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### CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY AS A MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Organizations are required to act and be leaders in the construction of corporate social responsibility strategies that allow them to generate a positive impact on society, conceiving the good practices of Corporate Social Responsibility as a business management tool, integrating social, environmental and economic aspects, committed to the development of the community in their area of influence. Thus, this research focuses on the characterization of social responsibility practices in the dimension "Active participation and community development", as indicated in the parameters of the ISO 26000 standard, in 117 service sector companies in the city of Ocaña, with a non-experimental quantitative approach of a descriptive cross-sectional type. The first part of this research reviews the literature on corporate social responsibility, active participation and community development. Subsequently, the methodology and results of the research are presented, showing that service sector companies in the city of Ocaña give preference to products and services from local suppliers and recognize communities as part of their business activities, however, they must implement actions of social responsibility practices aimed at recognizing the community as a significant part of their business and decision-making processes, as well as the implementation of social projects, citizen participation programs, and the execution of strategies to register, control and monitor complaints about the impact of the operations developed in the community in their area of influence.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Corporate Social Responsibility has taken on a relevant role for organizational development, taking as a reference point fundamental aspects such as the community, the workers and the level of competitiveness in the environment. From this perspective, communities become one of the strategic pillars for the implementation of this policy, in such a way that the intervention of the different social groups in favour of their development and integral well-being is rethought. As Mori (2009), "Social responsibility is a new vision that must be structured with criteria, methodologies and practices that allow companies, civil society and the state to, act in a co-participatory manner in the development of the people and the country".

On the basis of Caravedo (1998) who states that CSR "is a commitment that companies assume for the well-being of the social environment that surrounds them", it can be conceived that the actions of an organization should address the negative impacts caused by its operations on the integrity of people or the environment in which they live, in such a way that the positive impacts resulting from its activity are enhanced.

On the other hand, there are a series of contradictions between economic development and socio-environmental balance, which deepen as society perceives the ravages resulting from the productive system and the sustainability of the market. The main problem lies in the statement made by García (2013) when he states;

The damage to natural resources and the integrity of ecosystems, as well as the lack of social mobility and action, are just a few examples of the diffuse future and resistance to the destructive contemporary business system, which is not being contained by national governments (p. 121).

In this sense, García argues that society faces great challenges with regard to the adoption of SR, which lie in the fight against economic inequality, environmental sustainability and respect for the rights of society; hence, it is essential to implement a more dynamic culture within organizations, detached from the productive vision and associated to a greater degree with the social function that concerns them.

Likewise, Regalado et al (2015) state that the main objective of an organization is not only to satisfy the monetary needs of shareholders, but to seek the participation of all those involved in the company, with the different stakeholders that interact with the environment, whether they are customers, suppliers, workers and society in general, impacting the community with socially responsible actions (p.54). In this sense, in order to achieve progress and development, companies must generate actions that allow them to preserve their own social stability and that of those who participate in their activities, i.e. the community in general.

Nowadays, many companies have understood that obtaining economic benefits does not guarantee their success in the market, as they must contribute to the social development of the actors within their sphere of influence, while working

to increase their levels of competitiveness and face the globalisation of markets. From this perspective, it is pertinent that their activities are intertwined with Corporate Social Responsibility actions, so that the impact generated is visible to the wider community. (Barroso Tanoira, 2008).

Similarly, for Barroso (2008) the company must comply with four specific areas at the same time in order to be identified as socially responsible: the contribution to the quality of life within the company, the care and conservation of the environment, compliance with a code of ethics and the link with the community based on the business mission, but bearing in mind the importance of the goods or services offered. For this last area, he highlights the importance of organizations developing actions that guarantee social sustainability and public welfare, leaving aside philanthropic simplicity, since the impact generated cannot be quantified. "As long as companies do not perceive CSR as an essential factor in business continuity, it will remain a semantic mixture with features of compliance-avoidance and social philanthropy that may eventually be abandoned" (p. 79).

