Corporate Social Responsibility of Mobile Telephone Networks and Socio-Economic Development in South Sudan

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Abstract

Global competition among businesses has intensified since the beginning of the 21st century, leading not only to the rise of private monopolies but also to the gradual retreat of governments from roles they once dominated. This study explores the role of mobile telephone networks in South Sudan, with a specific focus on MTN's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and their contribution to socio-economic development. The research assessed (i) the relationship between MTN's CSR and socio-economic development, (ii) the impact of MTN on South Sudan's socio-economic progress, and (iii) the challenges facing MTN's CSR activities. A case study design was adopted, using questionnaires as the primary data collection tool. From a population of 1,400, a sample of 300 participants was randomly selected. Data were analyzed using SPSS (version 20.0) to generate descriptive statistics, with both quantitative and qualitative approaches applied. Secondary sources, including books, journals, newspapers, and internet materials, supplemented the primary data. Findings revealed that MTN's CSR is primarily focused on education and health initiatives, with job creation serving as the major link between CSR and socio-economic development. However, limited resources and the absence of proper monitoring and evaluation frameworks were identified as key challenges. The study recommends that MTN integrate CSR into its long-term business strategy by aligning activities with social, environmental, legal, and developmental standards. Suggested areas of focus include building schools and health facilities, supporting sports, and creating community value while adhering to government policies and regulatory frameworks. By adopting best practices across the four pillars of CSR—economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic—MTN can enhance its impact on South Sudan's socio-economic development.

Keywords: Mobile Telephone Networks, Corporate Social Responsibility, Socio-Economic Development, South Sudan.

1. Introduction

Several prior studies highlight the critical role of mobile telecommunication networks in shaping socio-economic development in South Sudan and comparable post-conflict settings. Brinkman,

Both, and de Bruijn (2017) trace the historical development of mobile phones in Juba, from the end of the second Sudanese Civil War in 2005 to just after independence in 2011. Their findings reveal that, despite infrastructural and technical challenges, mobile telephony quickly became essential for reconnecting dispersed families, enhancing personal security, fostering access to markets, and facilitating migrant-led business ventures. These functions underscore how communication technologies are not merely technical tools but become deeply entangled with politics, mobility, and entrepreneurship in fragile, post-war societies. Beyond enhancing social connectivity, mobile information technology has proven instrumental in improving public health outcomes. Haskew et al. (2015), for instance, demonstrate the effectiveness of Android-based smartphones in monitoring a nationwide polio immunization campaign in South Sudan. The study showed that mobile technologies improved data collection, enhanced campaign awareness, and facilitated equitable health service delivery. These findings suggest that telecommunication networks extend beyond communication to directly influence human development, particularly in fragile contexts where traditional governance and infrastructure remain weak.

Corporate governance and strategic business practices also play a pivotal role. Ahmed (2016) examined corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the Sudanese telecommunication industry and concluded that CSR was embedded into company strategy, with strong management commitment to social and environmental issues. Similarly, Sulemena (2017) argues that African telecom companies frequently report CSR activities—especially in education, community involvement, and ethical business practices—through online platforms. However, the quality and depth of CSR reporting varies, raising questions about accountability and the extent to which such programs achieve meaningful impact. The relationship between business and government is particularly important in Sudan and South Sudan. Hussien and Dibie (2017) describe the region's mixed economy, where business and government are closely intertwined. In such systems, foreign investment in telecommunications and petroleum significantly influences socio-economic outcomes. For South Sudan, where telecommunications are dominated by foreign-owned companies, CSR represents both a business obligation and a potential mechanism for contributing to national development in alignment with government priorities. More recent studies reinforce these perspectives. Johnathan (2023), in a case study of Zain South Sudan, found that strong corporate governance—particularly through CSR—enhanced competitiveness. However, inflation and management challenges limited performance, demonstrating the fragile nature of business operations in South Sudan. Similarly, Lisok (2018) highlights how recurring conflict has undermined socio-economic development in Central Equatoria by disrupting infrastructure and essential service delivery. This context emphasizes the need for private sector engagement, particularly from telecommunications companies, to help fill developmental gaps where the government remains limited.

International aid has also shaped South Sudan's socio-economic landscape. Riak and Yak (2025) argue that aid has contributed positively to healthcare, education, and infrastructure development but has simultaneously fostered dependency and corruption. This suggests that while foreign aid is important, it cannot be a sustainable solution. CSR, when embedded in business strategies of multinational corporations such as MTN, could complement aid efforts by providing sustainable, locally-driven development initiatives. Taken together, these prior studies highlight that mobile telecommunication companies in South Sudan, particularly MTN, are uniquely positioned to influence socio-economic development. Through targeted CSR activities in education, health, governance, and infrastructure, these companies can help bridge gaps created by conflict, institutional weaknesses, and limited public investment. However, the success

of such interventions depends on their strategic alignment with local needs, transparent implementation, and supportive regulatory frameworks.

