

THE INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: INSIGHTS FROM A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Social responsibility is a moral principle of an organization or individual engaging in activities in order to improve the lives of others in society. The aim of this article is to provide insights of the existing body of literature on individual social responsibility and identify the most important studies in the field. A review of the literature in the field based on the international databases search has been carried out and 7 papers have been analyzed. The investigation revealed that there is little increase in the relevance of this issue within academia, despite its growing importance in everyday life. The contribution of this paper is the elaboration of a framework of individual social responsibility by systematizing the findings of the publications within this theme.

Keywords: prosocial behaviour, responsibility of individual towards society, altruism

1. INTRODUCTION

Social responsibility has two branches: individual social responsibility and organizational social responsibility (private companies, public institutions, non-governmental entities, educational organizations).

Social responsibility is a moral principle of an entity that can be an organization or individual working to improve the lives of others in society (Bowes et al., 2001). Furthermore, it is a duty each company and individual should fulfil to maintain the balance between the environment and the economy. Their actions should lead to sustainable development in order to protect the interests of future generations on one hand and to meet the needs of the current population on the other hand.

Individual social responsibility (ISR) refers to the individual's perception of what he should do in order to help society. Organizational social responsibility takes into account the individual's perception of the role that organizations should play in society (Hatch and Stephen, 2015).

ISR represents the responsibility of each person for the activities he/she gets involved in. Moreover, it means that everyone has a moral responsibility to perform so that he/she should not affect the people around him/her (Park et al., 2009). Every individual should dedicate to supporting various social causes. He/she should not give importance to material things, but to focus on the welfare of others (Ecimovic et al., 2013). ISR could work only if the individual rises above his or her own interest and supports causes that will provide benefits to a large number

of people. In this context, each individual could make a small contribution to society, in whatever form, from saving natural resources to helping older people.

ISR is at the heart of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) because a company is made up of individuals (Devinney, 2012) and the CSR engine is fuelled by the behaviors of its individuals (Takala and Pallab, 2000). In order to be effective, the CSR requires the employees an appropriate ISR (Shao, Aquino and Freeman, 2008; Brown and Mitchell, 2010). ISR is a way of living/behaving by individuals.

According to Ghemes (2012), the complementarity of the two concepts can be further advanced. To become effective, the CSR requires the employees to be socially responsible. CSR is an instrument while ISR could be seen as a way of living/behaving.

The organizations are influenced by their human resources (Păceșilă, 2014) while the employees' responsibility determines the success or failure of their efforts. In a team where the interaction of individuals is based on individual responsibility, cooperation and flexibility, the results obtained are of substantially superior quality (Băbuțău, 2014).

The paper is organized as follows. In section one few definitions of individual social responsibility are presented and explained. Section two gives a general description of the method used. Section four discusses the results and the last section provides the conclusions.

2. DEFINING INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Individual social responsibility refers to the responsible behavior of the individual in society (Ecimovic et al., 2009), in the community that is not in his/her area of action. He/she shows his interest in the challenges faced by society and takes an active and proactive stance in solving them (Ghemes, 2012).

ISR is a characteristic of a society where individuals know their rights and responsibilities and act for the benefit of others and in the spirit of personal independence (Băbuțău, 2014).

ISR is not an act of charity made punctually or in communities where individuals have an immediate interest and where they feel the best. It is a behavior assumed individually, ethically and philanthropically, constantly manifested. It is an activist/volunteer/lobbyist behavior always connected to community problems and concerned with their solving.

There are many behaviors defining the person socially responsible (Băbuțău, 2014):

- The trust and loyalty to others
- The interest and sensitivity to the needs of the group/society

- The sense of responsibility towards problems with general social impact
- The positive and constructive participation in community life (volunteering)
- The openness to cooperation/negotiation
- The community spirit and the solidarity in actions of public interest.

ISR also refers to each person's commitment to the community he/she lives in (Ecimovic, 2011; Ecimovic et al., 2013), which can be expressed as an interest in what is happening in the community as well as in the form of active participation in finding solutions to the local issues (Isrworld, 2008). Every community undergoes a development process, each of its members being able to take part in it in different ways: participating in cleaning the streets, participating in organizing an event related to the history of the village, helping children without parents or the elderly.

Individual social responsibility could also be expressed by making important donations in goods or money for social, cultural, or environmental causes (Volunteer Canada, 2017; Păceșilă, 2017; Profiroiu and Păceșilă, 2017), as well as through the consumption of organic products (Benabou and Tirole, 2009). However, these behaviors are not always the result of intrinsic altruism, often being undertaken due to the social pressure or the desire to appear generous (Ellingsen and Johannesson, 2011; DellaVigna et al., 2012).

ISR also refers to supporting causes through volunteering (Omoto and Snyder, 1995): animal maltreatment, child mistreatment, social inclusion, discrimination, migration, human rights, gambling addiction, elderly care, education, environmental protection, family violence, urban rubbish, drug dependence, alcohol dependence, suicide prevention, clean energy, HIV, citizen security, recycling, illiteracy, cancer, etc.

