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## Addressing Gender Disparity and Youth Unemployment through CSR in the Oil & Gas Sector: A Conceptual Review

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### Abstract

This conceptual review examines the potential of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives within the oil and gas sector to address two pressing global challenges: gender disparity and youth unemployment. Despite progress in recent years, gender inequality remains a significant issue in many parts of the world, particularly in industries like oil and gas where women are underrepresented. Similarly, youth unemployment rates are disproportionately high in many regions, posing social and economic challenges. This review explores how CSR programs implemented by oil and gas companies can contribute to mitigating these challenges by promoting gender equality and providing opportunities for youth employment. Drawing on existing literature and conceptual frameworks, the review discusses key strategies and approaches that oil and gas companies can adopt to address gender disparity and youth unemployment through CSR initiatives. These strategies may include promoting diversity and inclusion within the workforce, supporting education and skills development programs for women and youth, and fostering partnerships with local communities and educational institutions. By leveraging their resources, expertise, and influence, oil and gas companies have the potential to make significant contributions to advancing gender equality and creating employment opportunities for young people, thereby promoting sustainable development and social progress. The review also highlights the importance of collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to maximize the impact of CSR initiatives in addressing these complex and interconnected challenges. Finally, the review identifies areas for further research and underscores the need for continued efforts to harness the power of CSR in driving positive social change within the oil and gas sector and beyond.

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### 1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the oil and gas sector encompasses a range of initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable development, environmental stewardship, and social well-being. Within this context, addressing gender disparity and youth unemployment has emerged as a critical focus area for CSR efforts. This conceptual review explores the role of CSR in tackling these challenges, specifically within the oil and gas industry (Duttagupta, *et. al.*, 2021, Osobajo, Ajide&Otitoju, 2019, Suska, 2021).

CSR in the oil and gas sector refers to the voluntary actions taken by companies to integrate social and environmental concerns into their business operations and interactions with stakeholders. It involves going beyond legal requirements to contribute to

the well-being of society and the environment (Chowdhury, *et. al.*, 2019, Oshioeste, Okoye & Udokwu, 2023).

Gender disparity and youth unemployment are complex societal issues that require collaborative and sustainable solutions. CSR initiatives in the oil and gas sector have the potential to create positive impacts by promoting gender equality in the workforce and providing opportunities for youth skill development and employment (Buheji, 2019, Hujó & Carter, 2019, Jamatia, 2023).

This review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of CSR initiatives in the oil and gas sector aimed at addressing gender disparity and youth unemployment. It will examine current challenges, best practices, and recommendations for companies seeking to make a meaningful impact in these areas. The review will also highlight the importance of collaboration and stakeholder engagement in driving effective CSR strategies.

## 2. Historical Perspectives

The historical perspectives of addressing gender disparity and youth unemployment through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the oil and gas sector have evolved significantly over time. Initially, CSR efforts in the industry were often limited and focused primarily on philanthropic activities. However, as societal expectations and regulatory pressures increased, companies began to recognize the importance of addressing these issues more systematically (El Helou & Sensenig, 2021, Uduji & Okolo-Obasi, 2022, Uduji, Okolo-Obasi & Asongu, 2023).

In the early days of the oil and gas industry, gender disparity was pervasive, with the sector being predominantly male-dominated. Women faced significant barriers to entry and advancement in the industry, leading to a lack of diversity and inclusivity. Similarly, youth unemployment was a growing concern, particularly in regions where oil and gas operations were located.

As CSR gained prominence in the industry, companies started to implement initiatives to address these challenges. These initiatives included programs aimed at promoting gender equality in the workforce, such as training and development programs for women, as well as initiatives to support youth employment, such as apprenticeship programs and vocational training. Over time, there has been a shift towards more strategic and holistic approaches to CSR in the oil and gas sector. Companies have started to recognize that addressing gender disparity and youth unemployment requires long-term, sustainable solutions. This has led to the development of more comprehensive CSR strategies that aim to create lasting change in these areas (Fatima & Elbanna, 2023, Halkos & Nomikos, 2021, Zou, *et. al.*, 2021).