1.1 Background of the Study
Collier and Esteban (2007) argue that organizations can only remain competitive in modern markets if they embrace social responsibility by addressing environmental and social challenges. Dhaliwal et al. (2012) classify CSR into three dimensions: environmental, external, and internal. They emphasize that addressing environmental and social issues is not optional but essential for organizational competitiveness and for promoting sustainable development. Sustainable development principles stress the need to use scarce resources responsibly to meet present needs without undermining future generations. Jhingan (2009) also underscores that economic development must be measured not only by income growth but by sustainable improvements in people's quality of life. This includes education, health, and environmental well-being. In response, telecom companies in Nigeria and South Sudan have increasingly sought to improve their corporate image by investing in infrastructure that directly contributes to socio-economic development. CSR has thus emerged as a powerful concept that enables businesses to make voluntary contributions to the societies in which they operate (Katamba et al., 2012). Unlike traditional philanthropy, modern CSR is integrated into business strategies and recognizes the need to balance profitability with social and environmental responsibility. Companies that ignore CSR risk reputational damage and declining competitiveness, while those that embrace it contribute to sustainable development and foster goodwill among stakeholders.

In South Sudan, telecommunications companies play a vital role in socio-economic development. They expand connectivity, particularly in rural areas, and provide access to essential information and services. However, the sector faces daunting challenges, including ongoing conflict, poor infrastructure, high operating costs, and limited rural penetration. These disparities hinder economic growth and exacerbate inequalities. Bridging this gap requires strategic CSR interventions that leverage telecommunications to enhance education, health, employment, and social cohesion.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem and objectives
The South Sudanese telecommunications sector has become increasingly competitive due to globalization, technological advancements, regulatory reforms, and leadership changes. These dynamics have reshaped customer expectations, compelling companies to deliver services guided by cost-benefit criteria while addressing growing stakeholder demands for accountability in social and environmental performance. Telecommunication companies, particularly MTN, have embraced CSR as a strategy to address pressing development challenges. CSR initiatives include investments in health, education, and community development. However, despite these efforts, critical questions remain: To what extent do these CSR activities contribute to socio-economic development in South Sudan? How effectively do they address persistent inequalities caused by conflict, poverty, and weak governance? The problem is further compounded by limited resources, weak monitoring mechanisms, and the absence of standardized CSR reporting. As a result, it is often unclear whether CSR initiatives are sustainable, impactful, or aligned with the developmental priorities of South Sudan. This raises the central research problem: while CSR is widely practiced by MTN in South Sudan, its actual contribution to socio-economic development remains insufficiently understood. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to assess the Corporate Social Responsibilities Role of MTN Telecommunication Company (TCC) in the Socio-Economic Development of South Sudan. This objective captures the essence of the research by

focusing on MTN's CSR as a strategic instrument and evaluating its contribution to the broader socio-economic transformation of South Sudan.

2. Literature Review

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a critical strategic tool for businesses worldwide, allowing corporations to balance profitability with social and environmental obligations. While CSR was historically considered a philanthropic add-on, modern scholarship positions it as an integral component of business strategy that influences socio-economic development, stakeholder relations, and corporate governance. In the context of fragile states like South Sudan, where governance structures are weak and public services are limited, CSR assumes an even greater significance. Telecommunication companies (TCCs), particularly multinational corporations such as MTN, are uniquely positioned to leverage CSR for socio-economic development by providing infrastructure, improving access to information, and supporting education, health, and community projects. This literature review examines the evolution of CSR from its historical roots to contemporary global practices, focusing on its application in the telecommunication sector. The review also synthesizes prior research on mobile networks in South Sudan, corporate governance, and socio-economic development, highlighting gaps in knowledge regarding the impact of CSR on development outcomes. The objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of CSR's potential role in promoting sustainable development in post-conflict societies, particularly through the activities of MTN in South Sudan.

2.1 Historical Roots of CSR

The concept of corporate social responsibility has deep historical roots, tracing back to ancient Roman legal structures, which institutionalized social obligations such as hospitals, orphanages, and care for the elderly (Chaffee, 2017). During the Middle Ages, philanthropic activities became more structured, often associated with religious and municipal institutions, demonstrating the early recognition of corporate responsibility towards society. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the English Crown formalize corporate roles in social advancement, exporting these ideas to colonies in America where corporations played critical social roles (Chaffee, 2017). The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were marked by the rise of Christian-inspired philanthropy, which aimed to address social ills such as poverty, child labor, and lack of education across Europe and the United States (Harrison, 1966; Carroll, 2008). Philanthropic initiatives, exemplified by organizations like the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), sought to integrate moral and social values into business practices, influencing both employee welfare and community development (Heald, 1970). By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, welfare schemes in industrial communities, such as those by Pullman Palace Car Company in 1893, reflected the integration of social sensitivity into corporate strategy, where managers began balancing profit with societal obligations (Carroll, 2008; Heald, 1970). The mid-20th century further formalized the CSR dialogue, as scholars and practitioners began conceptualizing corporations as trustees of social relationships beyond shareholders. Early foundational works, including Barnard's *The Functions of the Executive* (1938) and Clark's *The Social Control of Business* (1939), emphasized that businesses bear both economic and social responsibilities, setting the stage for modern CSR frameworks. This historical evolution underscores the transition of CSR from voluntary philanthropy to a strategic imperative embedded in corporate governance and operational decision-making.

