depend on various factors, e.g. Attitude, understanding and worldview of corporate owners etc. So it is simply that if they do not understand one thing then they will be not able to practice that properly. In this situation, our Proposed Model of Corporate Social Responsibility can be used for better understanding of CSR by the top executives.

There are also many other reasons why our garment factories do not practice CSR properly. In the context of Bangladesh, we can see that business of garment factories are increasingly facing competition, both in the domestic as well as in the international market. So, the businesses like to maximize their profit by ignoring CSR. And the second thing is that the companies are not receiving any pressure from the society, which is related to CSR. There are also some relatively small garment factories in our country which have narrow vision about CSR as they consider it as a cost burden. In this case, the state should play a supportive role

that can induce and enable to practice CSR in the corporate sector. The state should be strict to obey legal obligations. Like- most of the factories do not have waste management treatment plant. But our government is not concerned to it. If we have strong implementation of the law then our rivers would not be polluted.

Government should take appropriate measures to provide support to the companies with adequate facilities that could enable them to protect the environment and human rights. Besides, to protect our environment the corporate body should take the following steps-

- Recycle chemical wastes and hazardous waste before disposing those.
- Recycle cotton waste which generated in large volume and try to use those in other purposes.
- Burn plastic and other materials before disposing those.

The corporate body of garment industry also should take necessary steps to improve the working environment. Every factory must be included fire safety plant and factory building should be built according to the building code of conduct. Workers job security should be increased. They should be given an appointment letter and contract paper.

But the good thing is the situation is improving day by day. Child labor has been restricted in our garments. Most of the garments obey the rule of paying minimum wages to the workers. They also provide other benefits to the workers. In this case, international buyers can play a good role. They are diverting their pressure to comply with labor rights, and improving services and workplace conditions. But their responsibilities do not end up only with providing guidelines. They should also provide financial support to the factories to practice CSR properly.

We hope so that this problem will be overcome with the study of CSR in our University study as well as companies. Most of the national and multinational company's information disclosure process is poor. Therefore, the regulatory body of government should be improved and powerful. Our management should be trained well to practice better CSR, and implement it as a competitive tool in the market.

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