For Yucra (2016) Social Responsibility is a voluntary decision taken by companies, orienting their actions and principles towards the full compliance of a new vision established both internally and externally. In this sense, he emphasises the fundamental role of the perceptions of those individuals who are part of their sphere of influence when affirming that an organization is socially responsible;

[...] considering the expectations of stakeholders, demonstrating respect for ethical values, for people, for communities, for the environment, and thus contributing to the construction of the common good (p.498).

Similarly, Holme and Watts (as cited in Yucra, (2016) states that CSR "is the ongoing commitment of businesses to conduct themselves ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of their employees and families, as well as the local community and society at large".

Undoubtedly, the role that stakeholders have taken on in the growth of companies today is on a par with the level of importance of income and profits in the financial sphere. This is due to the fact that society is waiting for actions that contribute to its development, leaving aside excessive consumerism and the obviousness of the productive aspects, to take on the role of assessing the social, economic and environmental commitments acquired in terms of the impacts generated.

Social Responsibility becomes a mechanism to promote corporate security and commitment to stakeholders, establishing actions that allow support to be given to society, preserve the environment and improve the working conditions of a specific community. From this perspective, "business organizations should promote community development by creating jobs in their areas of operation" (Valencia & Esquivel, 2022).

From the conceptual perspective of stakeholders, a company fulfils its socially responsible role when it responds to the expectations of its group of influence and meets emerging needs, but at the same time involves them as fundamental actors in the decision-making process. In this sense, CSR emphasises "generating value for the groups with which the company relates so that, in doing so, the company is sustainable and acts in a sustainable way". In this sense, the groups that are really relevant for a company are those that can be held accountable or be affected by the development of its economic activity, having a direct interest and making it responsible for its actions, these are usually: shareholders or owners, employees, customers, distributors and business partners, suppliers, competitors, social agents, public administrations, the local community and the general public (Moreno-Prieto, 2015).

Sarmiento (2011) agrees with other authors who consider that CSR goes beyond philanthropic actions, being a process that involves each of the stakeholders, thus forming part of the strategic decisions that are taken and establishes that these practices respond to conjunctural events that include individual actions to achieve social impacts in terms of collective benefits, based on the definition of precise parameters and guided by a coherent management of the organizations. In this sense, Sarmiento clarifies that, in order to promote change towards sustainable development, Corporate Social Responsibility;

It requires resources to be invested in economic development, which logically benefits society and the company, so it must have clear objectives and implementation strategies. If this is not done, failure and therefore decline and disappearance is guaranteed, as there is no clarity about what the company wants to achieve and project to society (p. 13).

Precisely, organizations become change agents, a concept defined by Kotler and Roberto (1992) (as cited in Sarmiento, (2011) as "the organised effort, led by a group), that attempts to persuade others (target adopters) to accept, modify or abandon certain ideas, attitudes, practices and behaviours", i.e. each one plays the role of a change engine for a specific group it influences. However, this end cannot be achieved by one actor alone, since, in order to achieve sustainable development, not only by financing or executing change, but also by having a set course in relation to CSR policies and its corporate identity. As a result of the globalisation of markets, organizations have required a holistic vision that focuses on building value and addresses a paradigm shift towards short-term results for all stakeholders in general: "workers and their families, civil society, consumers, the public sector, suppliers, society as a whole, etc." (Brenes Alvarado, 2009).

Barrio (2016) explains that an entity that does not understand the new paradigm represented by stakeholders cannot fully understand what SR implies, on which its sustainability in the environment depends and which transcends the previous theoretical precepts, since now "workers and their families, civil society, consumers, the public sector, suppliers, society as a whole, etc.". In this sense, the author quotes Perdiguero (2003) who explains the relationship between the theoretical foundations of stakeholders and Social Responsibility as follows

On the horizon of the emerging idea of CSR, the main focus of the conflict shifts from the traditional confrontation of interests between the parties - company and workers, for example - to the discussion of solutions with a greater capacity to include all interests, but also the plural needs and expectations that converge in the company. The common objective would be the improvement of the company's wealth creation capacity, but in the perspective of strengthening its social efficiency in the framework of a complex society (p.p. 116-117).