2.2 CSR Laws and Global Practices

Globally, CSR has evolved from a voluntary initiative to a legally and strategically recognized obligation in many countries. France, Denmark, South Africa, and China have implemented

mandatory CSR reporting requirements to ensure transparency, accountability, and alignment with national development goals (Zain, 2008). International guidelines, such as the UN Global Compact, ISO 26000 on Social Responsibility, and OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, provide frameworks for corporations to integrate CSR into business strategy while monitoring social, environmental, and economic impacts (Magolis & Walsh, 2002).

CSR implementation globally varies in depth and focus. For example, the European Commission's CSR agenda emphasizes promoting exemplary practices, strengthening trust in business, advancing self-regulation, incentivizing sustainable practices, and integrating CSR into education and training (Chamhuri & Wan Noramelia, 2004). Similarly, firms like Aptech in India demonstrate the social impact of CSR through educational programs, community empowerment, and skill development, illustrating how CSR extends beyond compliance to tangible social transformation (Hogner, 1982). The Literature also shows that CSR must be embedded within strategic frameworks that consider environmental, social, and economic factors. Effective CSR practices involve internal initiatives for employees' welfare and safety, as well as external engagement with communities, public authorities, and NGOs. This dual approach ensures that CSR initiatives create value for both the company and society while fostering sustainable development (Szekely & Knirsch, 2005; Haniffa & Cooke, 2005).

2.3 CSR in Telecommunication Companies
Telecommunication companies (TCCs) are particularly well-positioned to implement CSR initiatives that contribute to socio-economic development. The expansion of mobile networks in Africa has enabled greater connectivity, facilitated access to information, and promoted entrepreneurship and education, particularly in post-conflict contexts (Brinkman, Both, & de Bruijn, 2017). MTN Group Limited, headquartered in Johannesburg, operates in over 20 countries and serves over 232 million subscribers. The company prioritizes CSR through four key imperatives: value addition to the business, sustainability of projects, community impact, and partnerships to increase project effectiveness (Collier & Esteban, 2007). MTN's CSR is classified into internal and external dimensions. Internal CSR focuses on employee welfare, including investment in human capital, health and safety measures, and environmentally responsible operational practices. External CSR targets the broader community and stakeholders, addressing educational programs, health initiatives, economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability. By leveraging telecommunications infrastructure and corporate resources, MTN has the potential to significantly influence socio-economic development in countries such as South Sudan (Szekely & Knirsch, 2005).

2.4 Mobile Telecommunication Networks and Socio-Economic Development in South Sudan
Several studies highlight the critical role of mobile networks in post-conflict South Sudan. Brinkman et al. (2017) show that mobile phones in Juba facilitated communication among displaced families, enhanced security, and supported market access and entrepreneurship. Haskew et al. (2015) demonstrate how mobile information technology improved public health outcomes during a national polio immunization campaign, showing higher household awareness, equitable service delivery, and more efficient data collection. These studies indicate that mobile networks extend beyond connectivity to facilitate education, health, and economic participation. In addition, the socio-political context amplifies the importance of CSR. Hussien and Dibie (2017) describe South Sudan's mixed economy, where business and government interactions are deeply intertwined. Foreign-owned telecom companies, including MTN, therefore influence both policy and development outcomes. Johnathan (2023) similarly shows that robust corporate governance,

including CSR, enhances competitiveness and operational effectiveness in South Sudan's Zain Company, although management challenges and economic volatility constrain outcomes.

2.5 CSR, Conflict, and Development Gaps

South Sudan faces structural and socio-economic challenges arising from prolonged conflict. Lisok (2018) reports that recurring armed conflicts disrupted infrastructure, service delivery, and livelihoods, resulting in widespread poverty and underdevelopment. Riak and Yak (2025) note that while international aid has contributed to healthcare, education, and infrastructure, dependency, corruption, and mismanagement remain significant challenges. These findings underscore the potential for CSR initiatives by companies like MTN to provide sustainable, locally-driven development interventions, complementing but not replacing foreign aid.

2.6 Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature reviewed demonstrates that CSR has evolved from philanthropy to a strategic tool for sustainable development, with legal, historical, and theoretical foundations globally. Telecommunication companies in Africa have leveraged CSR to support community development, education, and health, with evidence suggesting that mobile networks play a critical role in socio-economic recovery in fragile states. However, despite MTN's extensive CSR programs, there is limited empirical research assessing the actual socio-economic impact of these interventions in South Sudan. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by systematically evaluating MTN's CSR initiatives and their contributions to local development, particularly in areas of education, health, infrastructure, and economic empowerment.

