

Linking corporate social responsibility to organizational commitment: the role of employee job satisfaction

Linking
corporate
social
responsibility

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine the impact of an organization's internal and external corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Design/methodology/approach – Drawing on the social identity perspective, the authors proposed and tested a mediation model to understand the psychological mechanisms underlying the effects of CSR. The study sample comprised 263 employees from Italian manufacturing firms.

Findings – Our findings indicate that external CSR orientation is positively associated with employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Furthermore, the mediating effect of job satisfaction partially explains the positive relationship between external CSR orientation and organizational commitment. Moreover, we found that the positive impact of external CSR on employee outcomes is strengthened when combined with internal CSR.

Practical implications – This research has practical and theoretical implications for organizations seeking to enhance employee engagement and commitment through CSR initiatives and sheds light on how CSR can shape employee attitudes and behaviors toward the organization.

Originality/value – This study brings a novel contribution to the field by examining the impact of both internal and external CSR initiatives on employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Keywords Corporate social responsibility, Social identity theory, External and internal CSR, Employees' job satisfaction, Organizational commitment

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved over the years, starting with (Bowen and Johnson, 1953) seminal work on socially responsible investments. Recently, CSR research has shifted from a sole focus on shareholders to a stakeholder-centric approach (A. Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2021; C. B. Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2009). Studies on CSR at the micro-level

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examine the impact of external and internal human resource practices on employee evaluations, reactions and perceptions from external stakeholders such as the community, environment, investors and consumers (George *et al.*, 2020). The field remains fragmented despite increased micro-level CSR research in recent years (Jones *et al.*, 2019). It lacks a cohesive understanding of its impact on employee outcomes. There is a need for further consolidation in this area to understand better the theoretical foundations of CSR and its multifaceted influence on employees (De Roeck and Farooq, 2018). Studies on the differences in impact related to internal and external dimensions of CSR are also scarce (O. Farooq *et al.*, 2017).

The current literature on CSR at the micro level has focused primarily on the effects of CSR on external stakeholders rather than on employees' internal processes and experiences (Ahsan, 2023a; Chaudhary, 2019). This one-sided perspective is highlighted in a meta-analysis by Aguinis and Glavas (2012), which found that only 4% of CSR research examines the consequences of internal CSR (ICSR), and that 53% of studies are conceptual in nature. Additionally, most studies have taken a limited approach that focuses solely on the direct connections between CSR and employee outcomes (Glavas, 2016), leading to a literature in which similar findings have been repeated. The literature has also been silent regarding the interaction of two CSR orientations at the empirical and theoretical levels, assuming they are solely orthogonal and ignoring the possibility that they could be complementary (Battisti *et al.*, 2022; M. Farooq *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, there is a need for a deeper understanding of the micro-foundations of CSR, which calls for the development of more comprehensive, theoretically informed, empirical models to assess the potential processes and contingencies that can impact the relationships between employee CSR motive attributions and their outcomes (George *et al.*, 2020; C.-K. Lee *et al.*, 2018). While prior research has explored employee responses to CSR (Aguinis *et al.*, 2020; Akhouri and Chaudhary, 2019), our study introduces a novel perspective by explicitly investigating the mediating role of job satisfaction. It is an essential gap in the existing literature, and our examination of how job satisfaction acts as a mediator in the relationship between CSR programs and organizational commitment offers a unique contribution to understanding the underlying mechanisms (Khaskheli *et al.*, 2020). Earlier research has differentiated between ICSR and ECSR initiatives (Aggarwal and Singh, 2022; O. Farooq *et al.*, 2017), while this study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how different facets of CSR influence organizational commitment through employees' job satisfaction. Thus, further research is required to comprehend the mechanisms underlying employee responses to corporate CSR programs concerning organizational commitment and employee job satisfaction (De Roeck and Farooq, 2018).

ICSR, as explored in our study, refers to the organization's practices and initiatives that target its internal stakeholders, such as employees. This may include aspects like employee welfare programs, diversity and inclusion initiatives and employee training and development (Aggarwal and Singh, 2022; O. Farooq *et al.*, 2017), while external CSR (ECSR) as the organization's initiatives aimed at external stakeholders, such as the community and the environment. This encompasses philanthropy, environmental sustainability efforts and community engagement (Carroll, 1999; Maignan and Ferrell, 2004). Moreover, job satisfaction is the employees' subjective emotional response to their work environment and experiences. This involves aspects like fulfillment, contentment and the overall positive or negative feelings associated with their job (Judge and Locke, 1993; Spector, 1997) and employee commitment refers to the extent to which employees are emotionally attached to, involved in and identify with their organization. It encompasses the employees' dedication to and belief in the values and goals of the organization, their willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization and their intention to remain with the organization (Meyer *et al.*, 2002).

The main goal of this study is to provide a thorough understanding of the processes through which CSR initiatives affect employee outcomes. Our research questions specifically direct the investigation into two key areas:

- (1) Analyze the effects of ICSR and ECSR on organizational commitment, paying close attention to the mediating function of job satisfaction. By examining the relationship between CSR and organizational commitment, we aim to show how employee job satisfaction is critical in translating CSR initiatives into increased organizational commitment.
- (2) Investigate how ICSR and ECSR interact with one another and their respective impacts on various organizational commitment dimensions from the perspective of employee job satisfaction. We seek to understand the complex dynamics influencing employees' loyalty to a company by examining whether CSR operates cooperatively or independently.

This study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how CSR initiatives affect employee outcomes by addressing these research questions, ultimately informing organizational strategies to foster a positive work environment and strengthen employee commitment.

To address these questions, the study uses a mediation analysis to explore the causal relationship between CSR and work behavior, examining how job satisfaction mediates the relationship between ICSR and ECSR programs and facets of organizational commitment. Additionally, the study seeks to identify the boundary conditions for CSR initiatives' complementary or alternative effects on employee outcomes. This study makes three contributions to the existing literature on CSR. First, it provides empirical support for the argument made by previous researchers (De Roeck and Farooq, 2018) that employees can distinguish between a company's ICSR and ECSR initiatives and can assess the impact of each program on their employee's job performance. Second, it contributes to the literature by examining the complementary or alternative effects of ICSR and ECSR programs on employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Finally, this study offers insights into the mechanisms that translate CSR initiatives into favorable employee outcomes and provides practical implications for firms seeking to enhance their CSR programs.