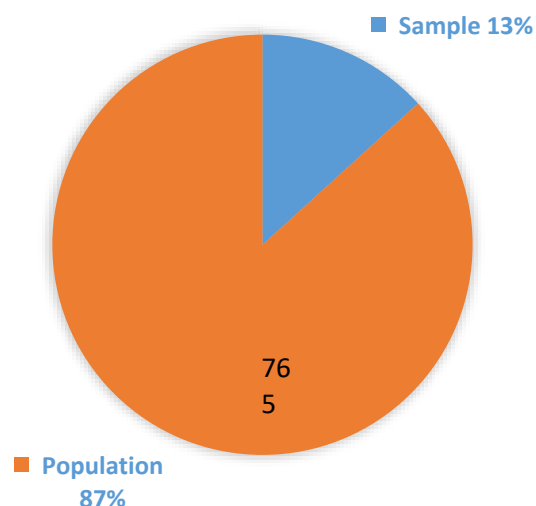
In short, the role of CSR is based on a company's ability to interpret and combine the needs of a society, based on the conception of all individual interests, so that it can effectively create wealth and respond to the demands of its stakeholders. For Mendoza et al. (2013) a socially responsible company actively participates with the community in order to promote the development of the country, starting from the solvency to social problems from innovation and improving the quality of life of families, both inside and outside the company. Other important work is in the field of re-engineering (Álvarez-Silva et al., 2020; Coronel-Nuñez et al., 2019).

The structure of the document continues with section 2 explaining the methodology used, section 3 shows the most important results and section 5 highlights the conclusions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodological aspect was developed using a positivist perspective, which addresses the quantitative analysis in order to understand and validate CSR practices in the dimension "Active participation and community development" in service sector companies in the city of Ocaña Norte de Santander. The study used a cross-sectional, non-experimental approach because, as stated by Hernández et al (2014). This approach involves the collection of data during a single moment through the use of an instrument, in this case the questionnaire, in order to describe the characteristics and essential components of a phenomenon that is to be analysed. According to the conditions of the research, it can be affirmed that the phenomenon allows a deeper understanding of the conception of the different events, facilitating the inference of the socially responsible dynamics of the companies and providing a high degree of objectivity on the subject in question.

On the other hand, the selected sample was taken in relation to the service companies found in the database provided by the Chamber of Commerce of the city of Ocaña, as can be seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Business sector involved. Data from the Ocaña Chamber of Commerce.

In this sense, the study population taken as a reference was the service sector companies comprising 765 entities in the city of Ocaña, and for which it determined a sample of 117 business units that participated in the application of the research instrument. In turn, the questionnaire designed as a tool for collecting information was elaborated under the Likert scale, applying the variables set out in Table 1.