2.7 Theoretical Review

Theoretical frameworks provide critical insight into why organizations engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and how these activities intersect with corporate governance and socio-economic outcomes. Two prominent theories often applied in CSR research are Legitimacy Theory and Economic Theory, both of which help explain corporate behavior in response to societal expectations and financial imperatives.

Legitimacy Theory posits that organizations seek to align their activities with societal norms and expectations to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders (Hogner, 1982; Guthrie & Parker, 1989). According to Wilmshurst and Frost (2000), as public scrutiny increases, organizations are compelled to ensure that their operations, practices, and disclosures resonate positively with the community. Corporate social disclosures are therefore not merely informational; they serve as proactive tools for legitimization. By demonstrating a genuine commitment to social and environmental responsibility, firms can attract long-term investments, appeal to ethically-conscious investors, and strengthen trust and credibility with stakeholders (Haniffa & Cooke, 2005). This interplay between transparency and legitimacy becomes particularly important in contexts such as South Sudan, where post-conflict vulnerabilities elevate public sensitivity to corporate actions and social interventions.

Economic Theory complements the legitimacy perspective by highlighting the direct and indirect benefits of CSR on corporate financial performance (Chamhuri & Wan Noramelia, 2004). CSR initiatives can create cost advantages, strengthen market positioning, and enhance corporate reputation, which in turn can drive profitability. Within organizational contexts, CSR addresses critical social dimensions such as fair employment practices, employee participation, lifelong learning opportunities, and equitable integration during restructuring or industrial changes. Furthermore, organizations that implement robust health and safety strategies, promote

workplace diversity, and engage in ethical labor practices can foster a more productive and loyal workforce, ultimately contributing to long-term financial sustainability. In this way, CSR is not only an ethical obligation but a strategic tool that simultaneously benefits society and business performance.

CSR also encompasses social and environmental obligations, offering companies opportunities to contribute positively to the welfare of communities. Social initiatives include educational programs, skill development, medical benefits, and community-based donations, while environmental initiatives focus on resource conservation, recycling, water treatment, noise reduction, and adherence to environmental regulations (Chamhuri & Wan Noramelia, 2004). Through these programs, companies can revitalize underserved areas, create employment opportunities, and support sustainable local development. CSR initiatives also serve as marketing tools, enhancing brand image, customer loyalty, and market share through visible engagement in social and environmental causes (Guthrie & Parker, 1989). Effective CSR thus integrates ethical commercial practices with broader societal objectives, highlighting the dual benefit of improving community well-being while enhancing corporate performance.

2.8 Corporate Social Responsibility Practices

CSR practices vary across organizations depending on ownership structure, size, and operational scope. Understanding these variations is essential for analyzing how CSR contributes to socio-economic development. Government-Linked Corporations (GLCs) often embrace CSR as part of their national development mandates. CSR initiatives in GLCs are frequently driven by a combination of philanthropic commitment and regulatory expectations. Husted and Allen (2007) emphasize that these organizations channel profits into social programs, infrastructure development, and educational initiatives that align with broader national priorities. By doing so, GLCs not only fulfill societal expectations but also enhance national development outcomes, demonstrating the critical role of CSR in shaping public trust and legitimacy. Multinational Corporations (MNCs) operate under significant pressure from diverse stakeholders across countries. Haniffa and Cooke (2005) note that MNCs must integrate CSR practices in accordance with both global standards and local legal requirements. This often includes comprehensive environmental management, labor rights protection, community development, and ethical business conduct. MNCs such as MTN and other telecommunication companies actively pursue CSR strategies that minimize environmental impacts, ensure compliance with local regulations, and maintain positive relationships with stakeholders. These efforts reinforce corporate legitimacy while contributing to long-term profitability and market competitiveness. Size of Organization and CSR Practices is another determinant influencing CSR engagement. Larger organizations tend to engage more extensively in CSR due to their broader societal impact, greater financial capacity, and heightened public scrutiny (Giannarakis et al., 2016; Haniffa & Cooke, 2005). These organizations are often able to implement complex CSR programs, spanning education, health, environmental sustainability, and economic empowerment, whereas smaller firms may focus on more localized or ad-hoc initiatives. The scale and scope of CSR practices in larger firms reflect both strategic intent and societal expectation, demonstrating the intertwined nature of corporate size, responsibility, and influence.

2.9 CSR and Financial Performance

Research exploring the link between CSR and corporate financial performance (CFP) is extensive but yields mixed results. Margolis and Walsh (2002) reviewed 122 studies conducted between 1971 and 2001, revealing varied outcomes regarding the financial impact of CSR. Early studies, often using event-study methodology, assessed short-term abnormal returns associated with

socially responsible or irresponsible corporate behavior. Wright and Ferris (1997) identified negative relationships, Posnikoff (1997) found positive correlations, and Welch and Wazzan (1999) observed no significant connection. Other studies focusing on long-term corporate social performance (CSP) metrics, including accounting and profitability measures, generally indicate positive outcomes. For instance, Cochran and Wood (1984) identified a positive correlation between social responsibility and accounting performance, particularly when controlling for company age and asset size. Overall, while CSR may not guarantee immediate financial gains, it often supports sustainable long-term profitability and reputation enhancement.