One of the primary goals of this study was to shed light on the complex interactions between ICSR and ECSR initiatives and how they affect workers' job satisfaction. The idea that ICSR acts as a moderator, enhancing the impact of ECSR on employee outcomes, is one that we want to investigate empirically. Focusing on how they interact to affect employees' job satisfaction, we hope to shed light on the dynamic relationship between ICSR and ECSR programs through our research. We specifically investigated the idea that the effect of ECSR on employee outcomes increases when both internal and external stakeholders are targeted. By examining this relationship, we hope to learn more about how ICSR initiatives can enhance the beneficial effects of ECSR on workers' job satisfaction. Our study advances how organizations can strategically use ICSR and ECSR initiatives to increase employee job satisfaction by addressing this hypothesis. These results significantly impact businesses, creating welcoming workplaces and encouraging productive employee outcomes. This contribution builds upon previous research examining workers' responses to CSR configurations (Chatzopoulou *et al.*, 2022). It offers a more comprehensive assessment of the effects of ICSR and ECSR perceptions on workplace attitudes and behaviors (Farooq *et al.*, 2014b). While previous research has primarily reported positive impacts of ICSR and ECSR on organizational commitment, some studies have found mixed results (N. Thang, 2012; Thang and Fassin, 2017). This discrepancy may stem from the fact that previous research has not fully explored the specific mechanisms through which CSR affects employee outcomes (Chatzopoulou *et al.*, 2022). To address this gap, our study focuses on the role of

job satisfaction as a mediator between ICSR and ECSR and organizational commitment (Bauman and Skitka, 2012; Chatzopoulou *et al.*, 2022; Glavas, 2016).

Despite the growing body of research on CSR, we still strive to understand why employees respond differently to different CSR orientations (Aguinis and Glavas, 2019). However, social identity theory offers a helpful framework for explaining the conditions and mechanisms that lead to positive outcomes from employees' perceptions of corporate CSR motives.

We will emphasize the critical role of job satisfaction as a driving force behind employee commitment, drawing on the foundational work by Judge and Locke (1993). The introduction highlights how job satisfaction is a central component influencing various work-related outcomes. Building on Meyer and Allen (1997) comprehensive commitment model, we will underscore the strategic importance of employee commitment. The article will elucidate how committed employees contribute to organizational stability, productivity and success. Job satisfaction is essential as it directly impacts employee performance, organizational commitment and turnover intentions (Dayal and Verma, 2021). A satisfied employee is likelier to be engaged, productive and committed to the organization (Suhariadi *et al.*, 2023). Our study aims to delve into the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between CSR initiatives and employee outcomes, emphasizing its pivotal role in shaping organizational commitment.

Organizational CSR involves continuous, tangible and immediate interactions between employees and the organization (El Akremi *et al.*, 2018; Gond and Moser, 2021). Our study argues that ICSR strengthens employees' identification with the organization due to ECSR by providing evidence of the organization's authenticity and reasonableness, leading to more favorable work outcomes. This argument is based on the interdependence of identity-related mechanisms in shaping employees' perceptions. Our study contributes to the theoretical integration of social identity perspectives and provides a deeper understanding of the psychological interaction between people and organizations within the context of micro-level CSR research (Chatzopoulou *et al.*, 2022; Gond and Moser, 2021; Guzzo *et al.*, 2020).

2. Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

2.1 Research framework

This research framework, as shown in Figure 1, focuses on the examination of how an organization's CSR orientation impacts employees' organizational commitment by exploring

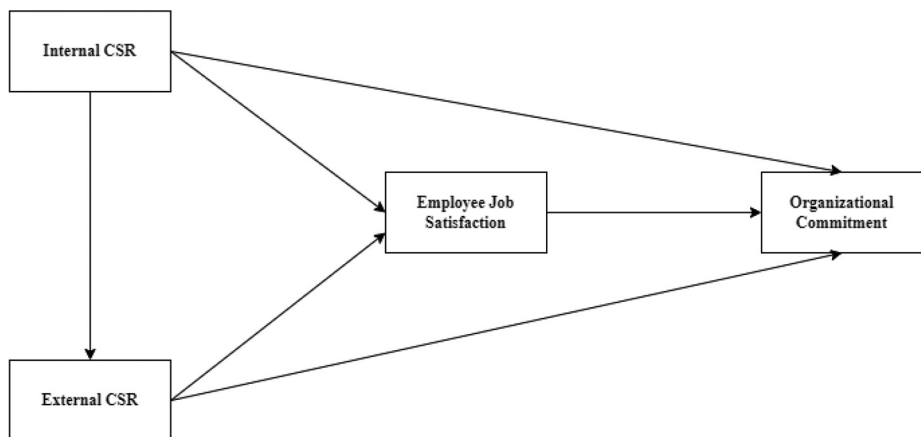


Figure 1.
Conceptual model

Source: Authors' own work

their perceptions and interpretations of the corporate goals rather than actual CSR activities (Asrar-Ul-Haq *et al.*, 2017; Chatzopoulou *et al.*, 2022). Drawing upon Vlachos, Epitropaki, Panagopoulos and Rapp's (2013) methodology, our study centers on employee commitment as the primary outcome measure. This study aims to build upon previous research findings by analyzing the impact of CSR on employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Specifically, we seek to understand the extent to which ICSR and ECSR programs impact these outcomes and explore the mediating role of job satisfaction in this relationship (Amunkete and Rothmann, 2015; Asrar-Ul-Haq *et al.*, 2017; Barakat *et al.*, 2016; Chatzopoulou *et al.*, 2022).

Barakat *et al.* (2016) explore the influence of CSR on employee satisfaction. They argue that CSR initiatives can positively impact employee satisfaction, and this relationship is mediated by organizational identification and perceived organizational support. The study is conducted in the context of the banking industry in Portugal, and data is collected from 319 bank employees. The study's focus on the banking industry in Portugal also provides valuable insights into the unique contextual factors that may influence the relationship between CSR and employee satisfaction. Asrar-Ul-Haq *et al.* (2017) explore the relationship between CSR, job satisfaction and organizational commitment in Pakistani higher education. The study investigates whether universities' CSR initiatives in Pakistan impact employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The study uses a quantitative research methodology, and data is collected from 264 respondents through a survey questionnaire. The results indicate that CSR positively correlates with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The study's findings are consistent with previous research identifying a positive relationship between CSR and employee outcomes.

