Corporate social responsibility of telecom industries in Bangladesh: Rhetoric vs. realities

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Abstract: This empirical study examines the current CSR practices of Telecom organizations in Bangladesh such as Grameenphone Ltd, Banglalink, and Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd. It documents the common people's perception and evaluation about the CSR practices of telecom industries in Bangladesh. By focusing on the current boom of mobile operators and their ever increasing subscribers in Bangladesh, this paper further analyzes what has currently been practiced as part of CSR activities and what ordinary people think and evaluate these practices. Such analysis will reveal the rhetoric vs. realities of CSR practices of the booming telecom industries in Bangladesh with millions of subscribers and billion-dollar revenue earnings each year. Although CSR practices have been considered as part of a major business ethics globally, this paper documents a very glaring picture of such practices in Bangladesh. Many common people just believe that CSR practices are just cosmetic, rhetoric, and in paper only without any substantial impact in real life. This paper highlights some expectations of the common people from the telecom organizations in Bangladesh, thereby suggesting some propositions for further strengthening their CSR activities. Methodologically, this study has incorporated views from different stakeholders and beneficiaries of telecom industries in Bangladesh. A mixed method, using both qualitative and quantitative techniques has been adopted to have desirable outcomes. This study suggests that a real sharing of revenue earned from telecom industries through CSR activities may contribute towards a more livable, sustainable and equitable society.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, People's Perceptions and Expectations, Telecom Industries, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

From the beginning of human civilization people use different ways to communicate with each other and those ways of communication were either transformed or updated over time because of new innovation and demand [1]. Recently in Bangladesh, telecommunication sector has grown up as one of the most thriving business sectors with millions of subscribers and billion-dollar revenue generations [2]. Bangladesh is a developing country and its telecom sector has been playing an essential role in promoting socio-economic development in Bangladesh. As commonly understood, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) means the benevolent activities of the corporate bodies which will bring about the overall betterment of the mass people in the society and which has a linchpin role to contribute in the macro economy of the country [3]. For this reason, CSR has been accepted as a means of major business ethics and corporate organizations are trying to contribute to the society

in accordance with their CSR policies. In this perspective, CSR concept has a promising humane future as it addresses and captures the most important concerns of the public regarding business and society relationships [4]. Besides conducting business activities and pursuing financial benefits, corporate bodies have also several other roles and responsibilities towards the society such as the social and environmental responsibilities and business contributions that would benefit the society at large [5], [6], [7], [8]. It is mandatory in these days for companies to conform to the legal responsibilities as prescribed by law. Thus, many organizations have no alternative but to comply with the basic law of the land [9]. Although Carroll [10] states that "profitability and obedience to the law are foremost conditions" of CSR ethics, many others believe that CSR is "ethical and voluntary or philanthropic" [4]. Here, it can be unambiguously said that, with profits and business development, the corporate bodies have social commitments that must be accomplished through corporate social

responsibility. Through CSR activities corporate bodies share their profit and maintain their social commitment. In Bangladesh, telecom organizations such as Grameenphone Ltd, Banglalink, and Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd. are leading corporate bodies that are expected to reinforce CSR activities. However, it has been found that they have deviated from their actual spirit of CSR activities [2], [3], [11], [12], [13]. It has been argued that CSR activities are generally practiced to achieve the expected objectives of the corporate body; rather than keeping in mind the social benevolence. The big billboards, TV commercials and expensive advertisements remind that those corporate bodies in general and telecom organizations in particular are mostly focused in their business growth and revenue generation, forgetting their social commitment and business ethics.