2.10 Corporate Governance, CSR, and Financial Performance
Corporate governance (CG) significantly shapes CSR practices and their impact on financial performance. Strong governance mechanisms, including executive oversight, ethical policies, and stakeholder engagement, enhance the effectiveness and credibility of CSR initiatives (Aguilera et al., 2007; Ntim et al., 2012; Starks, 2009; Shahzad et al., 2016). Corporate scandals in the early 2000s, such as Enron and WorldCom, highlighted the need for governance structures that integrate CSR to restore public trust (Agrawal & Chadha, 2005). Companies that embed CSR into governance practices demonstrate transparency, accountability, and ethical management, fostering investor confidence and stakeholder loyalty. Research suggests that CSR adoption can serve as a catalyst for improving internal governance, creating alignment between social responsibility, risk management, and financial objectives (Albareda et al., 2008).

2.11 CSR in South Sudan
In South Sudan, empirical research on CSR is limited, particularly among local companies. Nevertheless, telecommunication firms such as Zain South Sudan and MTN South Sudan have implemented notable CSR programs that address critical development gaps. Zain South Sudan, for instance, focuses on grassroots education, ICT literacy, and community engagement, establishing itself as a socially responsible actor in a post-conflict society (Zain, 2008). Similarly, MTN South Sudan's CSR initiatives include environmental sustainability programs, educational support, healthcare interventions, and employee volunteering through campaigns such as "21 Days of Y'ello Care." These initiatives are strategically aligned with local development priorities and demonstrate responsiveness to community needs. By fostering partnerships, employing needs-based assessment frameworks, and focusing on long-term sustainability, MTN and Zain not only improve community well-being but also enhance their corporate image and stakeholder trust. These telecommunication companies also illustrate the synergy between CSR, corporate governance, and financial sustainability. By embedding CSR into strategic planning, management oversight, and stakeholder engagement, they demonstrate how socially responsible practices can contribute to both community development and organizational performance. The scope of CSR in South Sudan underscores the potential for multinational companies to act as catalysts for socio-economic transformation in fragile and post-conflict contexts, where governmental capacity is limited, and private sector engagement is critical. The theoretical foundations of CSR, supported by legitimacy and economic theories, highlight the dual purpose of corporate social responsibility: fostering societal trust and enhancing financial performance. CSR practices vary according to organizational type, size, and context, yet their common objective is to balance profit with social and environmental responsibility. Empirical studies indicate that CSR can positively influence community development, employee welfare, and long-term corporate performance, though results may vary in the short term. In South Sudan, telecommunication companies such as MTN and Zain demonstrate the practical application of CSR, addressing educational, health, environmental, and economic challenges in post-conflict communities. These initiatives

exemplify the integration of CSR into corporate governance and strategic management, offering a model for sustainable socio-economic development in fragile states.

3. Methodology

To evaluate the influence of MTN South Sudan's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on the socio-economic development of South Sudan, this study adopted a mixed-method research approach within a case study framework. The mixed-method design was chosen to combine the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of CSR's impact. The quantitative component enabled the measurement of patterns, frequencies, and statistical relationships, providing structured insights into CSR activities and their perceived effects. Meanwhile, the qualitative component captured participants' experiences, interpretations, and perceptions, revealing deeper narratives about how CSR initiatives influence socio-economic development. The case study framework was particularly suitable as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of MTN, a leading telecommunications company, within its real-world operational and community context. The population for this study comprised stakeholders interacting with MTN South Sudan, including employees, distributors, customers, and community members affected by CSR programs. Participants were selected using convenience sampling, ensuring practical access to respondents in a context where logistical and socio-political constraints may pose challenges to data collection. A total of 300 respondents from Juba City participated in the study, which included MTN employees, dealers, and community representatives. This sample size provided sufficient breadth for quantitative analysis while also capturing diverse qualitative perspectives on CSR activities.

Data collection was conducted through a combination of structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The structured questionnaires gathered quantitative data on respondents' perceptions of CSR's impact on socio-economic development, corporate reputation, and community welfare. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," was employed to standardize responses and facilitate statistical analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including MTN managers and community leaders, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences and perceptions while maintaining focus on the study objectives. FGDs complemented these instruments by encouraging group discussions that provided nuanced insights into how CSR activities contribute to education, healthcare, employment, and broader community development. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 20.0, with descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations calculated to summarize participants' responses. Cross-tabulations and charts were also utilized to visualize relationships between CSR activities and socio-economic outcomes. Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were processed using a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis tool (CAQDA), which allowed for systematic thematic coding and identification of patterns, challenges, and success factors associated with MTN's CSR initiatives. Ethical considerations were rigorously observed throughout the study. Participants were provided with informed consent forms explaining the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and measures to ensure confidentiality. No personal identifiers were collected, and respondents were assured that their feedback would be used solely for academic purposes. Ethical clearance was also obtained from the relevant academic and organizational authorities, ensuring that the study adhered to established research standards.

