Journal of Public Administration, Policy and Governance Research (JPAPGR), Vol. 4, No. 4, 2026. Available online at https://jpapgr.transglobalacademic.com/jpapgr/index. P-ISSN:2787-0464 E-ISSN: 1595-6776. Covered in Europub, etc.
Wilfred, Martha Kebe & Godfrey Ekene Odinka, 2026, *JPAPGR, 4*(4):143-153

Lafarge Corporate Social Responsibility Programmes and Wellbeing of Host Communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between Lafarge Africa Plc's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes and the wellbeing of host communities in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the relationships between CSR educational support programmes, healthcare support programmes, infrastructural development programmes, skill acquisition programmes, and the wellbeing of host communities. Relevant literature on CSR and community wellbeing was reviewed, and the study was anchored on Stakeholder Theory and Legitimacy Theory. A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. The target population comprised adult residents of six Lafarge host communities, estimated at 25,800 persons, from which a sample of 433 respondents was drawn using the Taro Yamane formula and a multistage sampling procedure. Data were collected using a 36-item structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation at the 0.05 level of significance, based on 407 valid returns. The analysis indicated significant positive relationships between all four CSR dimensions and wellbeing of host communities, leading to the rejection of all four null hypotheses. Infrastructural development programmes exhibited the strongest relationship with wellbeing, followed by educational support, healthcare support, and skill acquisition programmes. The study concluded that Lafarge's CSR programmes contribute meaningfully to the wellbeing of host communities, with tangible, visible interventions exerting the greatest influence on residents' quality of life. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Lafarge should sustain its infrastructural programmes and expand its educational, healthcare and skill acquisition interventions through participatory, community-driven planning, while government agencies strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure that corporate CSR programmes genuinely improve host community wellbeing.

Keywords: *Corporate social responsibility, host communities, wellbeing, Lafarge, Cross River State*

INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as an important strategy through which organisations seek to contribute to the social, economic, and environmental development of the communities within which they operate (Singh & Misra, 2021; Chen et al., 2021). In many developing societies, especially in resource-rich regions, communities increasingly expect companies not only to pursue profit but also to address pressing social needs through sustainable development initiatives. The growing attention given to CSR is largely connected to concerns about inequality, poverty, unemployment, poor infrastructure, inadequate healthcare services, and environmental degradation affecting host communities (Nwokoma et al., 2022; Eshiet & Udoyen, 2024; Ayeni & Aborisade, 2022).

In Cross River State, particularly within the Southern Senatorial District, communities continue to experience developmental challenges despite the presence of corporate and industrial activity. Issues such as youth unemployment, poor healthcare delivery, inadequate educational facilities, limited access to potable water, poor road networks, and declining standards of living remain visible across many communities. Against this backdrop, Lafarge Africa Plc's CSR programmes in education, healthcare, infrastructural development, and skills acquisition have become increasingly relevant to efforts to strengthen relationships with host communities and contribute to community development. Educational CSR programmes, delivered through scholarships, renovated school facilities, and learning materials, are widely viewed as mechanisms for improving literacy, reducing dropout rates, and enhancing future employment opportunities (Mamudu et al., 2021). Healthcare CSR programmes, including medical outreaches and support for health facilities, are expected to reduce disease burden and improve access to care. Infrastructural CSR programmes such as road construction, boreholes, and electrification are expected to improve living standards and facilitate economic activity (Okeke-Muogbo & Nneka, 2016), while skill acquisition programmes seek to promote self-reliance and reduce youth unemployment (Eyab et al., 2024).

Despite the increasing implementation of these programmes, questions persist regarding the extent to which they genuinely improve the wellbeing of host communities. Some communities continue to experience persistent poverty, unemployment, and infrastructural deficits despite the presence of corporate CSR interventions, creating the need for empirical investigation into the effectiveness of CSR programmes and their contribution to community wellbeing. It is against this background that this study examines Lafarge's CSR programmes and the wellbeing of host communities in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, focusing specifically on educational support, healthcare, infrastructural development, and skill acquisition programmes.