The question that immediately comes to our mind is whether those corporate bodies just mimic capitalistic mindsets or are just another form of a capitalistic organization venturing into revenue generation. In a developing country such as Bangladesh where millions of children are still malnourished, high prevalence of child labour and widespread poverty, corporate bodies could have better contributed socially to combat such social ills. However, the expected contributions are still very low for the corporate organizations. The time is very up to reconsider the reinforcement of CSR practices in Bangladesh. Keeping this in mind, this paper examines the current CSR practices of telecom industries in Bangladesh, and what common people exactly expect and evaluate their level of contribution. What matters most is to critically re-examine the ways in which CSR activities are incorporated into the policy and practice of these corporate organizations. One crucial aspect of this study is to understand whether current CSR practices of telecom industries reflect the actual need of the society. Finally, to understand what people think telecom industries must incorporate in their CSR policies to consider a pro-society CSR policy. This study is thus a contribution towards understanding CSR policies in Bangladesh as well as a practical policy framework in improving the CSR practices of telecom industries in particular.

For this study telecom industries in Bangladesh have been chosen since this is the most established and thriving business sector in Bangladesh. This sector has been earning billion-dollar revenue annually, raising the question of how much they are paying back to the society as part of their social obligation and business ethics. Thus, this research is significant in revealing the rhetoric and realities of CSR activities of these organizations. Additionally, despite thriving revenue generation of telecom industries, not many researches have been conducted on this sector. This study thus demands both theoretical and practical considerations.

In the sections below, methodology used for this study has been discussed followed by a systematic theoretical consideration and the development of telecom industries in Bangladesh. Current CSR practices of telecom industries have been outlined next, which allows a transition to evaluate what has been said on paper and what has actually been practiced. The discussion then follows to the actual analysis of the findings and discussions followed by conclusions and some acknowledgements on limitations and future directions for research.

2. Methodology and Data Collection

Adopting an appropriate research methodology is very crucial in conducting a research and a research methodology can be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically [14], [15], [16]. While conducting a research various strategies are generally adopted by a researcher suitable in the context of research. A theoretical framework, research questions and/or the proposed hypotheses are all guiding factors in conducting a research [17]. Thus, selecting an appropriate methodological approach depends upon the nature of the investigation to be carried out, its purpose and scope. For this study, both primary and secondary data sources were used. In order to understand people's perceptions and expectations from CSR, a survey was conducted with 100 respondents from Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh with headquarters of all telecom organizations. A structured questionnaire was used for this purpose, focusing mostly on the questions of people's understanding about CSR, current limitations of CSR practices, people's expectations and ways to improve such practices. Random sampling was found to be effective in conducting this survey for this study. However, I fully acknowledge the major limitations of random sampling, which may not necessarily be representative of age, sex, education and other categories.

Besides obtaining primary data through surveys and interviews, secondary data sources also constitute a major part of this research. Most of those secondary data came from reliable web pages of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Corporation (BTRC), Grameenphone, Banglalink, and Teletalk. Annual reports of those organizations provided vast data sources of their CSR practices. Some information about CSR has been collected from online books, journals, and daily newspapers. Some other techniques, such as virtual observations, consultation with experts, and informal conversation with officials who deal with CSR issues and strategies in Bangladesh were also proved to be helpful. Additionally, personal interviews, mail or telephone interviews were also conducted to collect in-depth information. In fact, every effort has been made to collect as much information as possible for making this study authentic and reliable.

There are some limitations of this study. This study has been conducted in Dhaka city, however, a more representative sampling from other cities of Bangladesh could be considered to make this study as representative as possible. This study uses a random sampling which does not ensure age, gender, class and education of the respondents. A more stratified sampling may be adopted to have wider voices to be captured. Considering the time and funding of this study the author is only obliged to conduct this study in

Dhaka city with a manageable sample size enough for this type of study.

3. Theorizing Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is an imperative phenomenon in corporate world which came into a common use in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as many multinational corporations were formed that time. In the beginning, CSR used to refer to the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of actions which are desirable in terms of objectives and values of our society [18]. After 1960s, the literature on CSR developed considerably and in that time it was defined as the new concept of social responsibility which recognizes the intimacy of the relationships between the corporation and the society with a realization that such relationships must be kept in mind by the top managers as the corporation and the related groups for the overall betterment of the society [19]. In its broadest sense, corporate social responsibility reflects the needs and demands of the society, which goes beyond the mere economic one. Recently corporate social responsibility movement represents a board concern with business's role in supporting and improving the social order [20] which often mean an adoption of 'a new consciousness' for ensuring corporate responses of corporate business [21].