Closon *et al.* (2015) examined the complex connections between job satisfaction, organizational commitment and people's perceptions of CSR. The study included 119 employees from various Belgian organizations, making up a diverse sample. The researchers carefully analyzed the gathered data using a cross-sectional survey design and an advanced statistical method called structural equation modeling (SEM). The results were significant, showing a connection between employees' opinions of CSR and their commitment to the organization and job satisfaction. These findings shed important light on the critical relationship between CSR and job satisfaction, emphasizing the potential influence of CSR initiatives on staff members' commitment and general job satisfaction in the organizational context.

Closon *et al.* (2015) significantly contribute to the field by advancing our knowledge of the connection between CSR and job satisfaction. This research paves the way for organizations to adopt effective CSR strategies that foster a positive work environment and promote employee well-being by illuminating the positive relationship between employees' perceptions of CSR and their commitment to the organization as well as their job satisfaction (Ahsan, 2023b; Closon *et al.*, 2015).

Altheeb *et al.* (2023) comprehensively review the ICSR literature and its impact on job satisfaction. The authors begin by defining ICSR and outlining its importance in enhancing the well-being of employees and promoting sustainable development. They then provide a detailed review of the existing literature on ICSR and job satisfaction, highlighting the various theoretical frameworks, methodologies and empirical findings.

Given the notion that the intended effects of CSR may not always be realized and that they are reliant on the meaning employees attribute to the legitimacy of the corporate goals through a reflective sense-making process (Aguinis and Glavas, 2019), our study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes.

Numerous studies have examined the connections between CSR, organizational commitment and employee job satisfaction (Altheeb *et al.*, 2023; Closon *et al.*, 2015; Lok and Crawford, 2001; Rahman *et al.*, 2016). However, numerous empirical studies are constrained, in that they usually evaluate the benefits of CSR on employees' views, making false assumptions that their participation in CSR will automatically produce favorable outcomes (Lee *et al.*, 2013) and without taking into account how these effects occur (Farooq *et al.*, 2014a, 2014b). Numerous studies have suggested the importance of employee job satisfaction as the mediating element for a more thorough understanding of commitment, which is why we focused on it (Jou *et al.*, 2013; Lok and Crawford, 2001). To better explain this tactic, we use commitment as a time-lag consequence of contentment. As both notions are products of communication between organizational reality and people's expectations, satisfaction is a more instant outcome of this communication. Lacson *et al.* (2014); Meyer *et al.* (2002) found that researchers typically favor employees' job satisfaction-organizational commitment correlates (DeCotiis and Summers, 1987, p. 455).

Finally, we assert that while the "source" of ECSR and ICSR diverges, the organization is, in both cases, the "goal" of both orientations (Farooq *et al.*, 2017). The joint introduction of ICSR and ECSR activities as necessary components of business management and strategy practices to meet stakeholders' expectations affects how well-meaning employees perceive things.

Although they interact to influence the results, many CSR programs work separately to shape employees' attributions (Hur *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, it is anticipated that the conditional indirect effects of ECSR evaluations on organizational commitment through the mediating role of employee job satisfaction will reflect variances depending on the levels of employees' ICSR assessments.

We conducted an empirical study supported by psychological models concentrating on CSR micro foundations using social identity assumptions. This viewpoint has been widely used in micro-level research to highlight the interconnected underlying mechanisms that explain how CSR could alter the relationships between employees and organizations (Chatzopoulou *et al.*, 2022; Jones *et al.*, 2019).

2.2 Internal corporate social responsibility and organizational commitment

Organizational commitment is defined as the entire commitment of employees to a company. The company's efforts can impact an employee's emotional and physical attachment to the organization (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). Several research studies have demonstrated a beneficial relationship between employee commitment and CSR (Brammer *et al.*, 2007; Collier and Esteban, 2007; Turker, 2009). Social identity contends that an organization's CSR raises its reputation and allure. According to reputation studies, employees are expected to be attracted to and identify with prestigious firms because doing so improves their self-worth and self-concept (Aberson *et al.*, 2000; Dutton *et al.*, 1994).

Social contact can be particularly instructive for the relationship between employees' ICSR motives and organizational commitment by drawing on side-bet assumptions. In particular, the reciprocity norm contends that employee commitment to a company depends on the value and advantages of belonging to that firm (Collier and Esteban, 2007). Therefore, they must increase their dedication to an organization's internally oriented CSR. This is particularly true if they weigh alternative possibilities by contrasting the commitments, attitudes and practices of several firms with their own and conclude that their current job situation is preferable (Ali, Nasruddin, and Lin, 2010), higher levels of employee organizational commitment are strongly correlated with ICSR purpose attributions.

The following hypotheses will be evaluated:

H1. Internal CSR has a positive impact on organizational commitment.

2.3 Internal corporate social responsibility and employee job satisfaction

Based on previous research and theories related to CSR and its impact on various organizational outcomes, it is proposed that ICSR practices have a positive effect on employee job satisfaction (Chatzopoulou *et al.*, 2022; Obeidat *et al.*, 2018; Rahman *et al.*, 2016). ICSR initiatives that involve and empower employees in decision-making and problem-solving will likely increase their job satisfaction. Employees feel valued and appreciated when included in important company decisions and activities. Moreover, companies prioritizing their employees' work-life balance through ICSR practices such as flexible work arrangements and paid time off are more likely to have satisfied employees. These practices help employees manage their personal and professional responsibilities, reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction (Hajiali *et al.*, 2022).

Additionally, companies that have ICSR programs aligned with their organizational values and mission are more likely to have employees who are satisfied with their jobs. When employees see that the company they work for is committed to making a positive impact on society, they are more likely to be proud of their work and satisfied with their employment (Shazadi *et al.*, 2022). Further, companies that prioritize ICSR initiatives that promote employee well-being, such as health and safety programs, are likely to have employees who feel secure in their jobs. This sense of security and protection is expected to increase employee job satisfaction.

Therefore, we develop a hypothesis that:

H2. Internal CSR has a positive impact on employee job satisfaction.