To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire and interview guides were pre-tested on a small subset of respondents. Feedback from this pre-test was used to refine the questions for

clarity and relevance. Reliability of the quantitative instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency, with coefficients above 0.7 considered acceptable. Additionally, triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data enhanced the credibility and robustness of the study findings. Despite the strengths of this methodology, some limitations were acknowledged. The use of convenience sampling may introduce selection bias, limiting the generalizability of results beyond Juba City. Furthermore, some respondents could have provided socially desirable responses due to their affiliation with MTN or its CSR programs. Nevertheless, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, along with triangulation, helped to mitigate these limitations and ensured a comprehensive and reliable analysis. Moreover, the study employed a mixed-method, case study approach to evaluate the socio-economic impact of MTN South Sudan's CSR initiatives. By combining structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions, the research captured both measurable trends and rich narratives. The application of SPSS and CAQDA ensured systematic analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, while ethical considerations and pre-testing strengthened the reliability and validity of the findings. This approach provided meaningful insights into the relationship between CSR activities and socio-economic development in the South Sudanese context.

4. 0 Data Analysis
Rate of Return of Instruments

		Sample size, Rate of Response, Missing			
Questionnaires	%	Returned	%	Not Returned	%
300	100	215	72	85	28

Source: Primary data, 2025

A total of 300 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to respondents, representing a complete 100%. Out of these, 215 questionnaires were returned fully completed, yielding a response rate of 72%. This response rate is considered excellent, as noted by Magenda (2003), who states that a research study is deemed acceptable when the response rate exceeds 70%.
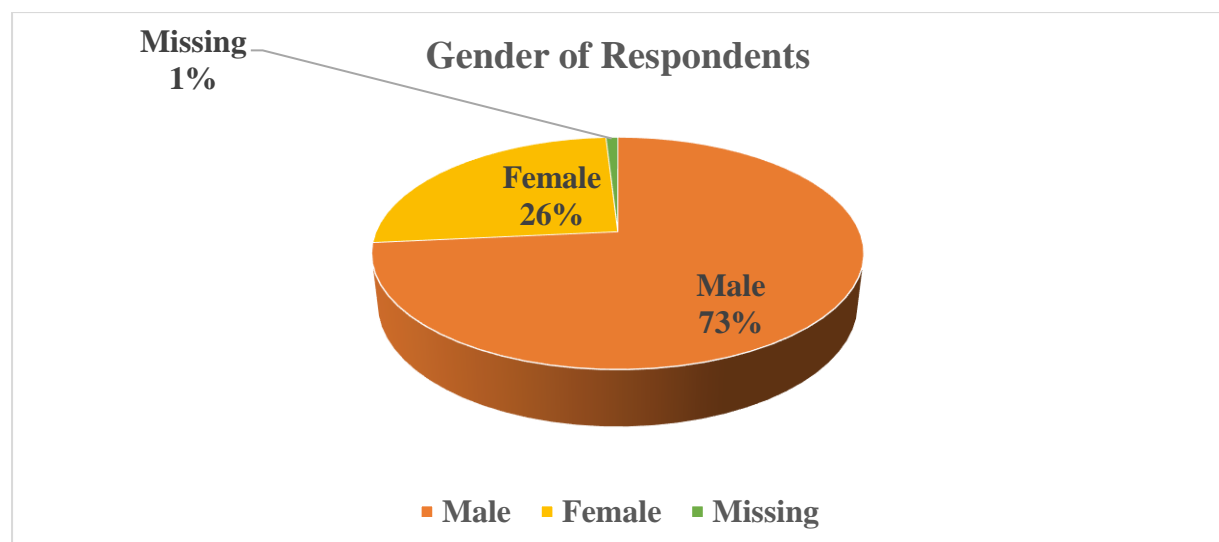
Figure 1: Gender of Respondents
Source: primary data, 2025

The figure 1 indicates that 73% of the participants were male, while 26% were female, with 1% of the data unaccounted for. This result reinforces the notion of a patriarchal society, where men predominantly occupy positions of power in politics, ethics, education, social structures, economic spheres, and asset control, as corroborated by a similar study conducted by Rosenthal et al. (2012).