Banerjee [22], [23] criticizes CSR discourse by stating that it reflects merely narrow business interests, which marginalizes and excludes broader stakeholder interests. Furthermore, empirical research has consistently shown that CSR traditionally focused on the issues of interest to powerful economic stakeholders while neglecting "eco-justice" issues that are of relevant to less powerful social stakeholders (see Belal [24], O' Dwyer et al. [25], [26]). Eco-justice is concerned with intragenerational and intergenerational equity [27], [28] which includes issues of equality, child labor and poverty alleviation [29]. Backman [30] suggests that CSR should include such activities as "employment of minority groups, reduction of pollution, greater participation in programs to improve the community, improved medical care, improved industrial health and safety-these and other programs designed to improve the quality of life are covered by the board umbrella of social responsibility". Jones [31] states that through CSR, corporations have an obligation to constituent groups in society other then stockholders and beyond that is prescribed by law and union contract.

But, there is a critical difference between the rhetoric and real sharing of their benefits in the development process. The difference was brilliantly explained by the French students in a poster: "I participate; you participate; he participates; we participate; you participate…they profit" cited by Arnstein [32]. It implies that CSR is undertaken ritualistically. The 'haves' manipulate the process for their benefit. CSR is, according to Hanlon [33], a legitimizing tool used to counter criticisms of business and to further enhance capitalism's continuing expansion into new markets and spaces. In a similar vein, Llewellyn [34] argues that CSR may result in corporations obtaining a more powerful position within society. She suggests that it is naïve to expect corporations to accept greater social responsibilities without requiring something in return. In accepting responsibilities, corporations would incur costs and in return they would claim rights. Others argue that CSR is merely a window-dressing, or an attempt to preempt the role of government as a watchdog over powerful multinational corporations. Some other studies have found out that anything imposed from the top on the organizations without any real commitment from inside often doomed to failure, as has been demonstrated in the microcredit programme of non-governmental organizations in Bangladesh [12], [35].

CSR is also variably referred to as corporate conscience, corporate citizenship, social performance, or sustainable responsible business [36]. Based on those literatures, it can be said that CSR has been referred to as the concept where corporate bodies are looking forward to ensure all stakeholders' benefits and working together for a long-term business development. CSR pushes to uphold a commitment for the corporate world to act fairly and responsibly, and contribute to financial development of the society as well as improving the quality of life of the workforces and their families and of the local community as a whole.

There have been a few studies in Bangladesh that document the CSR practices of corporate bodies. Uddin [1] has documented the ways Grameen Phone practices CSR activities in Bangladesh. Sarker [3] conducted a study on the CSR practices of the private Banks in Bangladesh and argues that private banks do lack a commitment towards implementing CSR activities. Majumdar [37], for example, demonstrates that the listed CSR activities of the corporate bodies are very much confined within the domain of social awareness creation on different issues. He argues that there are many other pertinent issues which could be incorporated into CSR activities in Bangladesh. Masud and Hossain [38] document the deceptive CSR reporting practices of the private commercial banks in Bangladesh. They argue that these banks do not follow standard CSR reporting practices; rather, use fraudulent information of activities without existence.

Globally, CSR has been considered as a major business ethics for the corporate bodies (see Sethi [8], O'Dwyer et al. [25]; and Llewellyn [34]). In India Ghose [39] documents how CSR practices impacted on the sales of products of the companies, and there has been a consistent link between committed CSR activities of the companies and the improved sales performance. Chiu and Lin [40] have studied the cosmetics market in China and explored how Chinese consumers perceive the role of CSR in the cosmetics industry. They argue that consumers have been increasingly becoming aware of the CSR tasks and priorities in Chinese market. In the context of Europe and the US, Doh and Guay [41] demonstrate that the government policy, corporate strategy

and NGO activisms play a crucial for pushing the corporate bodies to comply with standard CSR practices. Jenkins [42] argues that the ways CSR has been practiced globally may highly unlikely to attain any positive outcomes particularly in reducing poverty in the developing countries. Based on these findings both in Bangladesh and globally, it can be said that CSR occupies a central focus in many business organizations. However, there is still room for further improvement in CSR practices, particularly in expanding the areas of activities and listening to the people to understand their actual needs and demands. This paper addresses these issues and explores how common people in Bangladesh evaluate CSR practices of telecom industries with specific reference to the rhetoric and realities of such practices.