2.4 External corporate social responsibility and organizational commitment

Despite a strong external focus, social identity is a potent hypothesis explaining how employees perceive corporate CSR (De Roeck *et al.*, 2014; Rupp *et al.*, 2013). Employees view a company as genuine and reputable if they engage in externally focused, socially responsible activities, including supporting social charities, reducing pollution and offering high-quality products and services (Turker, 2009). These traits impact employee identification through reflective evaluations, which means that an organization's ECSR motivations are transformed into noticeable operational processes that are more likely to inspire a sense of good social outreach and positively affect employee self-image and self-esteem (Maignan and Ferrell, 2004). Because ECSR goals are acknowledged by external stakeholders, they inspire employees to see their firm as more pro-social and worthy of affection and loyalty. We contend that employees are more willing to make "side bets" with their time, money and talent if they feel their employer organization participates in external socially accountable activities than other organizations. Its development and maintenance, based on comparisons between in and out-groups, are essential for preserving an increased social identity. Employees assess membership by contrasting the distinct practices of their organization with those of other companies and construct their opinions about ECSR motive attributions through external sources. For example, word-of-mouth, public relations and reference groups determine how outsiders view the company (Kim *et al.*, 2010).

As a result, a positive correlation exists between an ECSR approach and higher levels of organizational commitment among employees. Given the importance of external stakeholders in organizational dynamics, social identity has a strong capacity to provide a self-referential and self-definitional framework for positive work behaviors (Kaluza *et al.*, 2020)

So, here we hypothesized that:

H3. External CSR has a positive impact on organizational commitment.

2.5 External corporate social responsibility and employee job satisfaction

An organization's engagement in ECSR activities, such as philanthropy, environmental sustainability and social justice initiatives, will positively affect employees' job satisfaction. Employees who perceive their organization as having a positive impact on society are likely to experience increased job satisfaction, as they feel proud to be associated with such a company. Furthermore, research has indicated that companies with strong CSR practices often enjoy higher employee engagement and commitment (Turker, 2009). This, in turn, is likely to translate into higher levels of job satisfaction among employees. It is consistent with the social exchange theory, which posits that employees are more satisfied when they feel they receive fair treatment and benefits from their organization. Companies that engage in ICSR activities are seen as responsible, ethical and socially responsible, which can enhance their reputation and increase employee job satisfaction. Additionally, employees are often motivated to align their values with their organizations, and CSR activities can provide such an opportunity (Brammer *et al.*, 2007).

Employees are more satisfied when they feel they receive fair treatment and benefits from their organization (Ahsan, 2023c). Companies that engage in ECSR activities are seen as responsible, ethical and socially responsible, which can enhance their reputation and increase employee job satisfaction. Additionally, employees are often motivated by the desire to align their values with those of their organizations, and CSR activities can provide such an opportunity (Brammer *et al.*, 2007).

Therefore, we hypothesized that:

H4. External CSR has a positive impact on employee job satisfaction.

2.6 Internal corporate social responsibility and external corporate social responsibility

According to previous studies, the perception of an organization's CSR affects employee results (Chow *et al.*, 2021; Vlachos *et al.*, 2017), and micro-level studies tend to ignore the compatibility or substitution impacts of ICSR and ECSR orientations. When the two orientations are combined, their effects are not only evenly distributed; implementing either type of CSR strengthens the other synergistically. On the other hand, substitution theory contends that firms' ICSR and ECSR motive attributions may be subject to trade-offs. These orientations are incompatible, and choosing one reduces the advantages of choosing another.

Recent research has shifted its focus to how a business's ICSR and ECSR programs may be used as tools to develop a workforce dedicated to the organization. We study the literature (Jones *et al.*, 2019; Vlachos *et al.*, 2013) and use the social identity perspective grounded in links among CSR orientations and commitment dimensions.

The social identity theory investigates how people's perceptions affect their behaviors and attitudes at work (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Its principles clarify a shared understanding of what belongs to a group, which often includes stereotypes of in and out-groups relative to one another and an appreciation of groups' relative status (Badea *et al.*, 2010; Brewer and Gardner, 1996). When people feel that significant organizational and personal characteristics are aligned, they are more likely to identify with and support the organization (El Akremi *et al.*, 2018). Thus, a respectable and legitimate company enhances employees' social identities, which benefits their job effectiveness (Brammer *et al.*, 2007; Farooq *et al.*, 2014a; Glavas, 2016).

At this point, we argue that ICSR and ECSR initiatives have a fundamental ethical principle of normative treatment: neither CSR orientation can exist independently because perception-influencing mechanisms are integrative. Companies that prioritize ECSR initiatives above ICSR initiatives, in particular, decouple their CSR strategy from their core

business operations (McElhane, 2009; Porter and Kramer, 2006). This disconnect causes employees to perceive their validity differently (McElhane, 2009). Outweighing others-focused CSR may, therefore, be viewed as being untrue or as an example of business “greenwashing” (Cherry, 2013; De Jong *et al.*, 2018). The development of this legitimacy veneer (MacLean and Behnam, 2010) reduces the perceived benefits of employees’ identification and group membership status. It diminishes the firm’s trustworthiness as a “good corporate citizen” from internal stakeholders’ views (Porter and Kramer, 2006).

An organization’s credibility from external sources positively affects employee identification, pro-organizational behaviors and attitudes (Farooq *et al.*, 2014a, 2014b; O. Farooq *et al.*, 2017). It follows O. Farooq *et al.* (2017); Hur *et al.* (2019) found that when an organization’s allure and reputation are weakened, employee credentials in the business will undoubtedly suffer, leading to less favorable organizational results. On the other hand, a company’s legitimacy and reputation as a kind and considerate corporate citizen are increased when ICSR and ECSR programs are consistent.

These experiences improve workers’ opinions of themselves, which inspires them to reciprocate with higher levels of dedication and employee job satisfaction (O. Farooq *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, implementing activities to achieve an organization’s external social aims is crucial for the affective and cognitive processes determining employee happiness and motivating workers to exhibit positive job results. Specifically, we argue that when employees believe their company is an honest and kind employer via its ICSR, their perception of their company as desirable, socially respected and charitable will increase. ICSR and ECSR among employees have a beneficial interaction impact, which is especially pertinent to corporate commitment. Consequently, employees with high ICSR perceptions experience an increase in the positive relationship between ECSR perceptions and organizational engagement through employees’ job satisfaction.

Therefore, we developed the following hypothesis:

H5. Internal CSR has a positive impact on external CSR.