Table 1: Activities and the Role of Telecommunication Companies in Socio-economic Development of South Sudan:

STATEMENT/SCALE	SA		A		U		D		SD		Missing		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Profit is increased by the activity of corporate social responsibility. Responsibility of MTN (the company).	102	47.4	68	31.6	14	6.5	7	3.3	5	2.3	19	8.8	**215**	**100**
Profit is decreased by the activity of corporate social responsibility responsibility of MTN (the company).	28	13.0	36	16.7	28	13.0	63	29.3	38	17.7	22	10.2	**215**	**100**
Can telecommunication companies use CSR as a business Strategy to improve profit or market growth?	90	41.9	70	32.6	15	7.0	11	5.1	6	2.8	23	10.7	**215**	**100**
Corporate social responsibility has no significant impact on The profitability of telecommunications	20	9.3	28	13.0	27	12.6	62	28.8	47	21.9	31	14.4	**215**	**100**
Corporate Social Responsibility has a significant impact on the profitability of telecommunications telecommunication companies	67	31.2	88	40.9	20	9.3	9	4.2	4	1.9	27	12.6	**215**	**100**
Corporate social responsibility guarantees the customers. Confidence level and loyalty to telecommunication companies.	104	48.4	57	26.5	9	4.2	10	4.7	10	4.7	25	11.6	**215**	**100**
If the Regulator made an MOU that forces the companies to allocate a percentage of their income can encourage the CSR	44	20.5	48	22.3	48	22.3	29	13.5	17	7.9	29	13.5	**215**	**100**
The correct implementation of corporate social responsibility	101	47.0	58	27.0	14	6.5	9	4.2	7	3.3	26	12.1	**215**	**100**

can make an impact on the communities in South Sudan													
The sample of corporate social responsibility in telecom Companies can be done on other companies (Oil companies Etc)	73	34.0	44	20.5	33	15.3	17	7.9	21	9.8	27	12.6	**215**	**100**
The corporate social responsibility boosts the Telcom company's Reputation	81	37.7	57	26.5	24	11.2	15	7.0	12	5.6	26	12.1	**215**	**100**
The corporate social responsibility activities engage and inspire employees and customers	85	39.5	73	34.0	16	7.4	4	1.9	10	4.7	27	12.6	**215**	**100**
The corporate social responsibility activities have a direct link with the company's ethics and best practices	72	33.5	73	34.0	28	13.0	8	3.7	9	4.2	25	11.6	**215**	**100**
Effective CSR activities will retain and encourage talent in the company	67	31.2	71	33.0	32	14.9	8	3.7	10	4.7	27	12.6	**215**	**100**
Telecom companies are doing their best in CSR	53	24.7	63	29.3	26	12.1	26	12.1	18	8.4	29	13.5	**215**	**100**
The social impacts of a company's CRS are poverty and hunger reduction, human rights protection, environmental and animal rights, access to resources, providing equal opportunities, affordable quality of education, etc.	63	29.3	49	22.8	31	14.4	16	7.4	33	15.3	23	10.7	**215**	**100**

Source: *primary data, 2025*

5.0 Discussion
The findings (table 1) of this research provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of MTN South Sudan's corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities and their impact on both community development and organizational performance. According to the survey data, 48.4% of participants strongly agreed that engagement in educational and health initiatives constitutes a key component of MTN's CSR activities. This suggests that the company's CSR efforts are perceived as significantly contributing to the welfare of local communities by improving access to essential services. Similarly, 31.2% of respondents strongly agreed that MTN's CSR initiatives also aim at enhancing the overall quality of life within communities. These results indicate that CSR activities go beyond philanthropic gestures and are strategically aligned with socio-economic development objectives, addressing critical community needs.

A primary insight from this study is that CSR initiatives by MTN South Sudan are closely linked to socioeconomic development, particularly through employment creation. By generating job opportunities and supporting local business networks, MTN fosters economic stability and empowerment within communities. As the country's largest telecommunications provider, MTN South Sudan serves approximately 1,700,000 subscribers, representing a 61.8% market share as of December 2020. The company employs over 200 staff members and collaborates with more than 20 dealers managing distribution networks with over 5,000 points of sale. This structure not only provides direct employment but also supports a broader economic ecosystem, highlighting the strategic impact of CSR on both micro- and macro-level socioeconomic development. The data also reveal that 47.4% of participants strongly agreed, and 31.6% agreed, that CSR drives socio-economic growth within communities. This finding underscores public perception that MTN's CSR activities extend beyond corporate obligation and actively contribute to community prosperity through initiatives such as educational programs, healthcare support, and community development projects. Consequently, CSR emerges as a mechanism for sustainable development, wherein corporate operations are aligned with the social and economic needs of local populations. Despite these positive outcomes, the study identified significant challenges in the effective implementation of CSR programs. Limited resources and the absence of systematic measurement and monitoring emerged as a major concern, with 37.7% of respondents strongly agreeing and 26.5% agreeing. This suggests that while MTN has ambitious CSR objectives, insufficient funding, inadequate tracking mechanisms, or a lack of standardized performance metrics may constrain the impact of these initiatives. Additionally, 39.5% of participants strongly agreed, and 34% agreed that the absence of a clear implementation framework further complicates CSR activities. Without structured processes, programs may fail to achieve intended outcomes or demonstrate measurable impacts, limiting their strategic value for both the company and the communities it serves.

