

Incorporating Fast food Restaurants' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to Reduce Globesity: A Concept Paper

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Abstract

An escalating global epidemic of overweight and obesity taking over many parts of the world urges the World Health Organization (WHO) to introduce "globesity" term. Globesity is a serious public health problem as its health consequences range from increased risk of premature death to serious diet-related noncommunicable diseases and eventually reduce the quality of life. Globesity among the young generation has become one of the most critical challenges to global health in the 21st century. This conceptual paper discusses about the globesity issue lingering the young generation in Malaysia. Practising a nutritious diet, being physically active and maintaining healthy body weight are essential for the young generation to achieve a sustainable and quality lives. Young generation who are exposed to health information about healthy products provided on the fast-food menu stimulates healthy food choice. Several past studies posit that health-related Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices by the fast-food restaurants are helpful to shape healthy dietary patterns among the consumers. Nevertheless, limited study conducted to examine the Carroll's CSR pyramid model dimension towards reducing the rise of globesity among Malaysian young generation. Therefore, this conceptual paper reviewed the existing literatures that widely debate on globesity epidemic and proposed research framework to untangle this issue through CSR practices.

Keywords: Young generation, Corporate Social Responsibility, Fast food, Globesity

INTRODUCTION

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According to World Health Organization (2020), overweight and obesity are defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may compromise individual's health. Obesity has become a public health concern because globally, there are more people who are obese than underweight (Almutairi et al., 2022; Chaudhuri et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2020). In addition, Goettler et al. (2017) eloquently argued that the alarming rate of overweight and obesity may cause substantial healthcare costs because they have high risk of getting type 2 diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease and stroke. The worldwide rampancy of obesity expanded about triple within the last 40 years urges the World Health Organisation (WHO) to introduce "globesity" term to indicate obesity as global epidemics (Vasileva et al., 2018). Not only that, United Nations highlights the

non-communicable disease (NCD) as major public health challenge in the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 (Thakur et al., 2021).

Practising a nutritious diet, being physically active and maintaining healthy body weight are crucial for the young generation to achieve a sustainable and quality lives. Not only that, they should also monitor their food consumption because healthy eating is essential for their growth. Past studies posit that skipping breakfast habit, eating late at night, erratic eating, consuming unhealthy snacks and high fast food consumption are most common among the young generation ((Monzani et al., 2019; Sousa et al., 2020). Kotova et al. (2022) revealed that malnutrition in childhood increase the chance of developing obesity in adult life. Several past studies confirm that the prevalence of obesity among the young generation in Malaysia significantly high ((Alagappan et al., 2019; Fen et al., 2021). Findings from National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2019 demonstrate the obesity trend in Malaysia continues to rise compared to NHMS 2015 (Institute of Public Health, 2020). These evidence portrayed that globesity among the young generation has become one of the most critical challenges to global health in the 21st century.

Responding to this issue, the government has established National Strategic Plan for Non-Communicable Disease (NSP – NCD) 2016 – 2025 to establish a clear framework for intensifying NCD prevention and control in Malaysia (Ministry of Health, 2016). Therefore, several key action plans and initiatives under this strategic plan have been introduced which are Policy Options to Combat Obesity in Malaysia 2015 – 2020, National Strategic Plan for Active Living 2016 – 2025 and National Plan of Action for Nutrition of Malaysia III 2016 – 2025. Moreover, strategy A4 of 11th Malaysia Plan 2016 - 2020 highlights the collaboration with private sector and NGOs to increase health awareness (Economic Planning Unit, 2015). To reduce the globesity among young generation. Hossain and Islam (2020) profound that fast food industry shall has an ethical and social responsibility to implement socially responsible actions to put right the globesity. These actions might include health-related CSR practices such as innovation in advertising, adjustment in portion sizes and labelling nutritional information to assist the consumers making healthy food selections. Rajini et al. (2021) affirm that the cost effective, tasteful ingredients, convenience, friendly-packing and speedy service attracts the young generation to fast food consumption. Since majority of them are fast food consumers, the fast food restaurants are recommended to emphasize their concern towards globesity by promoting the adoption of healthy lifestyles through

their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. When the fast food restaurants establish a healthy eating environment, Rehman et al. (2022) prove that the consumers tend to make healthier food choices.