According to some authors in the field (Schlenker, 1980; Aquino și Reed 2002; Hatch and Stephen, 2015), individual social responsibility has two dimensions: the individual's moral identity and the individual's symbolic moral identity. The first dimension emphasizes the perception of individuals about their role in society and the improvement of social welfare while the second dimension is the external expression of social responsibility.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

In order to identify the main aspects regarding individual social responsibility, a systematic literature review was performed in November and December 2017. The systematic literature review allows the researcher to analyze a large amount of information in order to identify the relevant aspects in the field of study (Petticrew and Roberts, 2006; Bossle et al., 2016; Păceșilă and Ciocoiu, 2017).

Data were collected from several academic databases (Isi Web of Knowledge, Scopus, Science Direct, Emerald, SpringerLink, Sage, JSTOR 2016, EBSCO Host Business Source Complete, PROQUEST Central) which were

accessed within the ANELIS PLUS project (<http://www.anelisplus.ro>). Publications were gathered using the keywords "individual social responsibility" and "personal social responsibility" in titles, including all published articles in the field. The reason for using all these databases was the broader data coverage.

Academic databases are organized collections of electronic information from journals, newspapers and books that can be obtained by using specific keywords. Generally, the resources in these databases are predominantly scientific and cannot be found on the open web. The information presented is credible and of good quality as it undergoes a selection process before being included in those databases (CSN-College Library Services, n.d.).

Academic databases could be categorized into several categories. Moreover, taking into account that some of them provide access to printed or electronic publications in various fields, it is possible that certain papers be found in two or more databases.

According to CSN-College Library Services (n.d.), there are general and specialized databases. The former (Proquest, Academic Search Premier, etc.) are large and provide access to information from thousands of publications in different areas. The second category (Business Source Premier, Health Source: Nursing, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, etc.) provides information on specific areas such as health, art, history, etc.

Liverpool Hope University (2017) identifies four types of databases: Multi-disciplinary journal databases, Subject specific databases, Publishers' databases, Other types of content.

Multi-disciplinary journal databases (Academic Search Complete and JSTOR) contain information on various academic subjects coming from both scientific and commercial journals. Moreover, they allow limiting the search to academic peer review journals.

Subject specific databases (PsycARTICLES, Education Research Complete, Westlaw and International Index to Performing Arts) contain information from journals or other types of publications on a specific area or a group of related areas.

Publishers' databases (Science Direct, Sage, Emerald) include various categories of publications in a specific or multidisciplinary field. As regards Other types of content, it refers to non-journal databases and comprises e-books, newspapers, images, audio & video, legal and government information and encyclopedias.

However, not all databases are free of all restrictions on access. Some of them (DOAJ, Google Scholar, WorldCat, etc.) are accessible free on the web, while others (Isi Web of Knowledge, Scopus, Science Direct, Emerald, SpringerLink, Sage) do not provide open access to academic research.

In order to collect many relevant data, the search covered a long period of time. However, only few original publications in the field were found. The keywords used generated 31 relevant publications (1 article was found

in two databases): individual social responsibility - 8 publications (7 articles, 1 chapter in a book), personal social responsibility - 23 publications (17 articles, 1 review, 1 book review, 1 case study, 2 opinions, 1 newspaper). Therefore, the term “personal social responsibility” is the predominant term in the literature. Furthermore, one can state that it is a young research area because papers started to be published in the last decades of the past century, with an increasing in publications from the beginning of this millennium.

TABLE 1 - THE STUDY OF INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE LITERATURE

No.	Database	Period	Publications generated	Relevant publications (document type)	Key word
1.	Isi Web of Knowledge	1975-2017	5234	-	Individual social responsibility
			2811	-	Personal social responsibility
2.	Scopus	1960-2017	9662	1 article	Individual social responsibility
			6700	2 articles	Personal social responsibility
3.	Science Direct	1823-2017	234289	-	Individual social responsibility
			154711	2 articles	Personal social responsibility
4.	Sage	1847-2017	289532	4 articles	Individual social responsibility
			223309	4 articles, 1 review	Personal social responsibility
5.	Emerald	1898-2017	72142	-	Individual social responsibility
			54157	-	Personal social responsibility
6.	SpringerLink	1841-2017	373178	1 article, 1 chapter in a book	Individual social responsibility
			274416	-	Personal social responsibility
7.	JSTOR 2016	1900-2017	47259	1 article	Individual social responsibility
			27064	1 article	Personal social responsibility
8.	EBSCO Host Business Source Complete	1900-2017	823	-	Individual social responsibility
		1900-2017	62	8 articles 1 book review 1 case study 2 opinions	Personal social responsibility
9.	PROQUEST Central	1900-2017	1223683	1 article	Individual social responsibility
		1900-2017	1027208	1 newspaper	Personal social responsibility

Source: Author, 2017

However, most of the papers were excluded from the analysis. 6 studies were removed because they were not focused on individual or personal social responsibility. A similar situation occurred with other 18 publications

whose content could not be accessed through the databases mentioned above. Moreover, these papers were not made open access by the publisher.

