Social entrepreneurship as an instrument for curbing youth gangsterism: A study of the Nigerian Urban Communities

B. E. A. Oghojafor¹, S. A. Aduloju² and F. F. Olowokudejo²

¹Department of Business Administration, University of Lagos, Akoka-Yaba, Nigeria.
²Department of Actuarial Science and Insurance, University of Lagos, Akoka-Yaba, Nigeria.

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There have been growing concerns over the level of unemployment in Nigeria especially among the teeming youths. Unemployment among the youths has been a major factor responsible for youth gangsterism in most urban centers. This study focuses on the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship in providing gainful employment for the teeming youths in the Nigerian urban communities, especially in the light of declining government resources and decaying infrastructure in less developed economies. Research data were obtained through a structured questionnaire on a random sample of 200 entrepreneurs in Lagos metropolis, the commercial nerve of the country. The three formulated hypotheses were tested with Kolmogorov-Smirnov goodness-of-fit test.

Key words: Social entrepreneurship, youth gangsterism, poverty eradication.

INTRODUCTION

A report by the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001 shows that the universities and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria produce an average of 120,000 graduates each year while another 500,000 school leavers or college graduates are turned out each year, without the hope of any job (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, 2010). Also, rural migrants believe that more jobs and social opportunities are available in urban areas, but once in the cities they find themselves without a job and with limited social networks. Trapped and discouraged by bleak job prospects, many young persons may be forced into sex, crime and violence, threatening social and political stability (Mehmet, 1978). Many youths now run criminal enterprises such as kidnapping, armed robbery, car snatching, illegal fuel sales, and illegal importation of arms, many of which have reached alarming levels in several African cities.

Over the years, agencies have launched programs and implemented interventions to help impoverished and marginalized groups. Government aid agencies and private foundations have invested substantial amount to support such initiatives, and some of them have been quite innovative (Noruzi et al., 2010). But all too often, the results of these initiatives have been disappointing in terms of effectiveness and sustainability, let alone their capacity to scale up their impacts into significant social changes (Cernea, 1987). In Nigeria, just as in other developing countries, about 110 Skills Development Centres initiated by governments, NGOs or international agencies exist to assist unemployed youth acquire skills to become self-employed. These include, Capacity Acquisition Programme, Mandatory Attachment Programme, and National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (Okolie, 2003). Apparently, such interventions are yet to deliver the range of benefits a comprehensive approach can.

Interestingly, a number of works have been done on the issue of unemployment and youths criminality in Nigeria (Okolie, 2003; Chigunta, 2002; Aghatise, 2002; Fourchard, 2006; Inegbenebor, 2007). However, while some of these works deal generally on issues relating to gangsterism, others discuss the issue of unemployment. The use of social entrepreneurship as an intervention to alleviate the level of chronic unemployment so as to reduce criminality in the urban centres has largely been ignored. This current study has this as its primary focus.

The objectives of this study include the following:
1. To examine the negative impacts of youths' unemployment in the Nigerian urban communities.
2. To investigate the relationship between social entrepreneurial activities and youth gangsterism in the urban communities in Nigeria.
3. To investigate the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship in providing gainful employment for the teeming youths in the Nigerian urban communities.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: First, we present a literature review on entrepreneurship. Second, we provide a conceptualization of social entrepreneurship and some of its attributes. Third, we discuss social entrepreneurship, employment generation and youth's criminal behaviour. Fourth, we consider the methodological issues. In the fifth part, we discuss the results and present the conclusion.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Entrepreneurs play a very important role in the development of a nation because they start business, provide jobs and use the indigenous resources of the country for better socio-economic growth (Junejo et al., 2008). Entrepreneurship has been considered a crucial mechanism of economic development (Acs and Armington, 2006; Cheng et al., 2009). It has been described as the engine propelling much of the growth of the business sector as well as a driving force behind the rapid expansion of the social sector (Noruzi et al., 2010). The term 'entrepreneur' was said to have been coined by the French economist Richard Cantillon in the early 18th Century who defined the term as an agent who buys means of production at certain prices in order to combine them into a new product (Schumpeter, 1951). The French economist Jean Baptiste was said to have given the term this particular meaning when he said, according to Dees (1998) that 'the entrepreneur shifts economic resources out of an area of lower and into an area of higher productivity and greater yield'.

**SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

The interest in social entrepreneurship, that is, entrepreneurial activity that primarily serves a social objective, has been on the rise in recent decades (Austin et al., 2006; Peredo and McLean, 2006). Social entrepreneurship, as a concept, is developed out of the realization that the challenges of finding effective and sustainable solutions to many social problems are substantial, and that the solutions may require many of the features associated with successful business innovations (Alvord et al., 2004). In simple words, social entrepreneurship is seen as a response to declining government involvement in the economy and society (Sharir and Lerner, 2006; Perrini and Vurro, 2006). Social entrepreneurial companies are those whose primary goal emphasizes social value and economic value creation as a necessary condition to ensure financial viability (Dorado, 2006; Schuler and Cording, 2006). Social entrepreneurship has been described as the simultaneous pursuit of economic, social, and environmental goals by enterprising ventures, and as a human response to social and environmental problems (Haugh, 2007).

While a plethora of definitions of social entrepreneurship exist, cutting across all of them is the underlying drive for social entrepreneurship to create social value, rather than the narrow personal and shareholders' wealth (Zadek and Thake, 1997). In a study by Welsh and Krueger (2009), the most important components of a definition of social entrepreneurship include social problems and needs to be addressed, innovation and innovative idea, community impact, mission based, tied with sustainable, outcome-based approach, ethical accountability, multiple stakeholders served, tied with not being limited by resources, economic value creation, scalable, and risk taking in defying the odds.

Social entrepreneurship began to attract interest as a field of learning in the academic and practitioner circles over a decade ago, and a substantial volume of literature on it has emerged (Noruzi et al., 2010). The attention for social entrepreneurship originated from the non-profit sector, where entrepreneurial initiatives were increasingly seen as alternative funding schemes as public funding decreased substantially (Dees, 1998). Social entrepreneurs can become very powerful players in the national and international economy. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 to Mohammad Yunus for founding the Grameen Bank, the world's largest microfinance organization, thrust social entrepreneurship into the global spotlight (Noruzi et al., 2010).

A social entrepreneur is an individual, group, network, organization or alliance of organizations that seek large scale change through pattern breaking ideas about how governments, non-profits and businesses can address significant social processes (Light, 2005). The term social enterprise and social entrepreneurship are sometimes used interchangeably and sometimes distinguished from one another. A social enterprise is an organization that through some combination of products and services that it sells and its method of operation, generates net positive externalities and makes conscious efforts to increase the positive externalities of its business, and reduce the negative externalities (Jamison, 2006).

An unwholesome aspect of youth unemployment in urban centres of Africa is visible idleness, whereby youth congregate at bars and eating places to drink or converse or smoke marijuana, for substantial parts of the day (Chigunta, 2002). Such places encourage the development of street gangs and criminal activities. They
survive by engaging in various activities such as petty trading, casual work, stealing, pick-pocketing, prostitution, touting and other illegal activities.

Youth unemployment partly contributes to illicit activity, which increases insecurity. A study conducted in England and Wales on the link between unemployment and crime suggests that youth unemployment and the different types of crimes are significantly and positively correlated (Carmichael and Ward, 2001). Sustained unemployment could also cause young people to be hostile to the world of work and more receptive to drugs and crime (Nattrass, 2002). Lack of employment opportunities has contributed to increasing feminization of poverty all over Africa. It has also encouraged prostitution as a means of survival in several African towns and cities. Furthermore, it has encouraged human trafficking across international borders to engage in prostitution. Women migrants trafficked to Western Europe in Africa come mainly from Ghana, Nigeria and Morocco (Taylor, 2002; Aghatise, 2002).

Poverty is, however, the root cause of delinquency. Africa is a continent with a massive population of young people. More than half of Africa’s population is aged less than 21 years and two-thirds less than 30 years. Interestingly, Pandey et al. (2008) listed the dearth of employment opportunities as one of the gravest issues faced by the developing countries today; others are nutrition crisis, land problems, and pollution issues. There is the need to consider the option of setting up own businesses and combine this with passion and innovation to tackle social problems (Lee, 2009).