4. Development of Telecom Industries in Bangladesh: An Overview

Telecom services in this subcontinent were first introduced by the British in 1853 with the setting up of the Posts and Telecommunications Department [43]. After the independence of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in 1971, Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Corporation was set-up under the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications to run the Telecommunication Services in Bangladesh. This was converted into a corporate body named Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board after the promulgation of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board Ordinance No. XLVII of 1975 [44]. On 24th February, 1979; Telegraph and Telephone Board was converted to "Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB)" as a Government body with a mandate to provide basic telecommunication services throughout the country in pursuance of Ordinance No. XII of 1979 [45] and from 1 July 2008, as per the Telecommunication policy, 1998, [46] BTTB was converted into a public limited company - Bangladesh Telecommunication Company Limited through another ordinance. But poor operative and financial performance led this organization to be privatized over the years [47]. The Government acknowledges the private sector's increasing ability to meet the growth demands of the country, as well as the fact that the private sector will become a much stronger force in telecommunications development in the coming years.

The first boom in the telecom sector erupted when Bangladesh government allowed private sector participation in telecom industries by granting the permission to operate as a private service provider in 1989 [48]. Bangladesh Rural Telecom Authority was the first private company to get license from the government in 1989 to operate and maintain digital phone exchanges in 200 upazilas. Sheba Telecom (Pvt) Ltd. Was also granted license in the same year to operate in the rural areas of 199 upazilas [43]. Bangladesh is pioneer among the LDCs to opening up its mobile phone sector for private and foreign investment in 1989. Pacific Telecom launched the country's first mobile phone service.

Subsequently, three more mobile phone licenses were issued, in 1996, 2004 and 2005 [49]. The following figure demonstrates the active subscribers of six mobile operators in Bangladesh [50]:
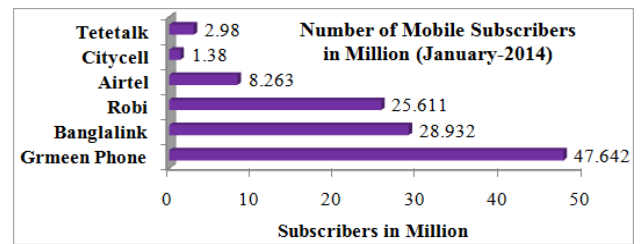

Figure 1. Active Subscribers of Several Mobile Companies

Between 1993 and 1996 the mobile phone services were monopolized by one company; Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Ltd. which did not let the customer benefitted, however, with the commissioning of mobile phone service by Grameen Phone Limited and Aktel in 1997, the situation started to improve in terms of price reduction and quality. Later on the operation of Grameen phone Ltd. can be considered as the golden period. The subsequent arrival of Teletalk, a government enterprise in 2004, Banglalink in 2005, and Airtel Bangladesh Ltd. in 2007 brought immense market competition among the telephone operators. The intensity of competition came as a blessing for the customers. This change in the trend forced every player to adjust their price policy and quality [49]. The telecom sector is recognized as the fastest growing sector in Bangladesh. Till February 2011, the total number of subscribers of these six mobile phone companies increased to 71.5 million [43]. Currently, six mobile operators and eight PSTN operators are operating in a competitive market environment. As of now, the tele-density (voice) of Bangladesh is around 63.74 percent [51]. The total number of mobile phone subscribers has just gone above 114 million at the end of January 2014 [50]. Today, more than one million people are involved directly or indirectly in this sector [52]. Besides, Government of Bangladesh collects huge amount of revenue including tax, vat from this sector which gives an immense opportunity for the development of socio-economic condition of Bangladesh.