**Table 1. Indicator rating scale**

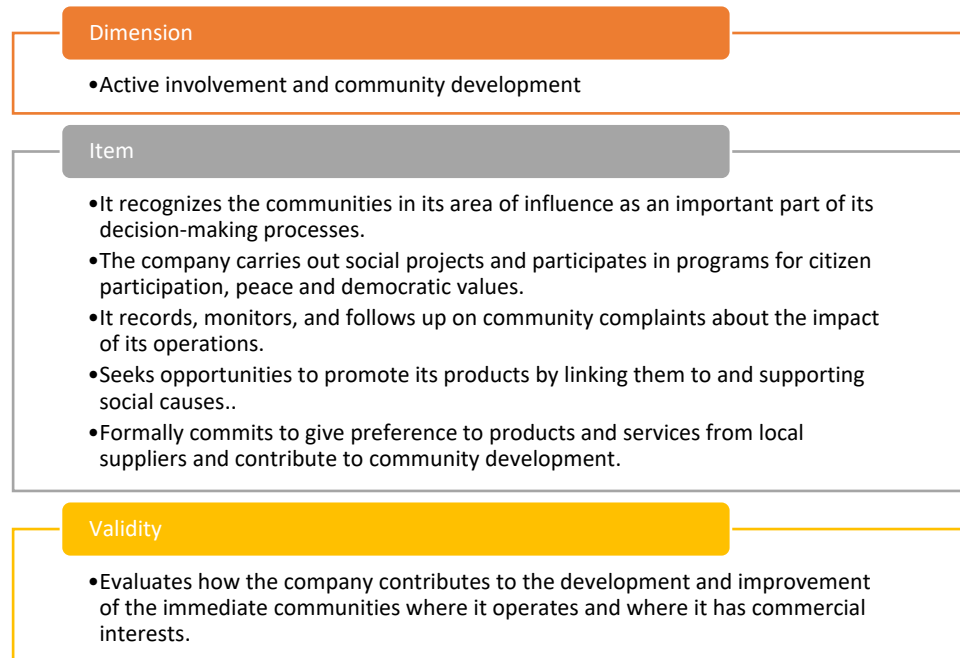
| Level         | Numeric Value | Nominal Value        |
|---------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Never         | 1             | Unimportant          |
| Almost never  | 2             | Unimportant          |
| Sometimes     | 3             | Moderately Important |
| Almost always | 4             | Important            |
| Always        | 5             | Very important       |

The variable studied in this research emphasises the business conception of the Active Participation and Community Development dimension, as shown in Figure 2.

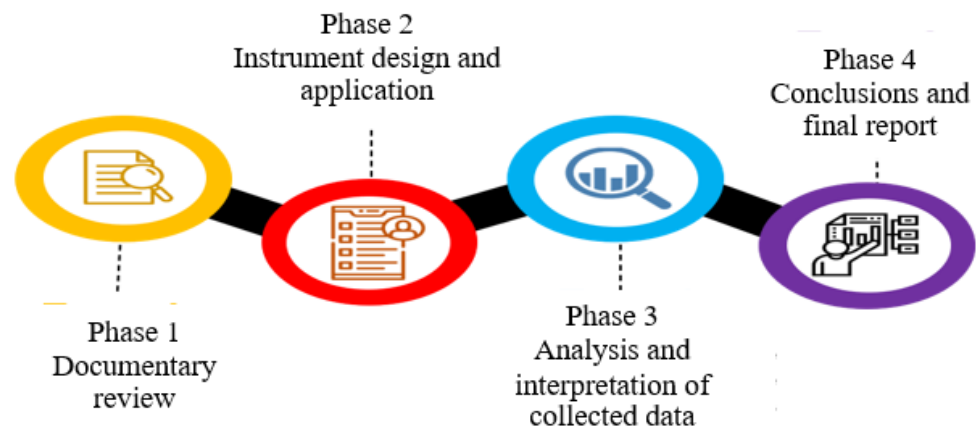
In the procedure for analysing the data collected, a thorough documentary review was carried out, which served as a theoretical foundation for the research. From this perspective, the information obtained from the different companies under study was analysed using SPSS statistical software, highlighting the relevance of each of the variables related to the socially responsible conduct of the organizations analysed.

Based on the information provided by the instruments, a diagnosis emerged that made it possible to establish how the dimension of Active Participation and Community Development is developed within the companies studied. In this sense, each of the phases of the research are shown in figure 3.

Finally, we present the results and the diagnosis that made it possible to determine the degree of compliance with the dimension under study, based on the information provided through the data collection instrument, which are described in the following section.