Today, leading oil and gas companies are implementing a range of innovative CSR initiatives to address gender disparity and youth unemployment. These initiatives include initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion in the workforce, such as unconscious bias training and flexible work arrangements, as well as programs to support youth employment, such as mentoring and internship programs. Overall, while progress has been made, there is still much work to be done to address gender disparity and youth unemployment in the oil and gas sector. By continuing to prioritize these issues and implement impactful CSR initiatives, the industry can contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable future for all (Uchekukwu, *et. al.*, 2023, Uduji & Okolo-Obasi, 2019, Ukoba, *et. al.*, 2011).

## 3. Gender Disparity in the Oil and Gas Sector

Gender disparity in the oil and gas sector is a pervasive issue that has been challenging to address. Despite efforts to promote gender diversity and inclusivity, women remain significantly underrepresented in the industry, particularly in technical and leadership roles. Understanding the current status of gender diversity, the factors contributing to gender disparity, and the impact of this disparity is crucial for developing effective strategies to address these issues (Murphy, *et. al.*, 2021, Okunade, *et. al.*, 2023, Perks & Schulz, 2020).

Women account for a small percentage of the workforce in the oil and gas sector, with estimates ranging from 15% to 25% globally. The representation of women is even lower in technical and leadership positions, where they make up less than 10% of the workforce in some regions. Despite efforts to increase gender diversity, progress has been slow, and the industry continues to struggle to attract and retain female talent.

The oil and gas industry has historically been male-dominated, with a culture that may be unwelcoming to women. Biases in recruitment and hiring processes can result in fewer women being hired for technical and leadership roles. The absence of female role models and mentors in the industry can make it challenging for women to envision themselves succeeding in these roles. The demanding nature of work in the oil and gas sector, including long hours and frequent travel, can be challenging for women, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities (Abuhelaiqa, 2020, Odeleye & Adeigbe, 2018).

Gender disparity limits the talent pool available to the industry, potentially hindering innovation and competitiveness. A lack of gender diversity can contribute to a less inclusive work environment, impacting employee morale and engagement. Gender disparity in the oil and gas sector can reinforce stereotypes and contribute to broader gender inequalities in society. Addressing gender disparity in the oil and gas sector requires a multi-faceted approach that includes promoting diversity and inclusion, addressing biases in recruitment and hiring, providing mentorship and development opportunities for women, and creating a more flexible and inclusive work environment. By taking proactive steps to address these issues, the industry can work towards a more diverse and inclusive future (Chau & Quire, 2020, Crane, 2022, Lobel, 2019).

## 4. Youth Unemployment in the Oil and Gas Sector

Youth unemployment in the oil and gas sector presents significant challenges and has far-reaching implications for both individuals and economies. Understanding the challenges and barriers faced by young people seeking employment, the effects of youth unemployment on economic development, and the role of the oil and gas sector in addressing these issues is essential for developing effective strategies to mitigate youth unemployment (Anyanwu & Duru, 2021, Eze *et. al.*, 2023, Lai, 2020).

Many young people face challenges in securing employment due to a lack of relevant work experience. There may be a mismatch between the skills and qualifications possessed by young people and those demanded by employers in the oil and gas sector. Economic and social factors, such as poverty, lack of access to education and training, and geographical location, can limit young people's access to employment opportunities in the sector. The cyclical nature of the oil and

gas industry can result in fluctuations in employment opportunities, making it challenging for young people to secure stable employment (Almeida & Santos, 2020, Giorgi, *et. al.*, 2020, Tang & Li, 2021).