To date, limited study conducted locally on delineating young generation perceptions of the health-related CSR activities performed by Malaysia fast food restaurants to reduce the rise of globesity. There is need to further explore the young generation perception because untangling the globesity demands whole-of-society approach. As such, this study is conducted to understand their perceptions towards CSR-health related activities that shall be performed by fast food companies to stimulate them making healthier food choices. According to Dumitrescu et al. (2018), there is a need for the fast food restaurants to engage in various forms of CSR to respond with globesity. Carroll (2016) and Martinez-Sala et al. (2021) highlight four CSR dimensions that must be engaged by the fast food companies which are economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic to promote social improvement such as encouraging the young generation to eat healthily. This conceptual paper is intended to gather relevant literature that explain young generation perceptions towards health-related CSR activities that shall be executed by the fast food companies. By understanding the young generation perception, it is hoped that it assists the fast food restaurants in the corporate strategies development in intensifying collaboration with the government to reduce the globesity issue.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Recently, young generation tend to practise unhealthy dietary habits because they consumed non-nutritious food such as burger, fried chicken, pizza, French fries and soft drinks. This energy food has low nutrients as it contains high salt, sugar and low fibre. If the young generation do not receive sufficient nutrients, it risks the body growth and development (Mohseni & Aryankhesal, 2020). A study conducted by Wan Zakaria et al. (2021) confirm that more than 56.8 percent young generation aged between 18 and 30 years old are likely to have poor eating habits due to the unhealthy food intake. The prevalence of obesity in Malaysia is higher compared to other Asian countries because of Malaysians' eating behaviour (Mohd-Sidik et al., 2021). The finding from National Health Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2019 posit that 30.4 percent Malaysians adults are overweight, and 19.7 percent are obese. In addition, the prevalence of obesity lingering the young generation who just completed the school

lifestyle and experience with a less externally monitored environment such as workplace or university (Mohd-Sidik et al., 2021). This is because of increased consumption of convenient food at the workplace or tertiary institutions while juggling with the hectic schedule. Obesity is a major global concern because it leads to a significant financial burden to the public health care system (Peng et al., 2017). It can be perceived that the rise of obesity lingering the young generation happened due to the changing of modern lifestyle.

Future study in Malaysia should keep abreast with new findings on the prevalence of obesity among young generation aged between 18 and 30 years old and investigate the influence of healthy CSR practices by the fast food restaurants to manage obesity (Kasirye et al., 2020). Since the fast food restaurants grow rapidly, the transition from school to university poses various challenges to the young generations lifestyles. If they choose the wrong habits presently, it increases the chances of getting chronic disease in the future. When the fast food restaurants offer a healthy food choices, it influences the consumer's behaviour to make healthier food choices (Ha et al., 2022; Rehman et al., 2022). A young generation with CSR beliefs on CSR sub-dimensions namely economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic influence their perception to choose a healthy and nutritious food (Chang et al., 2020). Hence, this paper focusing on the local context because addressing the globesity must begin from the young generation as the persistence of obesity leads to serious diet-related disease in adulthood. The findings can support Malaysia nutrition policies that impacts long term nutrition outcomes and eventually reduce the obesity rates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Carroll's CSR Pyramid

- *Economic Responsibility*

The business is considered to benefit the stakeholder when it creates profit and adds value to its products and services (Javed et al., 2021). If the consumers are concerned on preserving health and wellbeing, they want to understand the nutritional value of what they eat and strive to follow the balanced diet that lowers the risk of obesity. Hence, some consumers focus on the quality that the customer receives, food values such as the price that is paid for the food (Pérez-Villarreal et al., 2020). According to Abdullah et al. (2017), consumers are willing to pay more for food that they perceived healthier. It is now the time for fast food to react by emphasizing the

value of the food because the consumers are not only looking for the quick and convenient meals but also food that offer nutritional benefits. In addition, the marketing practices should be more effective by highlighting the healthy products that are offered by their restaurants (Dumitrescu et al., 2018).

•*Legal Responsibility*

According to Aquino et al., (2021), the business should operate according to law and regulations stipulated in the country to ensure it is legal and legitimate. All food handlers in Malaysia are governed by Food Act 1983 (Amendment) (No.3) Regulations 2014 and Food Regulations 1985 to protect the consumers against health hazards and fraud in food preparation, sale and consuming the food. Nowadays, consumers are well concerned about what they consume primarily related to food. This means fast food products must meet standards as required and governed by the authorized body such as compositional standard of ingredients, chemical elements, textures, appearance, quantity, and weight (Shamsudin et al., 2020). A combination of all characteristics ensures the food meets quality standard to be served for consumers. The fast food restaurants is also obliged to display the nutritional information of the food as it is useful to assist consumers in making a healthier choices (Vijayakumaran & Amalina, 2018).