**Figure 2.** Matrix of operationalization of variables.



**Figure 3.** Procedure for data analysis.

## RESULTS

Within the municipality of Ocaña, there are several constraints to community development, as businesses are characterised by a low capacity to cover operating expenses, the siege of the tax burden and unfair competition; but, in addition there is an increase in unemployment that requires greater interaction between the business sector and society (Pineda-López & Navarro-Claro, 2019). In that sense, when reviewing the results obtained, 47% of the companies surveyed recognise their area of influence as an important part of the

development of business activities, more than half of which 53% work individually in a world where the decisions they make affect neighbouring communities in some way.

Therefore, based on the concept that the organization is part of the community and has common interests with it, the organization must contribute to promoting higher levels of well-being within its area of influence and its recognition in order to achieve synergy and seek integral growth between the community and the organization. The company is an important part of the community and has shared values and common interests with it, hence organizations should contribute to promote higher levels of wellbeing within their area of influence, as stated by (Cáceres, 2015) shared value becomes a strategy for organizations to engage with society, while maintaining a perspective of their economic development. This element allows companies, together with the different groups that make up their sphere of influence, to direct their activities towards a substantial increase in economic performance and levels of innovation.

The lack of commitment of the company to act together with the surrounding community is evident in the data, where 72% of the companies do very little to involve their fruits in projects with the surrounding community. The isolation with which companies used to work in the past is still felt. The culture of responsibility towards the environment is only visible in 28% of the companies surveyed, which have managed to identify the expectations, needs and demands of these communities, in order to integrate them into the company's strategy, which is a necessary tool to ensure its operation and permanence over time.

The veracity of the problems that burden today's society brings with it the commitment to establish actions that allow social actors to generate changes and effective solutions. In this sense, the formulation and administration of business projects, which are based on an entrepreneurial mentality and institutional strengthening, is emerging as a mechanism for social development, generating significant impacts on interventions with the community (Padilla & Cabot, 2021).

The lack of an adequate administrative organization, as well as internal communication failures, are directly related to the results of this graph, where 70% of the companies do little or nothing to know the impact they have on the environment in which they operate.

Therefore, the perspective of social investment that every company should have within its policies, where the company is concerned about both the economic and social impact of its actions, is only detected in 30% of the companies in the study, showing the lack of commitment and social investment that these companies have with the community.

The win-win formula of cause marketing is only observed in 43% of companies, compared to 57% who are either not aware of it or are very uncreative in marketing their services. The great benefits that this marketing trend brings to companies is a tool that should be involved in all companies to help in community development, as well as to strengthen the corporate image of the