Statement of the Problem

Lafarge Africa Plc's cement operations in Cross River Southern Senatorial District have positioned the company as a major industrial stakeholder whose activities directly influence the livelihoods, health, and living conditions of surrounding communities. Communities such as Obutong, Essien Town, Diamond, Kasuk, Mfamosing, and Akansoko have experienced the dual reality of industrial proximity: access to employment and CSR-funded development projects on one hand, and exposure to environmental and social disruption on the other. While Lafarge has established CSR programmes targeting education, health, infrastructure, and economic empowerment, the actual influence of these programmes on measurable indicators of community wellbeing remains inadequately documented.

Existing evaluations of Lafarge's CSR interventions in the study area tend to focus on single programme areas or rely on corporate self-reporting, which may not accurately capture community-level realities, unintended consequences, or implementation gaps. This lack of independent, community-centred assessment creates information gaps that hinder evidence-based policy formulation and corporate accountability. The problem, therefore, is not simply whether Lafarge implements CSR programmes, but whether these programmes translate into measurable improvements in the wellbeing of the people who live closest to its operations. This study addresses this gap by systematically examining how Lafarge's CSR programmes across four key dimensions relate to the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between Lafarge's educational support programme and the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria?
2. How does Lafarge's healthcare programme relate with the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria?
3. What relationship exists between Lafarge's infrastructural development programme and the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria?
4. How does Lafarge's skill acquisition programme relate with the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

The broad aim of this study was to examine Lafarge's Corporate Social Responsibility programmes and the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the relationship between Lafarge's educational support programme and wellbeing of host communities.
2. Examine how Lafarge's healthcare programme relates with the wellbeing of host communities.
3. Evaluate the relationship between Lafarge's infrastructural development programme and the wellbeing of host communities.
4. Determine how Lafarge's skill acquisition programme relates with the wellbeing of host communities.

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between Lafarge's educational support programme and wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria.
H02: Lafarge's healthcare programme does not significantly relate with the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria.
H03: There is no significant relationship between Lafarge's infrastructural development programme and the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria.
H04: Lafarge's skill acquisition programme has no significant relationship with the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarification of CSR and Wellbeing

Corporate Social Responsibility has become one of the most influential concepts in business, development studies, and corporate governance. Carroll (1979) defined CSR as the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organisations at a given point in time, a framework later known as Carroll's Pyramid of CSR. Before Carroll's formulation, Bowen (1953) had already argued that businessmen should pursue policies and decisions desirable to societal values and objectives, earning him recognition as the intellectual forerunner of modern CSR. By the 1980s, Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory reframed CSR as a strategic and relational concept, arguing that corporations owe obligations not only to shareholders but also to employees, customers, host communities, and the environment. More recently, Porter and Kramer (2011) advanced the concept of Creating Shared Value, arguing that CSR should move beyond philanthropy toward strategic integration with core business operations in ways that generate economic value for the firm and social value for host communities.

Wellbeing, in turn, is widely recognised as a multidimensional construct extending beyond material prosperity to encompass health, psychological stability, social relationships, and access to basic amenities (WHO, 1948; Ruggeri et al., 2020; Shiba et al., 2022). In host community studies, wellbeing is often assessed through indicators such as educational attainment, healthcare access, infrastructural adequacy, and household income (Lee & Kim, 2015; OECD, 2024). This study conceptualises the wellbeing of Lafarge's host communities across these dimensions, in direct correspondence with the company's four principal CSR intervention areas.

CSR Educational Support Programmes and Wellbeing

Educational CSR interventions such as scholarships, school infrastructure, and learning materials are consistently linked to improved literacy, retention, and human capital development in host communities. Mamudu et al. (2021), examining CSR practices among major oil firms in the Niger Delta, found that educational support programmes contributed to community development, although implementation gaps limited their overall effectiveness. Similarly, studies of CSR-funded education programmes in other developing-country contexts report improvements in school enrolment, teaching quality, and learning outcomes, while noting that uneven distribution of resources across beneficiary schools can constrain impact.

