

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: PSYCHOLOGICAL PATHWAYS THROUGH AUTHENTICITY, ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION, AND PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

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АННОТАЦИЯ

В статье рассматривается, как восприятие КСО может усиливать вовлечённость сотрудников через аутентичность КСО и организационную идентификацию, а поддержку организации — как предлагаемый механизм.

Ключевые слова: корпоративная социальная ответственность; вовлечённость сотрудников; аутентичность КСО; организационная идентификация; поддержка организации.

ABSTRACT

This review examines how perceived CSR may strengthen employee engagement through CSR authenticity and organizational identification, while treating perceived organizational support as a proposed pathway.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility; employee engagement; CSR authenticity; organizational identification; perceived organizational support.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to an organization's responsibility for the social, ethical, and environmental effects of its activities and its relationships with stakeholders [1]. From an employee perspective, CSR can signal what an organization values, how consistently it acts on those values, and how it relates to employees and other stakeholders. This makes CSR relevant not only to corporate strategy but also to organizational behavior and human resource management [3].

Employee engagement concerns the extent to which employees invest themselves in their work. Kahn [6] conceptualized personal engagement as bringing physical, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of the self into a work role, while Schaufeli et al. [10] operationalized work engagement through vigor, dedication, and absorption. These perspectives distinguish engagement from narrower constructs such as job satisfaction.

Evidence increasingly suggests that employees' perceptions of CSR are associated with important work-related outcomes. A meta-analysis of 143 studies involving 89,396 participants found medium-to-large relationships between perceived CSR and employee attitudes and behaviors and identified organizational identification as an important mediator for several employee outcomes [8]. However, the more useful question for the present paper is not simply whether CSR matters, but how employees interpret CSR and how those interpretations may translate into engagement.

This paper addresses that question through three psychological pathways: CSR authenticity, organizational identification, and perceived organizational support. Existing

research has examined these mechanisms separately. Glavas [4], for example, tested authenticity and perceived organizational support as mediators of the CSR–engagement relationship, while other studies have linked perceived CSR to organizational identification and, in turn, to workplace outcomes [5,7,12]. The contribution of this review is to integrate these mechanisms into one evidence-aligned framework while explicitly distinguishing stronger evidence from pathways that remain tentative.

The paper is guided by three questions: (1) How is perceived CSR associated with employee engagement? (2) How do CSR authenticity and organizational identification help explain this relationship? and (3) To what extent is perceived organizational support a plausible, but still uncertain, mechanism? These questions provide the basis for the conceptual framework developed below.

METHODS

This paper uses a conceptual literature review to synthesize peer-reviewed research on perceived CSR, employee engagement, CSR authenticity, organizational identification, and perceived organizational support. Foundational theoretical works were retained when they directly informed the proposed mechanisms, while empirical and meta-analytic studies were prioritized for evidence about relationships among the constructs.

The review was organized around three questions: (1) Is perceived CSR associated with employee engagement? (2) Do CSR authenticity and organizational identification provide plausible explanations for this association? and (3) What does the available evidence suggest about perceived organizational support as an additional mechanism? The analysis compares findings across the selected studies and distinguishes direct empirical support from theoretical or proposed relationships.

No original survey, interview, experiment, or other primary data were collected for this paper. Accordingly, all numerical results reported in the Results section are taken from the cited studies and are presented as findings from the reviewed literature, not as results generated by the author.

RESULTS

The Results therefore represent a synthesis of findings reported in the reviewed studies.

CSR and employee engagement. The literature supports a positive relationship between perceived CSR and employee-related outcomes. Paruzel et al. [8] synthesized 143 studies involving 89,396 participants and found medium-to-large relationships between perceived CSR and employee attitudes and behaviors. Because the meta-analysis covered several outcomes rather than employee engagement alone, its findings provide broad evidence for the relevance of CSR to employee-related outcomes rather than a single definitive estimate of the CSR–engagement relationship.

Glavas [4] provides more direct evidence for employee engagement. Using data from 15,184 employees in a large U.S. professional services firm, the study found that authenticity significantly mediated the relationship between CSR and employee engagement, whereas perceived organizational support did not significantly mediate the relationship. These findings suggest that employees’ interpretation of CSR may matter more than the mere existence of CSR activities.