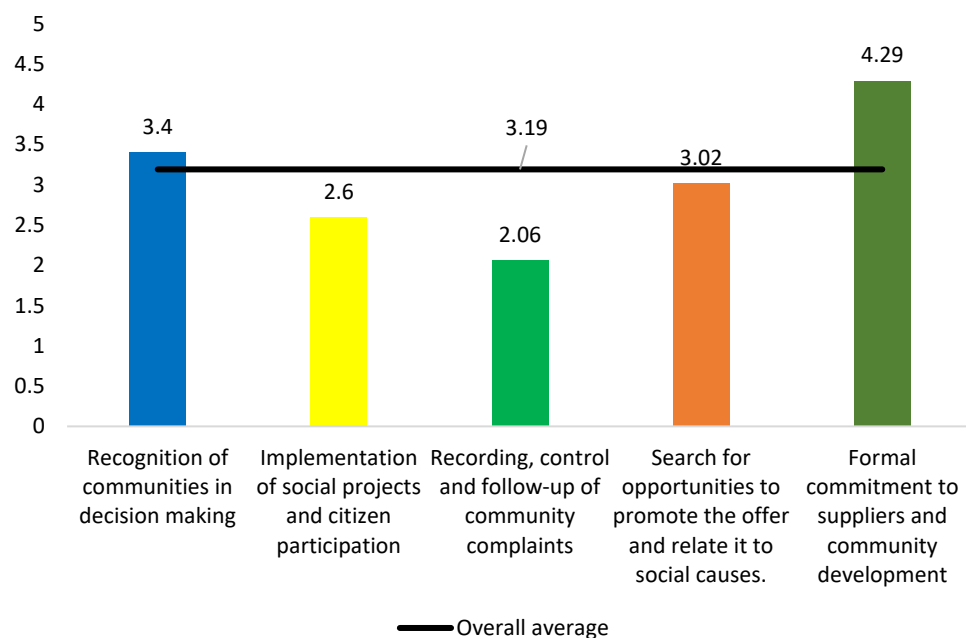


company and positively influence the purchasing decision of consumers, as well as to encourage the collective exercise of social responsibility.

In response to this question, it is important to recognise the high percentage of 83% of the companies that are committed to the community, as evidenced by the regionalism of the services and products handled in the region.

#### *Active Participation and Community Development from a statistical perspective.*

In this section we present the results of the statistical analysis of the research using the SPSS application, allowing us to establish relationships of dependence and interdependence and to construct classifications of subjects and variables, as well as to predict behaviour and analysis of variance (ANOVA).



**Figure 4.** Statistical analysis Active Participation and Community Development.

From the perspective of Corporate Social Responsibility, the ultimate goal of companies is not based on the mere economic benefit obtained from their activity, nor to meet the needs of shareholders, but to seek the interaction and participation of stakeholders, impacting them through actions of commitment and social responsibility (Regalado et al., 2015). The study shows that service companies in the city of Ocaña are indeed committed to their community in important aspects, where it was observed that these companies give preference to the products and services of local suppliers, contributing to the strengthening of the business fabric, the results show an average of 4.29 in this variable analysed (Figure 4).

Likewise, the companies analysed obtained an average of 3.4 in terms of recognising the communities in their area of influence as an important part of

their decision-making processes, followed by an average of 3.02 in CSR practices that seek opportunities to promote services supporting social causes, which makes it essential for these organizations to formalise strategies aimed at recognising the communities in their area of influence as a significant part of their decision-making processes and implement social cause marketing. As stated by Vega et al. (2013) community engagement is described as the type of actions taken by an organization with the aim of improving the standard of living of the surrounding society by promoting and supporting initiatives that have a social focus. Through these actions, companies seek to mitigate the negative impacts of their activities, counteracting them with investments in time, resources, products, etc. that are aimed at benefiting the communities in which they are involved. The main reason for this close interaction with society lies in the fact that all stakeholders demand positive retribution for the impacts generated.

However, despite the above premises, and according to the analysis of the averages, it was found that the service companies in Ocaña obtained an average below three in relation to the implementation of social projects and programmes for citizen participation, peace and democratic values, as well as the recording, control and monitoring of complaints from the community about the impact of their operations, This implies that these economic units must make a significant investment in programmes aimed at the community, establish actions aimed at creating citizen participation programmes, as well as registering, controlling and monitoring community complaints about the impact generated in the place where they carry out their business activities (Table 2). As expressed by Espinoza et al (2016) the role of companies in the life of the surrounding communities is fundamental, not necessarily in terms of generating wealth and employment, but as a source of social development.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of company size.

|  |       | N   | Media  | Standard deviation |
|--|-------|-----|--------|--------------------|
| Active participation and community development | 1.00  | 93  | 2.9656 | .86458             |
|  | 2.00  | 16  | 4.0250 | .76898             |
|  | 3.00  | 8   | 4.0750 | 1.30027            |
|  | Total | 117 | 3.1863 | .98075             |

The size of the company influences the results of the obtained means which show different results, for which it is necessary to establish through an analysis of variance (ANOVA) if the difference is statistically significant, as shown in table 3.