In terms of limitations, it is important to acknowledge that some articles matching the research might not be found, because they do not contain the demanded keywords in the title of the paper.

Finally, 7 publications remained in the present analysis. They were published during the period 2001 - 2017 and their content falls within the subject matter of the article. All publications under analysis are articles, reporting original scientific researches of the authors.

4. RESULTS

The research on the topics mentioned above is widely spread across different journals from various fields of social sciences: International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy, Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC, International Journal of Behavioral Development, Journal of Health Psychology, Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, European Physical Education Review, *Economica. New Series*.

TABLE 2 - THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE LITERATURE

No.	Key aspects	Author(s), year, document type	Data-base	Key word
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The values related to social responsibility: respect for the feelings and rights of others, empathy and social sensibility</i> - <i>The definition of social responsibility: an identification of oneself with others, an attitude that results in behavior that favours the common good</i> 	Escarti A., Gutierrez M., Pacual C., Llopis R. (2010) Article	Scopus	Personal social responsibility
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The responsibility of citizens in the development of a sustainable society</i> - <i>The responsibility of each person regarding the influence of its acts and decisions on the economic, social and environmental aspects of life</i> - <i>The consumer's social responsibility: philanthropic, social and environmental, ethical</i> - <i>The decisions taken by a person as a member of the society in order to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive impacts on the social, environmental and economic environment</i> - <i>The dimensions of personal social responsibility: economic, legal, ethical, discretionary and environmental</i> 	Davis S. L., Rives L. M., Maya S. R. (2017). Article	Science Direct	Personal social responsibility
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The values that all countries should encourage in children: social responsibility (concern for the welfare of others) as well as individual responsibility (self-reliance and care of one's own things)</i> 	Bowes M. J., Flanagan C., Taylor A. J. (2001). Article	Sage	Individual social responsibility
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The sense of altruistic duty toward society</i> - <i>The individual social responsibility based on moral appeal due to its influence on various prosocial behaviors</i> - <i>The relationship between individual social responsibility and volunteerism</i> 	Park H.S., Shin Y.S., Yun D. (2009). Article	Sage	

No.	Key aspects	Author(s), year, document type	Data-base	Key word
5.	- <i>The responsibility of people for their actions as individuals</i> - <i>People awareness that their own actions may affect people and/or communities outside of their immediate sphere of influence</i>	McKercher B., Mackenzie M., Prideaux B., Pang S. (2014). Article	Sage	Personal social responsibility
6.	- <i>The adolescents responsibility for their own and others' well-being</i> - <i>The existence of five levels of responsibility: (1) respect for the rights and feelings of others; (2) self-motivation; (3) self-direction; (4) caring; and (5) transfer 'outside the gym'</i>	Pozo P., Grao-Cruces A., Perez-Ordas R. (2016). Review	Sage	
7.	- <i>The prosocial behaviour: practice of charity, investment in socially responsible funds, consume of green products</i> - <i>The reasons of prosocial behaviour: intrinsic altruism, material incentives (namely law and taxes) and social and self-esteem concerns</i> - <i>The key role of the social image in the current society (the importance of others perceptions)</i>	Benabou R. and Tirole J. (2010). Article	JSTOR 2016	Individual social responsibility

Source: Author, 2018

From a thematic perspective, the articles topics were carefully checked in order to analyze the main trends in research. Based on this systematic review, several trends could be highlighted from the articles studied:

- Each individual has an obligation towards community or society in general, namely to promote or to support a balance between economy and ecosystems;
- Each individual is responsible for the impact of his/her actions or decisions on economic, social and ecological environment. In other words, one can state that individual social responsibility should be synonym with transparency, active listening and continuous personal improvement.
- People should be aware of the values and principles that govern their life and decisions and should act not only for their well-being but also for collective welfare.
- Cultivation of individual social responsibility among children and adolescents requires promoting prosocial behaviors as well as creating opportunities for practicing civic skills.

Although the temporal range with regards to the search is quite wide, only a few original research articles on individual social responsibility were found. However, the positive aspect is that all the 7 articles highlight relevant characteristics of the subject studied.

Even if the number of publications analysed is small because individual social responsibility is a recent topic, the interest in this subject will certainly increase in future, both from the academic environment and practitioners.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results show there is little research evidence available for individual social responsibility within academia because only 29 publications were generated using relevant keywords in the area of study. That is why further researches should be continued in the field in order to highlight the importance of this issue at local, national and global level. When the individual social responsibility is recognized as part of everyday life the change and progress throughout the world will no longer be a problem.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis is that it is very difficult to do a systematic review of this research area because papers are spread across many journals which many times cannot be accessed by databases. Moreover, not all the existing databases covering a field of research could be accessed for financial reasons.

As to the main theoretical contribution with regards to the analysis in search of trends of research, one can state that the findings of this paper are aligned with previous studies and contribute to further promoting individual social responsibility as a research field. This paper is also important because the pressure from wealthy societies for actions and decisions with less impact on people and environment is increasing.

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