An increased risk of political violence often comes from an expanding population of higher-educated youth who are facing limited opportunities to obtain elite political and economic positions (Goldstone, 2002). Chigunta (2002), as presented in Curtain (2004) shows that where there is more than 40% of people aged 15 to 29 years, the country is 2.3 times more likely to experience an outbreak of civil conflict compared with countries with smaller youth shares. Youth unemployment and its possible repercussions come at a price to the economy, to the society and to the individual, and the price is enormous. Being young and unemployed in Sub-Saharan Africa contributes to high social costs that further constrain public expenditure (Brenner, 1979). A direct impact on the economy of an unproductive youth labour force is lost output in terms of goods and services. (Bellemare and Poulin-Simon, 1994).

Unfortunately, many societies have relied on a top-down law enforcement based approach to gang intervention, and these include legislative decrees and ordinances, imprisonment, and accelerated sentencing. This strategy has not brought forth much success either in reducing criminality and violence or in creating safer communities. It has been reported that civil disorder, sometimes developing into civil strife and conflict, is one of the most serious constraints to Africa’s development (Fosu, 2005). Incidentally, young unemployed men are prime candidates for recruitment as soldiers in any civil disorder. Youth unemployment also has security implications for almost every country in Africa, since desperation often leads young people to fall prey to warlords, criminal gangs, or illegal migration syndicates (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, 2010).

**METHODOLOGY**

This is an exploratory research and our methodology involved gathering data by questionnaire delivered to the respondents by hand. Our population of interest was the full range of individuals who have been involved one way or the other in promoting and starting a business venture. A sample of 200 of such individuals was selected from information gathered from various newspapers, business and trade magazines in Nigeria. The majority of the questions in the questionnaire, our research instrument, were nominal in nature, and required “true”, “false”, or “I do not know” responses. These questions investigated the level of public awareness of social entrepreneurship in Nigeria, the role played by social entrepreneurs reducing youth’s unemployment, and how their activities can reduce the level of youth’s criminal behaviour in urban centers. Out of 200 copies of questionnaire distributed, 109 were retrieved and theses were analyzed as the following.

**Research question 1: Are the people generally aware of the role played by social entrepreneurship in the society?**

This question was answered using Item No. 3 in the questionnaire and this is presented in Table 1. From the Table 1, 84.4% of the respondents (that is 92 respondents) agreed that they knew about social entrepreneurship and that it should be encouraged by the government. This shows that majority of the respondents are aware of the subject, social.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not know</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research question 2: Is social entrepreneurship seen as a response to declining government involvement in the economy?

This question is answered using Item No. 5 in the questionnaire and this is presented in Table 2.

From Table 2, 42.2% of the respondents did not agree that social entrepreneurship was a response to government declining involvement in the economy, 37.6% believed it was, while 22% did not know what to say.

Research question 3: Can social entrepreneurship help in reducing youth gangsterism by providing employment opportunities?

This can be answered using Item No. 15 on the questionnaire; the response is presented in Table 3.

From Table 3, majority of the respondents (86.2%) agreed that social entrepreneurship has contributed positively to the reduction of criminal activities of youths in the urban centres, indicating that social entrepreneurship can serve as an intervention to criminal activities.

Research question 4: What are the main factors hindering the development of social entrepreneurship in the country?

The response to Item No. 17 in the questionnaire provides answer to this research question, and this is presented in Table 4. From Table 4, the factors that mostly hinder the development of social entrepreneurship in the country in order of frequency are:

1. No training for managers, leaders and entrepreneurs (63.3%);
2. Funding shortages (12.8%);
3. Legal barriers (12.8%);
4. Political barriers (11.0%).