5. CSR Practices of Telecom Industries in Bangladesh

Like many other developing countries, CSR practices in Bangladesh are guided by five recognized domains: economical, legal, ethical, philanthropic, and environmental. Here, philanthropy gets the main attention from the corporate bodies [37]. Nevertheless, CSR practices in Bangladesh are still in infancy [53]. There has been an increasing pressure on the national and multinational corporations in Bangladesh to consider the rigorous incorporation of CSR in their actions [54]. A number of corporations are now following an increased commitment to CSR beyond just profit making and compliance with regulation [53]. The government of

Bangladesh is going to undertake an initiative to promote CSR practices so that corporate bodies carry out the good citizen-like activities with an aim to reversing the current trend of businesses which have little commitment to society [55]. Based on global business obligations & commitments, mobile companies of Bangladesh are aligning their CSR activities in the areas of poverty alleviation, healthcare, education, charity activities, cultural enrichment, youth development, patronizing sports and music etc.

5.1. Grameenphone Ltd.

"Development is a journey, not a destination" - with this slogan Grameenphone (GP) is building relationships, based on trust, with its subscribers, business partners, employees, shareholders, as well as the wider community. Grameenphone considers CSR as a 'complementary' combination of ethical and responsible corporate behavior, and a commitment towards generating greater good for the society by addressing the development needs of the country. It has consolidated social investment initiatives in four core areas related to the Millennium Development Goals such as Poverty alleviation, Healthcare, Empowerment and Education [53]. Grameenphone recognizes the enormous potential for social and economic benefits to Bangladesh through telecommunication [56]. As part of CSR, GP provides more than 1.7 million free primary healthcare services to underprivileged pregnant mothers and their infants under the auspices of 'Safe Motherhood & Infant Care Project', free eye care support for around 28,780 people whereas 3,458 eye sights restored. Grameenphone is collaborating with the Telemedicine Working Group of Bangladesh Ltd, (TWGBD) to provide quality skin disease consultations to the underprivileged community [57], blood donation camps for the underprivileged Thalassaemia patients, establishment of Blood Bank at Bogra for underprivileged patients. Grameenphone has been providing safe drinking water to targeted population and reaching MDG targets, GP introduces a SMS based solution for maintenance of tubewells to ensure safe drinking water in partnership with HYSAWA [58]. It is also partnering with Bangladesh government and WHO to conducting polio vaccination awareness raising campaign since 2007 in order to eradicate polio from Bangladesh and building awareness on varied national issues such as AIDS, 'National Immunization Day' through folk songs.

In education sector, GP has launched 'Online School' (pilot) program. With this initiative, a remote school is connected with a sub-urban school in Dhaka where the teacher conduct the class using video conferencing technology and both the teacher and student interact with each other. Students also get necessary books and stuff in the online school. At present, there are 120 students in two classes (Elementary & KG) and the school is located in Gazipur [57]. On the other hand, to inspire underprivileged students and give them the opportunity to study hard and grow as real leaders of Bangladesh, GP opens up a 'Scholarship Program' in collaboration with Grameen Shikkha, an organization of Grameen Bank, which provides financial assistance to 100 meritorious but needy students through a scholarship fund at different academic levels. GP also builds up another program named 'Alokdeep' to provide non-formal primary education-cum-cyclone shelters in the southern belt of the country from October 2009 [58].

As a responsible corporate citizen, Grameenphone launched its environmental and climate change campaign 'Stay Green, Stay Close'. Particularly, 'Click Green' is an inevitable campaign among the employees of Grameenphone which creates climate and environmental awareness and encourages them to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development. On the contrary, Grameenphone took a 'Climate Change Program' in early 2008 with a vision for reducing carbon emission, being environment friendly and creating a momentum with the community and people. The main objective of this program is to reduce 15% carbon emission by 2012 and 40% by 2015 [57]. Some other initiatives are also to sponsor 'Special Olympics Bangladesh' in 2007, economic freedom for more than 400,000 village phone operators, employment opportunity to the acid survivors, emergency relief support in case of natural calamities, to support distressed population during winter by proving with warm clothing. Grameenphone distributed a total of 9045 blankets among the poor and distressed population in the northern part of the country and Khulna [57].