Youth unemployment leads to lost productivity and human capital, which can have negative implications for economic growth and development. High levels of youth unemployment can lead to social unrest, crime, and other social problems, impacting social cohesion and stability. Persistent youth unemployment can have long-term economic consequences, including reduced consumer spending, lower tax revenues, and increased social welfare costs (Iloabuchi, 2019, Katumo & Maingi, 2019, Onwuka, Ugwu & Chukwuma, 2020).

The oil and gas sector has the potential to create employment opportunities for young people, particularly in areas such as exploration, production, and support services. The industry can play a role in providing training and skills development programs to equip young people with the skills needed to enter the workforce. Oil and gas companies can contribute to addressing youth unemployment through corporate social responsibility initiatives, such as investing in education and training programs, supporting entrepreneurship, and fostering partnerships with educational institutions and government agencies (Alemzero, *et. al.*, 2021, Graham & Ovadia, 2019, Perks & Schulz, 2020).

Addressing youth unemployment in the oil and gas sector requires a coordinated effort involving governments, the private sector, educational institutions, and other stakeholders. By investing in education and skills development, creating employment opportunities, and supporting initiatives aimed at empowering young people, the industry can contribute to reducing youth unemployment and fostering sustainable economic development.

### 5. CSR Initiatives Addressing Gender Disparity

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives play a crucial role in addressing gender disparity in the workforce by promoting gender equality, empowering women, and creating a more inclusive and diverse work environment. These initiatives encompass various strategies and programs aimed at fostering equal opportunities for men and women, breaking down barriers to women's advancement, and promoting gender-sensitive policies and practices within organizations.

Implementing policies and practices that ensure equal access to employment opportunities, recruitment, hiring, and promotions regardless of gender. Ensuring that men and women receive equal pay for equal work and addressing gender wage gaps within the organization. Offering flexible work arrangements, parental leave policies, and childcare support to help employees balance work and family responsibilities. Providing leadership training and mentorship programs to empower women and support their career advancement into leadership positions. Creating a culture of inclusion where diverse perspectives are valued, and all employees feel respected and supported regardless of gender identity (Agrawal, *et. al.*, 2020, Coe, Wiley & Bekker, 2019, Vyas-Doorgapersad & Bangani, 2020).

Initiatives that focus on providing education, training, and economic opportunities for women in communities where companies operate. Training programs aimed at raising awareness of gender bias, promoting diversity, and fostering an inclusive workplace culture. Partnering with women-

owned businesses and minority suppliers to increase their representation in the supply chain. Pairing female employees with senior leaders who serve as mentors and advocates to support their career advancement. Supporting initiatives that promote gender equality, such as women's rights advocacy, girls' education, and access to healthcare (Gunawan, Permatasari & Tilt, 2020, Joshi & Yenneti, 2020, Tang, 2022).

Tracking key performance indicators such as gender representation in leadership roles, gender pay parity, employee turnover rates, and participation in diversity and inclusion programs. Gathering feedback from employees through surveys, focus groups, and interviews to assess the perceived impact of CSR initiatives on gender equality and workplace culture. Recognition from external organizations and stakeholders for the company's commitment to gender equality and CSR initiatives. Assessing the long-term sustainability and scalability of CSR programs and their potential to drive systemic change in promoting gender equality within the organization and society (Baker, French & Ali, 2021, Dixon-Fyle, *et. al.*, 2020, Hunt, *et. al.*, 2020). By implementing effective CSR initiatives targeting gender disparity, companies can contribute to creating more equitable and inclusive workplaces, driving positive social change, and fostering sustainable development.

### 6. CSR Initiatives Addressing Youth Unemployment

Addressing youth unemployment through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives is critical for fostering economic growth, reducing social inequalities, and empowering young people to contribute meaningfully to society. CSR programs aimed at youth employment focus on providing skill development opportunities, creating pathways to employment, and fostering entrepreneurship among young individuals (Kumi, Yeboah & Kumi, 2020, Molderez, 2020, Nwafor & Egoruze, 2022).