CSR Healthcare Support Programmes and Wellbeing

Health remains a foundational dimension of wellbeing, and CSR healthcare interventions such as medical outreaches, health facility support, and disease-awareness campaigns are widely viewed as mechanisms for reducing health vulnerabilities in under-served communities (WHO, 1948). Within the broader CSR literature, scholars argue that when corporations invest in community healthcare, they strengthen both community resilience and their own social legitimacy (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Idemudia, 2011). Given that access to healthcare remains a major developmental challenge in rural and semi-urban Nigerian communities, corporate healthcare interventions are consequently expected to contribute meaningfully to residents' physical and psychological wellbeing.

CSR Infrastructural Development Programmes and Wellbeing

Infrastructure is fundamental to community wellbeing because it directly shapes transportation, economic activity, sanitation, and social integration. Okeke-Muogbo and Nneka (2016) found that CSR-funded roads, boreholes, and community facilities contributed positively to rural development, although inconsistent implementation limited impact in some communities. Comparable findings have been reported among mining and industrial host communities, where infrastructural CSR projects were associated with improved living standards and stronger community-company relations (Nwoba & Michael, 2016; Nartey & Manu, 2023; Jianli & Atayan, 2024). In the Nigerian context specifically, Dickson et al. (2023) found that electrification and infrastructural CSR support significantly improved socioeconomic activity and community wellbeing in Bayelsa State, while Imbazi (2025) similarly linked rural electrification and infrastructural CSR to improved living conditions in the Niger Delta.

CSR Skill Acquisition Programmes and Wellbeing

Skill acquisition programmes, including vocational training and entrepreneurship support, are widely promoted as mechanisms for reducing unemployment and building household economic resilience. Eyab et al. (2024) found that economic-oriented CSR interventions significantly improved livelihood sustainability among beneficiary communities in Gombe State, while Goyal and Vandana (2025) reported that both technical and non-technical CSR-funded skill development courses contributed meaningfully to youth growth and employability, although the studies noted that sustained impact required post-training support such as mentorship and access to finance. Similarly, Olatunle et al. (2020) found that CSR-driven youth empowerment initiatives in the Niger Delta reduced social exclusion and economic vulnerability among beneficiaries, reinforcing the broader argument that skill-based CSR interventions can meaningfully shape community wellbeing when sustained beyond the training period.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory, developed by Freeman (1984) in Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach, argues that organisations have obligations not only to shareholders but to all groups affected by their activities, including host communities, employees, and government. The theory maintains that a company's long-term success depends on how effectively it manages relationships with these stakeholders. Applied to this study, Stakeholder Theory explains why Lafarge undertakes CSR programmes within its host communities: because the company's operations directly affect residents' social, economic, and environmental conditions, host communities constitute a key stakeholder group whose needs the company has reason to address through educational, healthcare, infrastructural, and skill-based interventions.

Legitimacy Theory

Legitimacy Theory, associated with Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), holds that organisations continually seek to ensure that their activities are perceived as legitimate and socially acceptable, operating on the premise of an implicit social contract between the organisation and society. Applied to Lafarge, whose cement operations generate environmental and social impacts on host communities, CSR programmes can be interpreted as efforts to maintain legitimacy and secure community acceptance. Together, Stakeholder Theory and Legitimacy Theory provide a complementary foundation for this study: Stakeholder Theory explains the ethical obligation to address host community welfare, while Legitimacy Theory explains the strategic importance, to Lafarge, of maintaining community acceptance and its social licence to operate.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, considered appropriate for collecting numerical data from a large number of respondents at a single point in time and for statistically examining relationships between CSR programme dimensions and host community wellbeing. The study was conducted in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, focusing on six Lafarge host communities: Obutong, Essien Town, Diamond, and Kasuk in Calabar Municipality, and Mfamosing and Akansoko in Odukpani Local Government Area.

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The target population comprised adult residents aged 18 years and above in the six host communities, estimated at approximately 25,800 persons. Using the Taro Yamane formula for sample size determination at a 5% margin of error, a minimum sample of 394 was derived; a 10% allowance was added to guard against attrition, yielding a final sample of 433 respondents. A multistage sampling technique was employed, combining purposive selection of the study district and host communities, proportionate allocation of the sample across communities based on population size, and systematic and simple random sampling of households and individual respondents within each community.