•*Ethical Responsibility*

It is related to actions that are permissible or forbidden in the organisation without any binding by the law (Mahmood & Bashir, 2020). Fast food restaurants is accountable to supply reliable information about the company and products offered to the consumers because they are often pressured to support healthy eating (Tong et al., 2019). It also includes providing hygienic food and considering the customers' feedbacks and suggestions. Not only that, the products prepared to consumers must derive from the raw materials that are safe (Chrisjtmiko & Margareth, 2018). Fast food restaurants should care about people's health and being ethical by responding towards the obesity issue through creating a healthy and sustainable eating environment.

•*Philanthropic Responsibility*

According to Kent et al. (2020), the organisation is favourable to consumers when it actively involves with charity activities, organise educational program, sponsors program and events. Fast food companies should initiate with organizing specific health education programs, dietary guidelines, and public awareness campaigns to address unhealthy lifestyles and improve the young generation's health (Bipasha & Goon, 2014). The researcher further claimed that increased knowledge of dietary guidance and advice was found significantly related to more healthful eating patterns. Likewise,

Arslan et al. (2022) agree that eating habit of the consumers can be modified through nutrition education.

Theory of Stakeholder

R. Edward Freeman originally described the Stakeholder Theory of organizational management and business ethics that upholds morals and values in managing the organization (Freeman, 1984). Freeman (2010) proclaim that organisations must consider the interests of all stakeholders when formulating their strategies and making decision. The fast food restaurants implemented various CSR activities to address stakeholders’ needs and demands. Kim and Ramos (2018) employed this theory in their study to understand how fast food restaurants integrate health-related CSR activities to address public health problems. In addition, this theory is not only justifies the responsibilities of an organization towards its stakeholder but also the stakeholder’s responsibilities towards the organization (Dmytriyev et al., 2021; Goodstein & Wicks, 2007). Hence, this theory is fit with this study context. Therefore, based on the review of existing literature this conceptual paper proposes a theoretical framework as below:

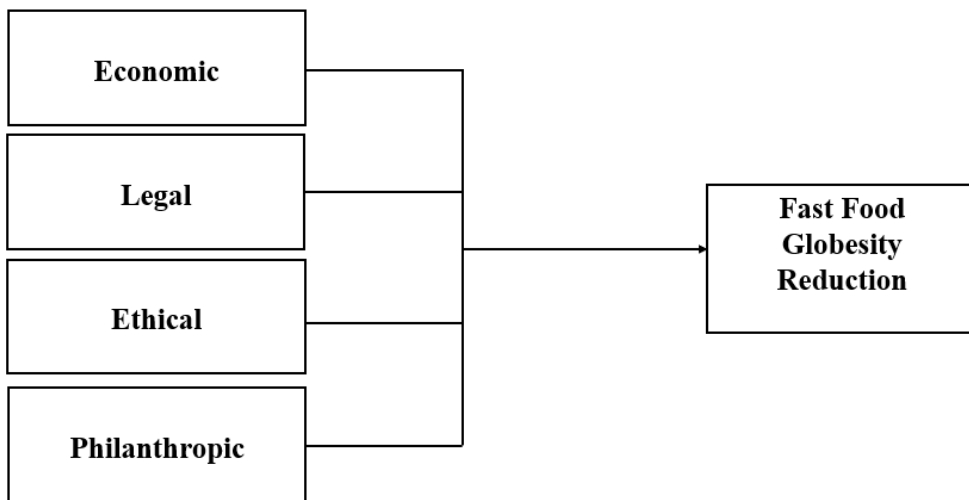


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

CONCLUSION

Earlier studies not widely explore the implementation of this model to delineate the expectations of young generation towards the fast food restaurants in creating healthy eating environment. This conceptual paper has presented mainly about Carroll's CSR pyramid model dimensions to reduce the rise of globesity among the young generation. This conceptual paper contributes to CSR body of knowledge by extensive discussion on Carroll's CSR pyramid model with the support of Theory of Stakeholder to address the issue. Based on the evidence presented at the earlier of this paper, the globesity epidemic is alarming and there is an urgent need for the fast food restaurants to implement proper and planned CSR initiatives to collaborate with government in addressing this issue. However, this paper has its limitation as the discussion is only cover the globesity issue lingering young generation in Malaysia. Future researchers may comparison the globesity issue lingering other Asian countries as the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Asian countries keep alarming due to urbanisation and globalisation forces.

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