5.2. Banglalink

Banglalink remained committed to play its role as a responsible corporate organization to contribute in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. Banglalink believes that 'when attempting to gain market power over competitors, CSR practices can add value to a business strategy' [59]. The company undertook several projects for the welfare of the community and preservation of the environment. These initiatives reflect banglalink's reputation as a forerunner in corporate social activities. Major social activities of Banglalink are: cleaning the world's longest sea beach, at Cox's Bazaar for preventing environmental pollution and preserving the environment, generating further awareness and create hype for preserving natural resources, especially among the youth, and observing 'international coastal cleanup day'. Banglalink has taken another special initiative to distribute blankets among the orphan children in many orphanages around the country. In 2011 it distributed 5,000 blankets among the destitute children of 101 orphanages across the country [60]. On the other hand, since 2009, Banglalink has been providing some free services to hajj pilgrims at hajj camp including arranging air-conditioned busses for pilgrims, water distribution, trolleys, and a hajj guide booklet for free. During Ramadan, Banglalink distributed free water and dates for the fasting people and arranged regular iftar and dinner party in different orphanages around the country. In 2011, it provided water and dates to almost 85,000 people and arranged iftar and dinner for more than 12,000 orphans of 123 orphanages

across the country. For promoting ICT facilities for students, Banglalink has set up computer labs in 270 schools at different parts of the country in 2011 [60].

5.3. Teletalk Bangladesh Limited

Like others, Teletalk Bangladesh Limited is also engaged with several CSR activities for promoting its commitment for the pro-poor and vulnerable population of the society. Teletalk particularly believes in empowering the citizens so that a collective consciousness is enhanced to promote positive change in our lives. As the part of CSR activities [61], Teletalk has provided 325 free connections to War-wounded Freedom Fighters and also provide a monthly 500 taka honorarium for them. It has established a short code SMS helpline for children with disability or diseases. In order to encourage children's art competitiveness, Teletalk has arranged a children's art competition named "Talent Promotion Initiative" where children were involved in a day long painting competition with Bangladeshi seasonal themes and then published a special "Billboard Calendar" based on selected pictures from the competition. Under the 'blanket distribution program' in Rangpur district, Teletalk distributed five hundred pieces of Blankets to the distressed people in the winter through Anjuman Mofidul Islam. On other hand, Teletalk also initiated a help line for Bushra – a patient of blood cancer. Here, one can send SMS for Bushra to help raise fund for medical treatment. It has also organized and directly participated in voluntary blood donation program for example; ORCA (Old Rajshahi Cadet Association) had organized a blood donation program which was sponsored by Teletalk.

Having discussed the main CSR activities of those three telecom industries in Bangladesh, it can be said that the overall condition of Bangladesh Telecom Industries' CSR has not touched noteworthy position as they just work on some particular areas like, health and safety, education, environment, and most recently sports sectors. It is observed from this study that almost all the companies have very strong CSR programs but only to promote their business and not to carrying out their social and philanthropic spirits. All of these companies carry out CSR activities only to promote their publicity of products. These activities primarily aim not to serve the needs of the society; rather they are much more concerned about the interest of their organization [62]. It is merely implemented for maintaining business policy without really fostering social and benevolent intentions and social responsibility for the society [3].