Offering vocational training, apprenticeships, and technical skills development programs to equip young people with the skills needed to succeed in the workforce. Providing career counseling, job placement services, and internship opportunities to help young individuals secure employment and gain valuable work experience. Offering mentorship, training, and financial support for aspiring young entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses. Providing training in digital literacy, coding, and other technology-related skills to prepare young people for jobs in the digital economy. Offering workshops and seminars on communication, teamwork, leadership, and other soft skills essential for success in the workplace (Muchira, *et. al.*, 2023, Sack & Allen, 2019, Wonthey, 2019).

Partnering with educational institutions to design curriculum, provide training facilities, and offer internships to students. Collaborating with government agencies to develop policies and programs that support youth employment, such as tax incentives for hiring young workers or funding for skills training initiatives. Working with industry associations and trade unions to develop industry-specific training programs and certifications that align with employer needs. Chevron's Future Leaders Program provides scholarships, mentorship, and internship opportunities to high-achieving students from underprivileged backgrounds, helping them pursue higher education and gain employment opportunities (Amey & Eddy, 2023, Anderson & Sanga, 2019, Franco, Silva & Rodrigues, 2019).

Microsoft's YouthSpark Initiative aims to empower young people through technology education, digital skills training, and entrepreneurship programs, reaching millions of youths worldwide. Nestlé's Youth Employment Initiative focuses on providing vocational training, job placement services, and entrepreneurship support to young people in communities where the company operates, helping them secure meaningful employment or start their own businesses. By implementing effective CSR initiatives addressing youth unemployment, companies can play a crucial role in building a skilled workforce, driving economic development, and creating opportunities for young people to thrive in the labor market (Muthpolotage, Qutab & Gardner, 2021, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020, Sehgal, *et al.*, 2020).

## 7. Challenges and Limitations of CSR in Addressing Gender Disparity and Youth Unemployment

Addressing gender disparity and youth unemployment through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives is not without its challenges and limitations. While CSR programs can have significant positive impacts, various constraints may hinder their effectiveness in achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes. Below are key challenges and limitations to consider when discussing CSR in addressing gender disparity and youth unemployment (Fallah Shayan, *et al.*, 2022, Oruc, 2020, Stanescu, 2019).

Limited financial resources and competing priorities may constrain companies' ability to invest in comprehensive CSR programs addressing gender disparity and youth unemployment. Lack of internal expertise, human resources, and infrastructure may hinder companies' ability to design, implement, and manage effective CSR initiatives. Complex regulatory environments and legal requirements may pose challenges for companies operating in different jurisdictions, impacting the design and implementation of CSR programs. Balancing the diverse expectations and interests of various stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, communities, and government authorities, can be challenging for companies (Kalliny, 2023, Khamidova, 2021, Özyol, 2020).

Many CSR programs may focus on short-term outcomes or initiatives with limited long-term sustainability, making it challenging to address systemic issues such as gender disparity and youth unemployment effectively. Scaling up successful CSR programs to reach larger populations or expand into new regions may be hindered by resource constraints, logistical challenges, and lack of scalability in program design. Over-reliance on CSR initiatives to address social issues such as gender disparity and youth unemployment without addressing underlying systemic issues may create dependencies and perpetuate unsustainable solutions (Dadzie, Fumey & Namara, 2020, Kumi, Yeboah & Kumi, 2020, Simac, Marcus & Harper, 2021).

Measuring the impact of CSR initiatives on gender disparity and youth unemployment requires robust metrics and indicators that capture both qualitative and quantitative outcomes, which can be challenging to develop and implement. Attributing changes in gender disparity and youth unemployment solely to CSR initiatives may be difficult due to the influence of external factors, economic conditions, government policies, and cultural norms. Limited availability and reliability of data on gender disaggregated indicators and youth employment statistics may hinder companies' ability to

accurately assess the impact of their CSR programs (Bachmann, *et al.*, 2022, Tewari, *et al.*, 2021, Van der Waal & Thijssens, 2020).