Organizational identification as an identity mechanism. Social Identity Theory proposes that people derive part of their self-concept from social groups to which they belong [11]. In

organizational settings, CSR may signal what organizational membership represents. Glavas and Godwin [5] linked perceived CSR to employee organizational identification, while Kim et al. [7] reported a relationship between CSR and employee-company identification. More directly, van Dick et al. [12] found that organizational identification mediated the relationship between employees' perceptions of CSR initiatives and work engagement, although the strength of this relationship depended on the importance employees attached to organizations' social and environmental roles.

These findings provide a stronger empirical basis for an identification pathway from perceived CSR to employee engagement and support Proposition 1: perceived CSR is positively associated with employee engagement, and Proposition 2: organizational identification helps explain this relationship.

Perceived organizational support as a tentative exchange mechanism. Social Exchange Theory suggests that favorable treatment can generate expectations of reciprocal exchange [2]. Perceived organizational support captures employees' perceptions that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Rhoades and Eisenberger [9] identified fairness, supervisor support, rewards, and favorable working conditions as important antecedents of perceived organizational support.

CSR may therefore function as one signal of organizational responsibility, but the specific mediation evidence is weaker. In Glavas [4], perceived organizational support did not significantly mediate the CSR-engagement relationship. Accordingly, Proposition 3 is treated as a proposed rather than established pathway: perceived organizational support may help explain the CSR-engagement relationship in some contexts, but current direct evidence is insufficient to treat it as a confirmed mediator. Proposition 4 therefore concerns a boundary condition rather than a settled effect: the relative importance of these pathways may depend on how authentic, relevant, and meaningful employees perceive CSR to be.

DISCUSSION

The review indicates that CSR is best understood not only as a firm-level policy but also as information that employees interpret. The central contribution of the paper is therefore a mechanism-based explanation: perceived CSR may influence engagement when employees interpret responsible organizational behavior as authentic, identity-relevant, and supportive.

The authenticity pathway has particularly direct support. Glavas [4] found that authenticity significantly mediated the CSR-engagement relationship, suggesting that employees may respond to whether organizational responsibility is experienced as genuine rather than merely communicated. This interpretation is consistent with the broader argument that CSR becomes psychologically meaningful when it aligns with organizational values and employees' experience of work.

The identification pathway provides a complementary explanation. CSR can communicate what an organization stands for and thereby influence the meaning employees attach to organizational membership. The evidence from Glavas and Godwin [5] and Kim et al. [7] supports the CSR-identification link, while van Dick et al. [12] provides direct evidence that organizational identification can mediate the relationship between perceived CSR initiatives and work engagement. The pathway should nevertheless be understood as context-sensitive rather than automatic.

Perceived organizational support offers a theoretically plausible exchange mechanism, but the evidence in the reviewed literature is more limited. The non-significant mediation reported by Glavas [4] is important because it prevents the framework from treating all psychological mechanisms as equally established. Accordingly, perceived organizational support is treated as a proposed mechanism requiring further empirical testing.

Taken together, the evidence supports a multi-pathway framework in which CSR authenticity and organizational identification represent better-supported mechanisms, while perceived organizational support remains a proposition for further testing. This distinction strengthens the conceptual contribution by showing not only what may explain CSR-related engagement, but also where the current evidence is uncertain.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

For managers, the clearest implication is that CSR should be experienced as authentic and consistent rather than treated only as external communication. Internal employee treatment should be broadly consistent with external CSR claims, and employees should be able to understand how CSR activities relate to organizational values and purpose.

The main limitation is the conceptual-review design. The paper does not collect primary data and therefore cannot establish causal relationships or estimate the relative strength of the proposed pathways in a new sample. In addition, the reviewed evidence comes from different contexts and operationalizations, which limits direct comparison across studies.

Future research should test the framework with original data, including mediation models or structural equation modeling, and should consider longitudinal designs. Studies could also distinguish internal from external CSR and examine whether CSR authenticity, employee values, organizational context, and national culture alter the strength of the proposed pathways.

CONCLUSION

CSR appears capable of supporting employee engagement when employees interpret responsible organizational behavior as authentic and meaningful and when it strengthens the value they attach to organizational membership. The reviewed evidence provides the strongest support for CSR authenticity and organizational identification as psychological pathways, while perceived organizational support remains a plausible but insufficiently established mechanism. The resulting multi-pathway framework offers a focused basis for future empirical testing and suggests that CSR is most likely to contribute to engagement when it is embedded consistently in everyday organizational practice.

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