6. Findings and Discussions

This study explores corporate social responsibility of telecommunication industries in Bangladesh. In this section, data are analyzed based on findings from the respondents about their perceptions and understandings of CSR activities of GP, Banglalink, and Teletalk in Bangladesh. The survey reveals that 77% of the respondents are male whereas only 23% are female. Majority of respondents belong to the age group

between 20 and 30 years. On the other hand, only 6% respondents belong to the age group of 35 and above. It means that most respondents are in the youth group. Educational status of the respondents shows that most of the respondents are university graduates. Only a very few of them (5%) are in higher secondary educational level. It means that most respondents are well educated. The occupational status of the respondents reveals that majority of them (35%) are care line managers whereas (25%) are students. On the other hand, some of them are teachers (17%) and HRM mangers (13%) respectively, while about (10%) are bankers and others.
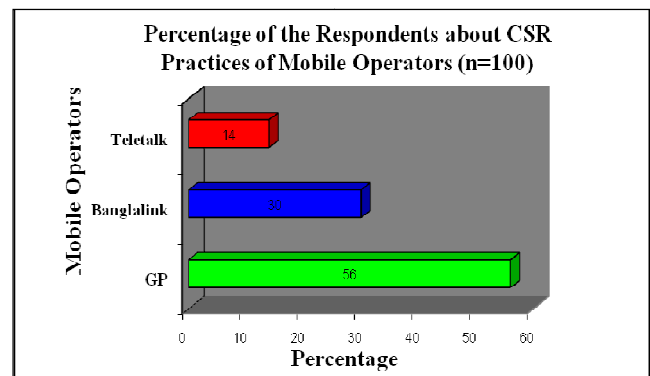

Figure 2. *Perceptions about CSR Practices of Mobile Operators*

It has been observed from this survey that a significant number of respondents (56%) refer to Grameen Phone (GP) as the leading CSR practice holder in Bangladesh whereas Teletalk, the state owned mobile operator, is at the bottom of the table. On the other hand, 30% respondents assess that Banglalink is in the second position. It has been found out from the survey that most of the respondents (48%) argue that the mobile operators are maintaining CSR to highlight their organizational activities. Conversely, 20% respondents argued that these organizations are upholding CSR activities to promote business, where 21% respondents just believe that CSR should strengthen their position in the corporate world. Interestingly, only 11% respondents believe that these telecom industries are properly carrying out their social responsibility. Overall, this study suggests that CSR is considered as a business tool which actually adopted by the said organizations to ensuring the maximum profits and enlargement of their organizations. Nowadays, mobile operators are working in various areas of CSR in Bangladesh. Figure-3 shows that most respondents (41%) are familiar with the fact that telephone organizations are involved in developing health and safety areas, whereas 29% refers to improvement of environment and disaster management sectors. On the contrary, 21% respondents replied that they work in the field of facilitating education and build up social awareness in our country, while only 9% refer to advancement of sports sectors. But almost all respondents mentioned that telephone companies are not ensuring enough CSR activities. This study reveals that a large number of respondents (59%) consider CSR activities as "average",

whereas only 9% opine that this is "good". Most surprisingly none of them perceived it as "very good". About 32% of the respondents stated the "poor" performance of CSR activities of these telecom industries. Many respondents are dissatisfied by the fact that telecom industries are not performing minimum CSR activities compared to the amount of profit they are generating annually.
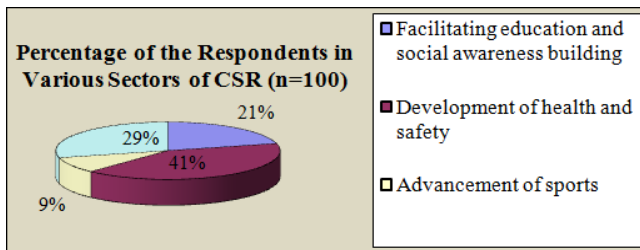