2.7 Employee job satisfaction, corporate social responsibility and organizational commitment

Despite expectations that a company’s CSR will improve employees’ work outcomes, the motivations behind the company’s socially responsible behavior have an immediate impact on employees’ evaluations of their jobs (Chatzopoulou *et al.*, 2022). Because views on organizational CSR activity directly and strongly influence employees’ commitment to their company (Vlachos *et al.*, 2013), their job satisfaction may mediate in the suggested relationship (Asrar-Ul-Haq *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, we presume that increased employee attitudes and behavioral and organizational commitment to employee job satisfaction prevent ICSR and ECSR initiatives.

Employees’ views of a company’s optional CSR programs intended to advance their business and welfare ethics are positively connected with higher stages of employees’ job satisfaction. Usman and Danish (2010) stated that employees who belong to an honest company that supports and honors exhibit improved job satisfaction through interchanging mechanisms in terms of emotional attachment.

Employees’ ECSR purpose attributions have also demonstrated extremely favorable associations with job satisfaction through identification and membership, which is an interesting finding (Amunkete and Rothmann, 2015). As a result, workers of morally upright companies are expected to be viewed favorably by others, which strengthens their sense of social identity and makes them more gladder workers (Vlachos *et al.*, 2013). In management and organizational behavior literature, substantial research has been conducted on the

connection between employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). So, at this point, we contend that employees' performance at work is shaped by largely steady, imperceptible mental states that influence their behavior (Du *et al.*, 2010), and that employee job satisfaction is a prospective path to enhanced commitment levels (Brammer *et al.*, 2007; Harrison, 1999). Because people feel happy when they think about a satisfying balance between their outputs and inputs, satisfied employees have an effective relationship with their company (Rhoades *et al.*, 2001). Parallel to this, happy employees are "stuck" within the organization due to the cross-situational costs of leaving. This is in line with a substantial amount of research. Farrell and Rusbult (1981) repeatedly showed that happy workers have an expected impact on their behavioral commitment.

So, here we hypothesized:

- H6. Employee job satisfaction positively affects organizational commitment.
- H7. Employee job satisfaction mediates the relationship between internal CSR and organizational commitment.
- H8. Employee job satisfaction mediates between external CSR and organizational commitment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample characteristics and data gathering

In this study, we organized field research for hypothesis testing. We recruited participants from various manufacturing industries in Italy using convenience sampling, where we distributed online questionnaires to employees. In total, 292 questionnaires were distributed, and we received 263 complete responses, resulting in a response rate of around 90%. Participants filled out the questionnaire anonymously online due to the potential sensitivity of the data acquired. Our sample size of 263 employees after the list-wise exclusion of replies with missing values is considered acceptable compared to other studies on micro-level CSR (Donia *et al.*, 2019). We acknowledge that CSR is an organizational-level variable, and our study treats it as an individual-level variable. We justify this approach by highlighting that employees' perceptions and attitudes toward CSR may affect their behavior, which ultimately influences their organization's overall CSR practices. The majority of the respondents ($n = 155$, 58.9%) were males. Most respondents (63.9%) belonged to the age group "18–25." The majority of our respondents were qualified, as (41.4%) had a first degree and (38.5%) had a second degree. Of these, 55.5% were employees and 42.6% were managers. The detailed characteristics of our sample are presented in Table 1.

3.2 Measures

The following contains a list of all the validated scales used to create many questionnaire items to assess each theoretical concept. Respondents rated each item on a Likert scale from one to five, with higher numbers always correlating to higher degrees of the idea.

3.2.1 Organizational commitment (OC). A six-item scale that included six items from the emotional commitment was used to measure cultural attitudes and behavior. This scale was originally produced by Meyer and Allen (1997). Sample items include, "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization."

3.2.2 Internal corporate social responsibility (ICSR). A six-item scale was used to measure ICSR. The scale was developed by Turker (2009). Sample items include, "Our organization encourages its employees to participate in voluntary activities."

Characteristic	%
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	58.9
Female	41.1
<i>Age</i>	
18–25	63.9
26–35	22.8
36–45	9.5
46–55	2.3
56–100	1.5
<i>Qualification</i>	
Grades 1 to 10	0.00
Grades 10 to 12	7.6
Diploma	12.5
First degree	41.4
Second degree	38.5
PhD	0.00
<i>Experience in the workplace</i>	
0 to 2 years	3.4
2–6 years	61.2
7–12 years	30.0
<i>More than 12 years</i>	5.3
<i>Designation</i>	
Employee	55.5
Manager	42.6

Table 1.
Respondents
characteristics
(*n* = 263)

Source: Authors' own

3.2.3 External corporate social responsibility (ECSR). A ten-item scale was used to measure ECSR. The scale was developed by [Turker \(2009\)](#). Sample items include, “Our organization gives adequate contributions to charities,” “Our Organization participates in the activities that aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment.” “Our organization protects consumer rights beyond the legal requirements.”

3.2.4 Employee's job satisfaction (EJS). A six-item global satisfaction index ([Agho et al., 1992](#)), derived initially from an 18-item index created by [Brayfield and Rothe \(1951\)](#), was used to quantify employees' job satisfaction. Sample items include, “I find real enjoyment in my job.”

4. Results

4.1 Common method variance (CMV)

In this study, we used Harman's one-factor test to evaluate the presence of common method variance (CMV). The research constructs were subjected to an unrotated factor solution during the exploratory analysis. The results presented in [Table 2](#) revealed that only 29% of the variance was accounted for by a single factor, which fell below the threshold limit of 49% for CMV. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the survey data did not exhibit significant issues of common method variance.

4.2 Reliability analysis

In the reliability analysis, Cronbach's alpha statistics were used to standardize and control the uniformity of the questions asked by respondents. Cronbach's alpha is a statistic

frequently used by researchers to illustrate scales or other measurements of items in a research study. In particular, scientific studies are frequently used. Cronbach's alpha statistics also show how well researchers conducted their investigations. The scales and measures of the relevant variables determine the typical and acceptable reliability values. For the reliability study of all variables included in the study, we used SPSS. The following Table 3 displays the items' Cronbach's alpha values used in the study.