Data were collected using a 36-item structured instrument, the Lafarge Corporate Social Responsibility Programmes and Wellbeing of Host Communities Questionnaire (LCSRPWHCQ), comprising a demographic section, a 20-item CSR section (five items each for educational, healthcare, infrastructural, and skill acquisition programmes) measured on a four-point Likert scale, and a 10-item wellbeing section measured on the same scale. Content and face validity were established through expert review, while reliability was confirmed through a pilot study of 40 respondents outside the study communities, yielding Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging from 0.724 to 0.857 across subscales, all above the 0.70 acceptability threshold. Copies of the questionnaire were administered directly to respondents by the researcher and two trained research assistants following informed consent; 407 of the 433 administered copies were retrieved and found valid for analysis, representing a 94% return rate.

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) to answer the research questions, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to test the four hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule applied was that a null hypothesis would be rejected where $p < 0.05$, indicating a statistically significant relationship between the CSR dimension and wellbeing of host communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Of the 407 valid respondents, 220 (54%) were male and 187 (46%) were female. Respondents were predominantly within economically active age brackets, with 29% aged 28–37 years and 31% aged 38–47 years. Slightly over half (54%) were single, while 41% were married. Regarding educational qualification, 51% of respondents held tertiary qualifications, 32% held secondary qualifications, and 14% held primary qualifications. Occupationally, civil/public servants constituted the largest group (31%), followed by students (17%) and the unemployed (19%). Respondents were drawn from all six host communities, with the highest proportion from Obutong (29%) and the lowest from Akansoko (8%), providing broad representation across the study area.

Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Sex	Male	220	54
	Female	187	46
	Total	407	100
Age	18–27 years	94	23
	28–37 years	120	29
	38–47 years	125	31
	48 years and above	68	17
	Total	407	100
Marital Status	Single	218	54

	Married	166	41
	Divorced/Separated	8	2
	Widow/Widower	15	3
	Total	407	100
Educational Qualification	Primary	55	14
	Secondary	132	32
	Tertiary	207	51
	Others	13	3
	Total	407	100
Occupation	Farming	42	10
	Trading/Business/Artisans	52	13
	Civil/Public servants	125	31
	Private employment	42	10
	Students	68	17
	Unemployed	78	19
	Total	407	100
Community of Residence	Obutong	118	29
	Kasuk	77	19
	Essien Town	65	16
	Diamond	60	15
	Mfamosing	51	13
	Akansoko	36	8
	Total	407	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Test of Hypothesis One

H01: There is no significant relationship between Lafarge's educational support programme and wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Educational CSR support programme	407	3.67	1.10	**0.586**	**<0.001**	**Reject H01**
Wellbeing of host communities	407	3.54	0.89			

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The result shows a moderate, statistically significant positive relationship between Lafarge's educational support programme and the wellbeing of host communities, $r(405) = 0.586$, $p < 0.001$. Since the probability value is less than the 0.05 level of significance adopted for the study, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis, that a significant relationship exists, is accepted. This indicates that increased educational CSR interventions, such as scholarships, learning-material donations, and school infrastructure support, are associated with improved wellbeing among host community residents.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H02: Lafarge's healthcare programme does not significantly relate with the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Healthcare CSR support programme	407	3.56	0.97	**0.566**	**<0.001**	**Reject H02**
Wellbeing of host communities	407	3.54	0.89			

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The result shows a moderate, statistically significant positive relationship between Lafarge's healthcare support programme and the wellbeing of host communities, r(405) = 0.566, $p < 0.001$. As the probability value is below the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternate hypothesis. This suggests that healthcare interventions such as medical outreaches, provision of drugs and supplies, and support for maternal and child health are positively associated with residents' wellbeing.

Test of Hypothesis Three

H03: There is no significant relationship between Lafarge's infrastructural development programme and the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Infrastructural CSR development programme	407	3.56	1.71	**0.746**	**<0.001**	**Reject H03**
Wellbeing of host communities	407	3.54	0.89			

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The result shows a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between Lafarge's infrastructural development programme and the wellbeing of host communities, r(405) = 0.746, $p < 0.001$. Since the probability value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Of the four CSR dimensions examined, infrastructural development exhibited the strongest association with wellbeing, suggesting that tangible, visible interventions such as road construction, potable water provision, and electrification carry the greatest weight in residents' perceptions of improved quality of life.