Figure 3. *Perception of Respondents in different areas of CSR practices*

This study also suggests that on the indicator of health and safety*,* the respondents' perception is positive. 42% respondents believe that the involvement of mobile operators in health and safety sector is "good", whereas about 31% consider it as "average". It has also been observed from this survey that the involvement of mobile operators in environment and disaster management sector is reasonable. About 40% of the respondents considered it as "average" where 30% considered it as poor. Although 8% replied to such indicator as "good", none of them responded to as "very good". On the other hand, more interestingly, 25% respondents argued that involvement of telecom industries in the environmental and disaster management sectors are "very poor". This survey further discloses that 43% respondents regard the involvement of mobile operators in education and social awareness building sector is "average", whereas about 33% consider it as "poor". Only a few respondents (3%) found it to be "very good" and 7% argued it as "very poor". This reveals that the perception of the ordinary people is not good enough in this sector. From this study, it is also disclosed that 57% respondents believe that the participation of mobile operators in sports sector is "poor" while 23% said as "average". Among the respondents, 10% considered this indicator as "good" and none of them referred to this as "very good".

One of the important research questions of this study is to understand what people think telecom industries should incorporate in their current CSR practices. When asked this question, majority of the respondents (30%) mentioned that agriculture sector in rural areas need to be incorporated, whereas 23% respondents argued for incorporating public awareness creation for family planning activities. Some 19% respondents stated that awareness on "energy use consumption" should be a part of CSR policy of mobile operators in Bangladesh. About 15% respondents consider campaigning against drug use should be an important area for CSR practice. On the other hand, 13% respondents argue that telecom industries may involve in "traffic management system" in the urban areas particularly in Dhaka city. The findings of this study reveal some propositions that telecom

organizations may consider for further strengthening their CSR activities. It is found out that 49% respondents believe that a real commitment to ensuring actual philanthropic activities and social responsibility of mobile operators can augment their CSR activities, whereas 27% respondents emphasized the implementation of law to force telecom organizations to maintain CSR obligations and corporate compliances. On the contrary, 15% respondents considered that telecom organization should implement CSR activities through which they come closer to the actual beneficiaries of their services, which may further contribute to the maximization of profit and reputation of their organizations. Others (9%) believed that telecom organizations of Bangladesh must comply with the international business ethics that strictly suggests the compliance of rigorous CSR activities.

7. Conclusion

This study has thus far demonstrated that the overall practices of CSR activities of corporate bodies in general and Telecom industries in Bangladesh in particular are not satisfactory in the context of real CSR consensus and business ethics. It is considered as a stepping stone for corporate bodies to achieve their goals. CSR activities are so far implemented for promoting business without actual spirits of social responsibility and benevolent purposes. Like other corporate organizations in Bangladesh, GP, Banglalink and Teletalk practice CSR just because of highlighting their organization and to strengthen their position in corporate world, and the CSR practices mostly grounded on publicity; rather than social welfare. As far as telecom sectors are concerned, it has been found out that the practices of CSR activities mainly are confined within the health and safety, environment and disaster management, education and social awareness building, and sports sectors. Needless to mention that, the CSR performance of mobile operators in those sectors is still far behind the expectation of the common people. It may be considered just as a drop of water in the ocean, considering these organizations are making billion dollars profit. This study also suggests that Teletalk, the state-owned mobile company, is even less responsive to the CSR activities compared to the other private operators.

This study further suggests some possible areas that corporate bodies may consider to incorporate in their CSR tasks and priorities. It has been observed that development of agriculture sector in rural areas, growing public awareness on over population, energy savings, anti-drug campaign, traffic management system in the urban areas are some of the possible areas that people think corporate bodies should include in their CSR priorities. However, the question remains who to enforce and look after whether corporate bodies are complying with minimum CSR tasks. If corporate bodies themselves do not come forward with a compassionate understanding of CSR activities, it is difficult for the state and law enforcement agencies to make them comply with it. In order to achieve sustainable development

and promote social solidarity, corporate bodies in general and telecom industries in particular may play a very crucial role in Bangladesh. But these CSR tasks and priorities must be guided by real altruistic mentality of the corporate bodies; rather than a mere rhetoric show-off. The findings of this study can be used as a benchmark to conduct further larger studies incorporating other corporate bodies in Bangladesh. This type of study can also be replicated in other developing countries in the global south where corporate organizations are yet to fully comply with the CSR tasks, priorities and business ethics.

Acknowledgements

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