4.3 Correlation analysis

We performed a correlation analysis between the variables using the SPSS software. The following Table 4 shows the results of the correlation analysis:

As can be seen in Table 4, ICSR is positively and significantly correlated with organizational commitment ($r = 0.789, p < 0.01$), ICSR is positively and significantly correlated with ECSR ($r = 0.615, p < 0.01$) and employee job satisfaction is positively correlated with employee job satisfaction ($r = 0.94, p < 0.01$). Whereas ECSR is positively and significantly correlated with organizational commitment ($r = 0.648, p < 0.01$), employee job satisfaction is positively and significantly correlated with organizational commitment ($r = 0.089, p < 0.01$).

4.4 Regression analysis

The investigation of the differences between the values of dependent and independent variables is done using regression analysis. Table 5 shows the results.

	Component initial eigenvalues			Extraction sums of squared loadings		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	9.718	29.676	29.676	9.718	29.676	29.676

Table 2. CMV
Note: Extraction method: Principal component analysis
Source: Authors' own

Variables	Items	Alpha	Mean	SD
Organizational commitment	6	0.898	3.789	0.696
ICSR	6	0.864	3.662	0.776
ECSR	10	0.775	3.438	0.604
Job satisfaction	6	0.826	3.600	0.719

Table 3. Cronbach's alpha
Source: Authors' own

Variables	1. OC	2. ICSR	3. ECSR	4. EJ
1. OC	1			
2. ICSR	0.789**	1		
3. ECSR	0.648**	0.615**	1	
4. EJS	0.089	0.94	0.281**	1

Table 4. Correlation table
Source: Authors' own

According to Table 5, the independent variable ICSR's standardized coefficient of regression (β) has a value of 0.567 and a significant value of 0.000 for the dependent variable organizational commitment. These findings indicate that the dependent variable, organizational commitment, is significantly and favorably impacted by the independent variable, ICSR. The value is 0.567, meaning that a change in the ICSR of one unit will result in a change in organizational commitment of 56.7%. These findings are consistent with our *H1*:

H1. Internal CSR has a positive impact on organizational commitment.

The independent variable, ICSR, had a standardized coefficient of regression (β) value of 0.940 and a significant value of 0.130 for the dependent variable employees' job satisfaction. These findings demonstrate that ICSR influences employee job satisfaction. A change of one unit in ICSR results in a change of 94% in employees' job satisfaction, as indicated by the figure of 0.940. These findings are consistent with our *H2*, presented below.

H2. Internal CSR has a positive impact on employee job satisfaction.

For the independent variable, ECSR, the standardized coefficient of regression (β) is 0.670, whereas it has a significant value of 0.000 for the dependent variable, organizational commitment. These findings indicate that ECSR significantly and favorably affects organizational commitment. A value of 0.530 indicates that a change in the ECSR of one unit results in a change in organizational commitment of 67.00%. These findings support the hypothesis listed below.

H3. External CSR has a positive impact on organizational commitment.

ECSR has a standardized coefficient of regression (β) value of 0.334, whereas it has a significant value of 0.000 for the dependent variable, employees' job satisfaction. These findings demonstrate that ECSR has a substantial and advantageous effect on employee job satisfaction. The value is 0.334, indicating that a change in the ECSR of one unit will result in a change in employee job satisfaction of 33.4%. These findings validate our *H4*, which is presented below.

H4. External CSR has a positive impact on employee job satisfaction.

The ICSR standardized coefficient of regression (β) is 0.479, with a significant value of 0.000 for ECSR as the dependent variable. These findings indicate that ICSR significantly and favorably affects ECSR. The value is 0.479, indicating that a change in the ICSR of one unit will result in a 47.9% change in ECSR. These findings are consistent with our *H5*, presented below.

H5. Internal CSR has a positive impact on external CSR.

Employee job satisfaction has a standardized coefficient of regression (β) value of 0.099 and a significant value of 0.111 for organizational commitment. These findings demonstrate that employee job satisfaction favorably influences their organizational commitment. A change

		β	<i>t</i> -value	Sig.	Adj.R2
1. ICSR-EJS	ICSR	0.94	1.519	0.130	0.005
2. ECSR-EJS	ECSR	0.334	4.726	0.000	0.075
3. ICSR-ECSR	ICSR	0.479	12.588	0.000	0.375
4. ICSR-OC	ICSR	0.567	15.891	0.000	0.487
5. ECSR-OC	ECSR	0.670	10.169	0.000	0.278
6. EJS-OC	EJS	0.099	1.601	0.111	0.006

Source: Authors' own

Table 5.
Regression table

of one unit in employee job satisfaction results in a change of 9.9% in organizational commitment, as indicated by the figure of 0.099. Therefore, these findings are consistent with our *H6*, which is presented below.

H6. Employee job satisfaction positively affects organizational commitment.

4.5 Mediation analysis

A bootstrapping approach was suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2004) to identify the mediation effect between the relevant variables. We used a process macro for SPSS that was influenced to determine the mediation impact on our variables (Hayes and Scharkow, 2013). The confidence interval for the total and direct effects is detailed in Table 6 for X = ICSR, Y = OC and M = EJS:

ULCI stands for upper limit confidence interval, and LLCI for lower limit confidence interval when reporting unstandardized regression coefficients. When examining *H7*, it was discovered that ICSR’s indirect impact on employee job satisfaction was significant. The direct effect results show a substantial relationship between ICSR and organizational commitment (0.0000 $p < 0.01$). Because 0 was not included in the confidence interval for the indirect influence on organizational commitment (LLCI = 0.0500; ULCI = 0.1800), this proves the mediation of employee job satisfaction (direct effect = 0.5345, $p < 0.01$, indirect effect = 0.5024, $p < 0.01$, total effect = 0.5370, $p < 0.01$) between ICSR and organizational commitment. Hence, this supports our *H7*, which is as follows.

H7. Employee job satisfaction mediates the relationship between internal CSR and organizational commitment.

ECSR’s indirect impact on employee job satisfaction was found significant while investigating *H8*. As shown in Table 7 the direct effect results reveal a substantial relationship between ECSR and organizational commitment (0.0000 $p < 0.01$). Because 0 was not included in the confidence interval for the indirect influence on organizational commitment (LLCI = 0.494; ULCI = 0.287), this proves the mediation of employee job satisfaction (direct effect = 0.5377, $p < 0.01$, indirect effect = 0.5151, $p < 0.01$, total effect = 0.5226, $p < 0.01$) between ECSR and organizational commitment.