Despite these challenges and limitations, companies can mitigate risks and enhance the effectiveness of their CSR initiatives by adopting a strategic and holistic approach, collaborating with stakeholders, investing in capacity building, and prioritizing long-term sustainability and impact measurement.

## 8. Best Practices and Recommendations

Addressing gender disparity and youth unemployment through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the oil and gas sector requires a strategic and holistic approach. Best practices and recommendations can help companies enhance their CSR impact and contribute to sustainable development. Below are key strategies and recommendations for effective CSR engagement (Kra & Bhat, 2023, Molderez, 2020, Mogaji, *et al.*, 2021).

**Integrate gender equality considerations into all aspects of CSR programs, from design to implementation, to ensure they address the specific needs and challenges faced by women.** Develop targeted programs that build skills, provide training, and create opportunities for young people to access employment in the oil and gas sector and related industries. Collaborate with local communities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders to co-design and implement CSR initiatives that are contextually relevant and sustainable. **Capacity Building:** Invest in building the capacity of local communities and stakeholders to participate meaningfully in CSR programs and contribute to their long-term success (Grosser & Moon, 2019, Leal Filho, *et al.*, 2023, Torres, Jain & Leka, 2019).

**Establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the progress and impact of CSR initiatives on gender disparity and youth unemployment, and use this data to inform decision-making and program improvement.** Align CSR with Business Objectives: Ensure that CSR initiatives are aligned with the company's core business objectives and contribute to its long-term sustainability and social license to operate. **Engage Employees:** Encourage employee involvement in CSR programs through volunteerism, skills-based volunteering, and employee resource groups focused on gender equality and youth empowerment (Hira & Busumtwi-Sam, 2021, Musariwa, 2023, Silalahi & Walsh, 2023).

**Maintain transparency in reporting CSR activities, including the outcomes and impact of initiatives on gender disparity and youth unemployment, to build trust with stakeholders.** **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly review and assess the effectiveness of CSR programs, solicit feedback from stakeholders, and adapt strategies to address emerging challenges and opportunities. **Knowledge Sharing:** Share best practices, lessons learned, and successful case studies with industry peers, stakeholders, and the wider community to promote learning and collaboration (Anwana, E. (2020), Guix, M., & Font, X. (2020), Peña-Miranda, *et al.*, 2022).

Collaborating with stakeholders, including local communities, governments, NGOs, and industry partners, is essential for the success of CSR initiatives addressing gender disparity and youth unemployment. By engaging stakeholders early and throughout the CSR process, companies can ensure that programs are contextually relevant, sustainable, and impactful. Stakeholder engagement

also helps build trust, manage expectations, and foster shared ownership of CSR initiatives, ultimately contributing to positive social and economic outcomes for all stakeholders involved (Diaz, 2020, Moshtari & Vanpoucke, 2021, Serfontein-Jordaan & Dlungwane, 2022).

## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, addressing gender disparity and youth unemployment through corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the oil and gas sector is both a moral imperative and a strategic opportunity. By implementing effective CSR initiatives, companies can contribute to sustainable development, improve their social license to operate, and enhance their reputation as responsible corporate citizens.

Key findings from this review highlight the importance of integrating gender equality and youth empowerment considerations into CSR programs, engaging stakeholders collaboratively, and aligning CSR efforts with business objectives.

A call to action is needed for the oil and gas sector to prioritize and scale up CSR initiatives that address gender disparity and youth unemployment. This includes investing in skills development, promoting diversity and inclusion, and supporting community development programs that create opportunities for marginalized groups.

Looking ahead, the future of CSR in the oil and gas sector holds great promise. As companies increasingly recognize the benefits of responsible business practices, there is growing momentum for more impactful and sustainable CSR initiatives. By continuing to innovate, collaborate, and prioritize social responsibility, the oil and gas sector can play a significant role in advancing gender equality, empowering youth, and contributing to a more sustainable future for all.

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