This report shows that lack of training for managers, leaders and entrepreneurs is the most critical factors facing the development of social entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Research hypotheses

The three research hypotheses presented in null form, were tested using Komolgorov-Smirnov goodness of fit test. It is appropriate because it is a non parametric tool used to test the goodness of fit of an ordinal data (Cooper and Schindler, 2000). This test looks at the degree of agreement between the distribution of the observed values and some specified theoretical distribution (expected frequencies), and it focuses on the largest value of the deviations among observed and theoretical proportions. It treats individual observation separately and thus, unlike Chi-Square ($\chi^2$) test for one sample, it needs not lose information through the combining of categories. It is thus more powerful than $\chi^2$ test. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is given as:

$$D_N = \max \left| F^O(x) - F^T(x) \right|$$

Where, $F$ is the number of observations; $F^O(x)$ is the specified (or theoretical) cumulative frequency distribution under H0 for any value of X, and $F^T(x)$ is the observed cumulative frequency distribution of a random sample of N observation for any value of X. The procedure is as follows: Specify the null hypothesis; specify the level of significance, and state the decision rule.

The degree of freedom was measured against 95% level of significance. The critical value of D for sample size of N>35 is given as:

$$D_{N} = \frac{\alpha}{\sqrt{N}}$$

The decision rule is that Ho will be rejected if the calculated D ($D_{cal}$) is greater than the tabulated D($D_{tabl}$) under the deviation level of 5%.
Table 4. Tick the factors that mostly hinder the development of social entrepreneurship in the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding shortages</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal barriers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Barriers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No training for managers, leaders and entrepreneurs</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 109 100.0 100.0


Table 5. Lack of gainful employment is a major cause of youth gangsterism in the Nigerian urban centers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 109 100.0 100.0


Table 6. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Frequency Table for Hypothesis 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>I do not know</th>
<th>False</th>
<th>True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$F$=Number of respondents according to their views that lack of gainful employment is a major cause of youths gangsterism in Nigeria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F^O(x) = $Theoretical cumulative distribution of choices under $H_0$</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.667</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F^O(x) = $Cumulative distribution of observed choices under $H_0$</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$</td>
<td>F^O(x) − F^O(x)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>0.324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Hypothesis 1: Gangsterism among youths in the urban communities is not a result of lack of gainful employment

We used the response to Item No. 13 on the questionnaire, which is presented on Table 5 to test this hypothesis. Table 6 shows the presentation of this result using Komolgorov-Smirnov goodness of fit test.

Our sample size is $N=109$. From the Kolmohorov-Smirnov Frequency Table for Hypothesis 1, the calculated $D$ value is the point of greatest divergence between the cumulative observed and cumulative theoretical distributions, which is 0.538.

Test table at $\alpha = 0.05$ for sample size $N>35$ is given as:

$$D = \frac{\alpha}{\sqrt{N}} = \frac{1.36}{\sqrt{109}} = 0.130$$

The decision rule is that the null hypothesis will be rejected if the computed $D$ is greater than the tabulated $D$. Here, $D_{cal} > D_{tab}$ (that is, 0.538>0.130), hence the null hypothesis which states that gangsterism among youths in the urban communities is not a result of lack of gainful employment, is rejected, implying that lack of gainful employment is a major cause of youth gangsterism in the Nigerian urban centers.

Hypothesis 2: There is no general awareness of the potential role that social entrepreneurship plays in the Nigerian business community

We used the response to Item No. 3 on the questionnaire, which is presented on Table 1 to test this hypothesis. Table 7 shows the presentation of this result using Komolgorov-Smirnov goodness of fit test.

Again, from Table 7, our sample size is $N=109$. From the Kolmohorov-Smirnov Frequency Table for Hypothesis 2, the calculated $D$ value which is the point of greatest divergence between the cumulative observed and cumulative theoretical distributions is 0.511.