	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Total effect	0.5370	0.0340	0.4700	0.6039
Direct effect	0.5345	0.0342	0.4672	0.6019
Indirect effect	0.5024	0.0570	0.0500	0.1800

Notes: $N = 263$. Bootstrap sample size 5,000. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval, ULCI = upper limit confidence interval; Details of the confidence interval for the direct and total effects = ECSR, Y = OC and M = EJS are displayed in Table 7
Source: Authors’ own

Table 6.
ICSR-EJS-OC
Mediation 1

	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Total effect	0.5226	0.0518	0.4206	0.6246
Direct effect	0.5377	0.0540	0.4314	0.6440
Indirect effect	0.5151	0.0192	0.494	0.287

Table 7.
ECSR-EJS-OC
Mediation 2

Notes: $N = 263$. Bootstrap sample size 5,000. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval, ULCI = upper limit confidence interval
Source: Authors’ own

$p < 0.01$, indirect effect = 0.5151, $p < 0.01$, total effect = 0.5226, $p < 0.01$) between ECSR and organizational commitment. Hence, this supports our *H8*, which is mentioned below.

H8. Employee job satisfaction mediates between external CSR and organizational commitment.

5. Discussion

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the micro-level approach to CSR, this study moves beyond the conventional macro-level analyses to unravel the nuanced mechanisms, practices and boundary conditions associated with firm-level CSR initiatives. We examine the relationships between an organization's ICSR and ECSR initiatives, employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This approach diverges from previous studies, which primarily focused on macro-level CSR (Halkos and Skouloudis, 2018). By considering the perspectives and opinions of employees, we have uncovered how such initiatives can promote actions and attitudes that align with the organization's strategic goals and contribute to its overall success (De Roeck and Farooq, 2018).

Building upon the foundations laid by previous research on employee responses to CSR (Aguinis *et al.*, 2020; Akhouri and Chaudhary, 2019), our study makes a distinctive contribution by examining the mediating role of job satisfaction. This research explores the complex mechanisms through which job satisfaction functions as a mediator in shaping organizational commitment, a unique approach in the literature that explores the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes. We provide preliminary empirical evidence on the effects of ECSR and ICSR orientations on organizational commitment and explore the role of employee job satisfaction as a mediating construct in this relationship. This research aims to understand further the connections between CSR, employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment and how they impact an organization's performance and strategic goals (Glavas, 2016; Rupp and Mallory, 2015).

Furthermore, our research distinguishes itself by examining the complex interactions between ICSR and ECSR initiatives. Our goal is to advance a more thorough comprehension of how these factors affect organizational commitment by way of employee job satisfaction. Although earlier studies have touched on the distinction between ICSR and ECSR (Aggarwal and Singh, 2022; O. Farooq *et al.*, 2017), our analysis goes beyond by explicitly examining their joint impact on employee outcomes. By doing so, we aim to advance the conversation on these CSR dimensions' varied and sometimes complementary effects.

Our findings show that both CSR orientations are linked to higher altitudes of organizational commitment aspects by improving employees' job satisfaction. These results imply that employees respond favorably to activities that address CSR's primary goal – the environment or society – and projects that may benefit them directly or indirectly. The positive, mediated effect of ECSR on employee job satisfaction demonstrates that in addition to nurturing employees' pro-organizational behaviors directly through identification, others-focused CSR can also foster such behaviors subtly by giving their work meaning and purpose (Brammer *et al.*, 2007; Hur *et al.*, 2019). The significance of employee job satisfaction as a crucial underlying mechanism by which ICSR and ICSR improve employees' personal investment in the company and, as a result, increase the costs associated with leaving is highlighted by the fact that the positive effect of ECSR and ICSR on behavioral commitment is completely mediated.

CSR may involve organizational behaviors beyond compliance as a reasonable justification (O. Farooq *et al.*, 2017). However, many HR/employment policies that comprise ICSR have been established in most firms in response to legal requirements (Chatzopoulou *et al.*, 2022). Thus, ICSR is more frequently seen as a part of a company's necessary business

framework than a more flexible CSR program (O. Farooq *et al.*, 2017). The perceived advantages of ICSR programs may be harmed by overemphasizing commitment in response to external stakeholders' expectations. Our data support the notion that employees differentiate CSR based on diverse stakeholder expectations and explain variances in responses to the CSR based on target audiences by taking all of the data into account, as proposed by other investigators (Bahta *et al.*, 2021; Farooq *et al.*, 2017; Hur *et al.*, 2019).

Our findings provide new insights into the interconnections between ECSR and ICSR. While previous research has emphasized the need to distinguish CSR initiatives based on their intended audience, little has been said about these different CSR approaches' potential substitution or complementary effects. Our data suggest that ECSR initiatives have a stronger positive impact on employee outcomes when employees are highly concerned about their organization's ICSR initiatives. This may be because the simultaneous use of ECSR and ICSR initiatives conveys the organization's genuine commitment to advancing the common good rather than solely focusing on profits and reputation. As a result, the company's reputation as a responsible and generous corporate citizen is reinforced (Donia *et al.*, 2019).

6. Contributions

This study contributes to the existing literature on CSR by focusing on employees' experiences of their organization's involvement in CSR activities. By examining employees' involvement in CSR, we provide a micro-level perspective on the real-world implications of CSR practices. Our findings highlight the importance of considering employee job satisfaction in micro-level CSR research, as it can significantly influence job outcomes. Additionally, our hypothesis of employees distinguishing between ECSR and ICSR orientations expands upon previous research by viewing CSR as a construct with both external and internal dimensions, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of CSR on employees. Overall, our study provides a valuable complement to existing micro-level CSR research.

Thus, we confirm the specific effects of employee job satisfaction on organizational commitment, as proposed by earlier studies (Donia *et al.*, 2019; Donia and Sirsly, 2016; Vlachos *et al.*, 2013; Vlachos *et al.*, 2017), and offer more evidence that systematic and multidimensional approaches offer a finer understanding of how effective CSR is for organizations to achieve micro-level results (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; De Roeck and Farooq, 2018). More importantly, we used a mediation technique to develop a model that explains how a mix of ICSR and ECSR initiatives adds value to organizations. This technique expands past research findings on the relationship between employee outcomes and perceived CSR. Given that companies use ICSR and ECSR programs, there is serious concern regarding how they interact (Basil and Erlandson, 2008).