Test of Hypothesis Four

H04: Lafarge's skill acquisition programme has no significant relationship with the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Skill acquisition CSR programme	407	3.41	0.75	**0.562**	**<0.001**	**Reject H04**
Wellbeing of host communities	407	3.54	0.89			

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The result shows a moderate, statistically significant positive relationship between Lafarge's skill acquisition programme and the wellbeing of host communities, r(405) = 0.562, $p < 0.001$. As the probability value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and youth empowerment initiatives are positively associated with residents' economic self-reliance and overall wellbeing.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study indicate that all four dimensions of Lafarge's CSR programme examined, educational, healthcare, infrastructural, and skill acquisition, are significantly and positively associated with the wellbeing of host communities in Cross River Southern Senatorial District, though the strength of these relationships varied. The moderate, positive relationship observed between educational support programmes and wellbeing supports the view that corporate investment in human capital development enhances community quality of life and corroborates studies such as Mamudu et al. (2021), which found that educational CSR interventions contribute to community development, even where implementation gaps persist. This finding aligns with Stakeholder Theory's assumption that corporations that respond to the developmental needs of stakeholders, such as host communities, are more likely to strengthen trust and social stability.

Similarly, the moderate relationship between healthcare support programmes and wellbeing underscores the importance of corporate investment in addressing healthcare access, a persistent developmental challenge in rural and semi-urban Nigerian communities. This finding is consistent with the broader CSR literature suggesting that health-related corporate interventions strengthen community resilience and reinforce organisational legitimacy (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Idemudia, 2011).

Infrastructural development programmes demonstrated the strongest relationship with wellbeing among all four dimensions examined. This finding is consistent with studies conducted in other extractive and industrial host communities, which similarly report that infrastructural CSR projects carry the greatest weight in shaping community satisfaction and perceptions of corporate commitment (Dickson et al., 2023; Jianli & Atayan, 2024; Imbazi, 2025). The strength of this relationship may reflect the immediate, visible, and tangible nature of infrastructural benefits, compared with social interventions whose outcomes emerge more gradually. The finding also strongly supports Legitimacy Theory: infrastructural development serves as visible evidence that Lafarge is giving back to host communities, thereby strengthening its social licence to operate and reducing potential tensions arising from its industrial activities.

Finally, the moderate relationship between skill acquisition programmes and wellbeing suggests that vocational training and entrepreneurship support meaningfully improve livelihoods and reduce unemployment among residents, consistent with Eyab et al. (2024) and Olatunle et al. (2020), who similarly found that empowerment-oriented CSR programmes enhance local economic capacity. Taken together, the findings suggest that Lafarge's CSR programmes play a significant role in enhancing host community wellbeing, with the strength of that contribution shaped by how directly and visibly each intervention touches residents' daily lives.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that Lafarge's CSR programmes significantly contribute to the wellbeing of host communities in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State. All four CSR dimensions examined, educational support, healthcare support, infrastructural development, and skill acquisition, showed statistically significant positive relationships with wellbeing, with infrastructural development exerting the strongest influence owing to its immediate and visible impact on residents' living conditions. The study reinforces the argument that effective CSR should move beyond symbolic or philanthropic gestures toward sustainable, community-driven interventions that address the actual developmental needs and priorities of host populations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Lafarge should sustain and expand its educational support programmes through increased scholarship schemes, school renovation, and provision of learning materials in host communities.
2. The company should strengthen its healthcare interventions by supporting more health facilities, organising regular medical outreaches, and improving access to affordable healthcare for community residents.
3. Lafarge should intensify skill acquisition and empowerment programmes targeted at youths and women to reduce unemployment, poverty, and social dependency in host communities.
4. Given the strong impact of infrastructural development on wellbeing, Lafarge should prioritise sustainable infrastructural projects such as road construction, potable water systems, and electrification across host communities.
5. CSR programmes should be designed through active consultation and participation of community members, to ensure that projects align with the actual developmental needs and priorities of host communities.
6. Government agencies should strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that corporate organisations implement CSR programmes that genuinely improve the wellbeing of host communities.

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