Another critical challenge identified is the lack of transparency and accountability, with 33.5% strongly agreeing and 34% agreeing. These results indicate that stakeholders perceive a need for clearer communication regarding how CSR initiatives are planned, executed, and evaluated. Transparent accountability mechanisms are essential not only to maintain public trust but also to ensure that CSR programs yield sustainable social and economic benefits. An important insight from this research is that the effectiveness of CSR is not determined solely by resource allocation but also by the quality of planning, monitoring, and governance mechanisms. The highest percentage of agreement (39.5%) highlighted limited resources and inadequate measurement as the foremost obstacle, suggesting that addressing these gaps could substantially enhance CSR outcomes. Well-defined frameworks, clear reporting protocols, and structured evaluation processes would enable MTN South Sudan to maximize the social impact of its CSR initiatives while reinforcing its corporate image and stakeholder trust. In summary, this study highlights several key insights. MTN South Sudan's CSR activities are recognized as significant contributors to social development, particularly in education, healthcare, and quality-of-life improvements. Employment generation and local economic empowerment are central to these initiatives, demonstrating a tangible link between CSR and socio-economic growth. Additionally, CSR serves as a strategic tool for enhancing brand reputation, stakeholder engagement, and community relations. However, challenges such as limited resources, inadequate measurement, lack of a clear implementation framework, and insufficient transparency constrain the full potential of CSR initiatives. Addressing these issues through structured planning, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms can ensure that CSR efforts achieve sustainable outcomes for both the company and the communities it serves. Overall, the research provides valuable insights into the dual role of CSR in South Sudan: as a driver of socio-economic development and as a strategic tool that

supports business objectives. By optimizing resources, enhancing governance structures, and increasing transparency, MTN South Sudan can further strengthen the impact of its CSR initiatives, contributing to long-term community welfare while maintaining a competitive advantage within the telecommunications sector.

6.0 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that MTN South Sudan's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives play a significant role in promoting socio-economic development within the country. Through activities targeting education, healthcare, employment creation, and community welfare, MTN not only fulfills its ethical and legal obligations but also strengthens its corporate reputation and stakeholder trust. The findings indicate that CSR engagement has a positive influence on community development by improving living standards, fostering economic participation, and enhancing access to essential services. Moreover, the study underscores the interconnectedness between CSR and sustainable business performance, highlighting how socially responsible practices can drive both economic growth and social well-being in a fragile post-conflict environment like South Sudan.

7.0 Applications

The insights from this research have several practical applications for policymakers, corporate managers, and development practitioners. For corporate entities, particularly in the telecommunications sector, the study emphasizes the importance of integrating CSR into strategic planning to achieve both business objectives and social impact. Policymakers can utilize these findings to design regulatory frameworks or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that encourage companies to allocate resources for social initiatives effectively. Additionally, NGOs and community organizations can leverage the study to identify potential partnership opportunities with private sector actors, ensuring that CSR programs are tailored to address pressing socio-economic needs. The research also offers a reference for other companies, including oil and banking sectors, seeking to replicate successful CSR practices in a contextually relevant and impactful manner.

8.0 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the analysis of data collected through the questionnaires, this study provides several key recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of MTN's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities in South Sudan. First, MTN should implement CSR initiatives that address critical social, environmental, legal, and developmental issues. By investing in projects such as building schools, health facilities, and supporting sports and cultural activities, MTN can strengthen community trust and demonstrate a genuine commitment to societal well-being. Such initiatives not only fulfill ethical obligations but also reinforce the company's reputation and long-term sustainability. Second, MTN's management should focus on creating value for the communities in which they operate by adopting CSR best practices and recognizing CSR as a strategic, long-term business approach. By prioritizing initiatives that foster community growth and development, the company can contribute meaningfully to socioeconomic advancement while simultaneously enhancing stakeholder loyalty and engagement. Furthermore, the government has a crucial role to play in CSR implementation. It should actively participate in promoting and enforcing the four core CSR responsibilities— economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic—since it provides licenses and regulatory oversight for telecom companies. Government involvement can ensure that CSR initiatives are not merely voluntary gestures but are effectively aligned with national development goals. Additionally, the government should support telecom companies through enabling policies and encourage

proactive CSR implementation rather than waiting for companies to initiate projects independently. Telecom companies, including MTN, should ensure that network and internet services are widely accessible and affordable, covering all states and reaching a broader customer base. Investment in advanced technology and continuous improvement of service quality are essential to maximize benefits for clients and support broader socioeconomic development. By following these recommendations, both MTN and government authorities can foster a sustainable and mutually beneficial environment where corporate initiatives and community development go hand in hand.

9.0 Limitations and Future Research Directions
Despite its contributions, the study acknowledges several limitations. The use of convenience sampling within Juba City limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions of South Sudan, particularly rural areas with different socio-economic dynamics. Furthermore, reliance on self-reported data may have introduced response bias, as participants could overstate positive outcomes or underreport challenges associated with CSR activities. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track the long-term impacts of CSR initiatives on socio-economic development and explore comparative analyses across different sectors and regions within South Sudan. Additionally, investigating the role of corporate governance mechanisms in enhancing the effectiveness of CSR programs could provide further insights into optimizing social impact while ensuring sustainable business performance.

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