We respond to the literature claiming that ignoring this option could restrict how CSR studies are applied and prevent further research. We find that ICSR strengthens the favorable benefits of ECSR on employee performance when both programs exist. These findings are noteworthy because they provide empirical support for social identity theory: one CSR attitude may positively reinforce the effects of another. This implies that although ICSR efforts may not be seen as substantial predictors of organizational phenomena, they work as a boundary condition for ECSR to increase its beneficial impact on employee attitudes and behaviors. Our research on the insignificant relationship between ICSR motive attributions and workers' work outcomes supports this conclusion.

In this context, we contribute to the limited but growing body of literature on potential mediators that may clarify the links between employees' perceptions of business

commitment and their desire for CSR (Farooq *et al.*, 2014a, 2014b). Another value added by our study is that it provides a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms driving the variation in CSR outcomes by identifying synergies across disparate theories with roots in organizational psychology.

7. Practical implications

Further to the preceding contributions, businesses may evaluate the efficacy and efficiency of their CSR initiatives by clarifying how workers interpret CSR orientations toward various stakeholders (El Akremi *et al.*, 2018). Thus, our present study can benefit corporate entities. First, ICSR activities have impacts on ECSR initiatives. ECSR actions may provide intangible business resources because employee attitudes and behaviors are valued, uncommon, challenging to mimic and less perfect substitutes (Farooq *et al.*, 2014a, 2014b).

However, overemphasizing efforts in favor of external stakeholders runs the risk of creating the impression that an organization's person-centric CSR is purely symbolic and exists primarily to boost its corporate image for profit-enhancing purposes. Employees are essential to a company's success. Thus, management should prioritize knowing how to communicate self-focused CSR activities to them. Therefore, we draw attention to the need for better communication tactics to inform staff about an organization's attempts to uphold an internally focused ethical attitude. Positive employee outcomes are anticipated. Similarly, our findings suggest that corporate executives should prioritize an integrated CSR program that incorporates components from both internal and external orientations to boost the efficacy of their firms' human resources. This is because when ICSR and ECSR signals are concurrently presented in an organizational environment, the advantages of ECSR can only be completely realized.

8. Implications for research and society

The findings of this study will likely affect future research in the areas of CSR and organizational commitment. As we used and proved employee job satisfaction as a mediator between ICSR and organizational commitment, as well as between ECSR and organizational commitment, researchers are open to using other identifying factors, such as work–life balance, job involvement, job performance, psychological well-being, etc. in mediation or moderation analysis. The present study also provides insight into the effects of ICSR and ECSR on factors such as perceived organizational support, organizational identification and employee engagement.

This study also has societal implications. The importance of ECSR, ICSR and employee job satisfaction is emphasized in our research. Organizations can foster a positive work culture by focusing on ICSR. This could not only benefit employees but also would have broader societal implications. A positive work culture can promote employee well-being, job satisfaction and work–life balance, leading to healthier and happier individuals contributing to society. ECSR initiatives such as corporate philanthropy, environmental sustainability practices and community engagement have direct societal implications. Organizations can address social and ecological challenges by actively engaging in ECSR activities, positively impacting communities and promoting sustainable development. Employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment have significant economic implications for society. Satisfied and committed employees will likely be more productive, innovative and motivated, leading to organizational success and economic growth. This, in turn, contributes to job creation, increased prosperity and a thriving economy at both local and national levels.

By focusing on ICSR and ECSR practices, promoting employee job satisfaction and fostering organizational commitment, organizations can contribute to a socially responsible

and sustainable society. Such organizations catalyze positive change, influencing societal values, behaviors and the overall well-being of individuals and communities.

9. Study limitations

It is vital to be aware of the limitations of our research. First, although we used various statistical techniques to identify bias resulting from common method variance, this variance could not be completely ignored because only one data source was used for the analysis. It should be noted, however, that using information from sources other than employees may not be appropriate at all (Vlachos *et al.*, 2013). Second, because both the explanatory and outcome variables were collected at a single point in time, caution must be exercised when drawing causal conclusions from the results of this research. Employee job satisfaction is more dynamic than workplace commitment, a consistent aspect of behavior across time (Chang, 1999). Time-sensitive longitudinal designs might be used to capture the phenomena under study better.

Moreover, we explicitly acknowledged that the age skewness was a limitation. While our sample predominantly comprises individuals aged 18–25, we recognize that this may limit the generalizability of our findings (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012). To mitigate potential biases associated with age, we will consider this skewness in our interpretation of results and encourage future research to replicate the study with more diverse age groups.

We discuss the potential influence of generational differences on reactions to ICSR and ECSR. Existing literature suggests that different generations may view corporate ethics and responsibility differently (Meriac *et al.*, 2010). As such, we have carefully considered whether age-related variations in our sample might impact the observed relationships and whether generational factors should be explored further in future research.

Finally, while Italy is a developed EU economy, the developing-country context of our study may be useful for duplicating our findings in other research conditions.

10. Conclusions

CSR scholarship has evolved from the margins to the core of organizational-level research (Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010). Our study, which focuses on the micro level of that research, uses a homological system to correlate the organization's ECSR and ICSR orientations with its outcomes. We consolidate psychological micro-foundations of CSR through social identity theory hypotheses and explain how ECSR and ICSR orientations relate to employees' work attitudes and actions. We contribute to micro-level CSR research by contrasting the impact of employees' ICSR and ECSR motivation attributions on work outcomes. To initiate, we emphasize the critical role of other-focused CSR in developing a highly committed workforce through employee job satisfaction. Creating positive staff attitudes and behaviors is secured by establishing ICSR and ECSR bundles. We recommend further study to create a more responsive framework to illuminate the interaction between various CSR orientations and dynamic interactions inside enterprises. Such references would enlarge our theoretical frameworks of how CSR affects several organizational space dimensions and provide managers with more thorough practical advice on optimally combining CSR programs in their businesses. While our study focused on the combined effects of ICSR and ECSR on employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment, we acknowledge the potential role of ECSR as a mediator in this relationship. Further research could explore this possibility by testing a mediation model that includes ECSR as a mediator between

ECSR and employee outcomes. Such research could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying the effects of CSR on employee attitudes and behaviors.

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