**Table 3.** One-factor Anova (Number of employees)

|  |              | Sum of squares | Gl  | Root mean square | F      |
|--|--------------|----------------|-----|------------------|--------|
| Active participation and community development | Inter-groups | 22.103         | 2   | 11.052           | 14.081 |
|  | Intra-groups | 89.475         | 114 | .785             |        |
|  | Total        | 111.578        | 116 |                  |        |

The above table shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean of the dimension under study influenced by the size of the company, since the significance levels are below Sig = 0.05. It is therefore necessary to find out which groups have different means from each other using the Scheffé multiple comparisons test as shown in table 4.

**Table 4.** Scheffé Multiple Comparisons

| Dependent variable                             | (I) Quantity Employees | (J) Quantity Employees | Difference of means (I-J) | Sig. |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------|
| Active participation and community development | 1.00                   | 2.00                   | -1.05941*                 | .000 |
|  |                        | 3.00                   | -1.10941*                 | .004 |
|  | 2.00                   | 1.00                   | 1.05941*                  | .000 |
|  |                        | 3.00                   | -.05000                   | .992 |
|  | 3.00                   | 1.00                   | 1.10941*                  | .004 |
|  |                        | 2.00                   | .05000                    | .992 |

\*. The difference in means is significant at the 0.05 level.

Companies with 1-10 employees have the statistically significant differences when compared to companies with 11-50 and 51-200 employees, as the latter two groups of companies are less different in their actions with the community in the dimension of active participation and community development.

The analysis of variance allowed us to observe how the level of training of the manager has a positive influence according to the size of the company, by marking a difference between the averages of the groups studied. It is then necessary to identify the groups with different means by using the Scheffé multiple comparisons test as shown in table 5.

**Table 5.** Scheffé Multiple Comparisons

| Dependent variable                             | (I) Quantity Employees | (J) Quantity Employees | Difference of means (I-J) | Sig. |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------|
| Active participation and community development | 1.00                   | 2.00                   | .12381                    | .960 |
|  |                        | 3.00                   | -.45000                   | .157 |
|  |                        | 4.00                   | -1.37389*                 | .000 |
|  | 2.00                   | 1.00                   | -.12381                   | .960 |
|  |                        | 3.00                   | -.57381                   | .138 |
|  |                        | 4.00                   | -1.49770*                 | .000 |

|  |      |      |           |       |
|--|------|------|-----------|-------|
|  | 3.00 | 1.00 | . 45000   | . 157 |
|  |      | 2.00 | . 57381   | . 138 |
|  |      | 4.00 | -. 92389* | . 001 |
|  | 4.00 | 1.00 | 1.37389*  | . 000 |
|  |      | 2.00 | 1.49770*  | . 000 |
|  |      | 3.00 | . 92389*  | . 001 |

\*. The difference in means is significant at the 0.05 level.

The results highlight differences between 1 (Bachelor) with 3 (Professional) and 4 (postgraduate), indicating that the higher the level of education, the higher the level of understanding and commitment to corporate social responsibility of the organization. Likewise, larger companies have a clearer understanding of the incorporation of CSR practices within their organizational management.

## CONCLUSION

Companies must recognise the impacts generated in the development of their economic activity through active participation with the community, not only from the identification of the impacts generated but also from a closer involvement with the surrounding community. However, it became evident that most of the companies under study do not recognise their area of influence as an important part in the development of business activities, resulting in a lack of business commitment to act together with the surrounding community. Thus, only 28% of the companies have managed to identify the expectations, needs and demands of these communities in order to integrate them into the company's strategy.

Business commitment to the community is positive in that service sector companies are committed to giving preference to local products and services, contributing to the strengthening of the business fabric and thus acting responsibly towards the community.

Larger companies are less different in their actions with the community and have a clearer understanding of the incorporation of CSR practices within their organizational management, making it clear that small companies are more likely to be absent from social responsibility practices that involve the surrounding community. It was also identified that the higher the manager's level of education, the higher the level of understanding and action of CSR practices.

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