Test table at $\alpha = 0.05$ for sample size $N>35$ is given as

$$D = \frac{\alpha}{\sqrt{N}} = \frac{1.36}{\sqrt{109}} = 0.130$$

The decision rule is that the null hypothesis will be rejected if the computed $D$ is greater than the tabulated $D$. Here, $D_{cal} > D_{tab}$ (that is, 0.511>0.130), hence the null hypothesis which states that there is no awareness of the role social entrepreneurship plays in the business community is rejected, indicating that people are generally aware of the role played by social entrepreneurship.
Table 7. Kolmogorov-Smirnov frequency table for Hypothesis 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>I do not know</th>
<th>False</th>
<th>True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F = Number of respondents according to their views that there is general awareness of the role of social entrepreneurship in the Nigerian business community</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F^O(X)$ = Theoretical cumulative distribution of choices under Ho</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.667</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F^O(X)$ = Cumulative distribution of observed choices under Ho</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F^O(x) - F_O(x)$</td>
<td>0.269</td>
<td>0.511</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 8. Social entrepreneurial activities have helped significantly to reduce the level of unemployment among the teeming youths.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not know</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 9. Kolmogorov-Smirnov frequency table for Hypothesis 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>I do not know</th>
<th>False</th>
<th>True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F = Number of respondents according to their views that social entrepreneurship has helped to reduce the level of unemployment among the youths</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F^O(X)$ = Theoretical cumulative distribution of choices under Ho</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.667</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F^O(X)$ = Cumulative distribution of observed choices under Ho</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>0.220</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F^O(x) - F_O(x)$</td>
<td>0.223</td>
<td>0.447</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Hypothesis 3: Social entrepreneurship does not have positive effects on the Nigerian youths through employment generation

We used the response to Item No. 14 on the questionnaire, which is presented on Table 8 to test this hypothesis. Table 9 shows the presentation of this result using Kolmogorov-Smirnov goodness of fit test.

From the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Frequency Table for Hypothesis 3, the calculated D value is the point of greatest divergence between the cumulative observed and cumulative theoretical distributions, which is 0.447.

Test table at $\alpha = 0.05$ for sample size $N>35$ is given as

$$D = \frac{\alpha}{\sqrt{N}} = \frac{1.36}{\sqrt{109}} = 0.130$$

The decision rule is that the null hypothesis will be rejected if the computed D is greater than the tabulated D. Here, $D_{cal} > D_{tab}$ (that is, 0.447>0.130), hence the null hypothesis which states that social entrepreneurship does not have positive effects on the Nigerian youths through employment generation is rejected, indicating that social entrepreneurship has helped significantly in reducing the level of employment among youths.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the findings of this study, while the goal of a business is primarily to make money, many are aware of the important role social entrepreneur plays and agree that it should be encouraged. The research also finds out that not all social problems can be adequately addressed
by market forces or public sector; some of these are better handled by social entrepreneurship, which combines the passion of a social mission with an image of business-like discipline, innovation, and determination. Social entrepreneurship has been described as one driven by social mission, a desire to find innovative ways to solve social problems.

Another finding of this study is that the dearth of employment opportunities is one of the gravest issues faced by the developing countries today. The natural consequence of this, according to what we found was that such a top-down law enforcement based approach (like legislative decrees and ordinances, imprisonment, and accelerated sentencing) as an intervention to criminal activities has not brought forth much success either in reducing criminality and violent behaviour. It was also revealed that social entrepreneurial activities have helped significantly to reduce the level of unemployment among the teeming youths, and by that has contributed positively to the reduction of criminal activities of youths in the urban centers.

In light of the aforementioned, the following recommendations are made. First, government should encourage social entrepreneurship as this makes meaningful contributions to the social and economic well being of the people. Entrepreneurship is a difficult process to foster because it requires so many different supporting components for an individual to move beyond an idea or concept of what might be viable to successful execution.

The government therefore needs to urgently address the problem of infrastructural development as a national priority, in order to turn-around the dwindling fortunes of the manufacturing sector.

Second, there are barriers faced by entrepreneurs in the society, and these include funding legal, and political. However, lack of training for managers and entrepreneurs is barrier mostly mentioned. It is therefore recommended that government should take necessary actions to create more entrepreneurship training centers so that social entrepreneurship can flourish.

Third, to the many donors and fund providers, it is recommended that they should keep their steps with the trend, noticing the huge social benefits that will be generated by social enterprises, and set up their strategies. As mentioned in this paper, providing jobs for the teeming youths is one of the few economically viable avenues of social entrepreneurship. The paper thus provides businesses in one of the platforms where they can rightly direct their CSR initiatives.

Fourth, it is also recommended that not much emphasis should be placed on such a top-down law enforcement based approach (like legislative decrees and ordinances, imprisonment, and accelerated sentencing) as an intervention to youths criminal activities, because these are social problems that need to be solved by social activities.

REFERENCES


