

## Corporate social responsibility and employee loyalty: Role of pride and commitment

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**Abstract**—Recently, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is one of the most important issues that have received the attention of our whole society in all sectors. The current research attempts to examine the influence mechanism of corporate social responsibility on the loyalty of employees who work in the firms. This research also clarifies the mediating effects of employees' pride perception and commitment in the relationship between CSR performance of the firms and employees' loyalty intention. This research collected data through questionnaire survey using a convenient sampling method with the respondents who are employees in small and medium firms in Hanoi city, capital of Vietnam. Finally, 210 valid questionnaires collected that were utilized to test the hypothesis applying PLS-SEM approach with SmartPLS software. The results showed that CSR does not directly affect employees' loyalty behavior, but via the mediating effects of employees' pride perception and commitment with the firms. Moreover, perceived pride of employees has no direct effect on employees' loyalty behaviors with the firms.

**Index Terms**—Corporate social responsibility, loyalty, perceived pride, commitment, employee, SMEs

### I. INTRODUCTION

IN THE context of increasingly fierce competition today, in order to survive and develop, firms must have an appropriate firm strategy. Human resource policy is one of the important policies that firms need to pay attention to because after all, corporate governance is people management. Therefore, internal marketing becomes a very important issue that receives the attention of managers. After recruiting employees to work, they will be trained to match the firm with the job position. This is a time-consuming and costly process, so if the employee leaves the firm, it is a huge loss, especially for senior staff. The purpose of creating and maintaining employee motivation in the firm, increasing satisfaction and long-term working commitment at the firm [1]. Managers are always looking for and have pointed out many factors that determine employee engagement such as leadership style [2], working environment [3], working and learning environment [2], and CSR [4, 5].

CSR is one of the issues attracting the attention of the whole society and of scholars in many fields. Specifically in management, marketing [6], strategic management [7], working efficiency [8], marketing and customer behavior [9]. The research can approach from the perspective of the behavior of employees and customers in the relationship between CSR and their behavior. However, up to now, there are only very few studies focusing on clarifying the mechanism of impact of CSR on the long-term working commit-

ment of employees. In addition, many studies have demonstrated that CSR has a direct or indirect influence on employee behavior of the organization. [10-12]. Furthermore, recent studies suggest that further study of this relationship is needed [4, 5].

This study explores employee engagement with the firm by emphasizing CSR awareness. Forbes magazine, in an article published in 2012 on this issue, indicates that employee engagement. Employees are one of the leading trends in CSR. The article refers to a study by A Hewitt & Associates he visited 230 firms and reached 100,000 employees. The results show that the employees of the firm are more engaged when they actively carry out CSR activities. In addition, a study by the Association for Human Resource Management shows that firms implementing a sustainable development strategy have more loyal employees. Oliveira et al (2014) conducted a study focusing on this relationship, they point to four clusters of documents including "sustainability and ethics". One study shows that CSR awareness studies often focus on external aspects and outcomes, rather than internal factors and its interaction with these factors, for example, human resource management [13]. The authors point out that it is necessary to further study the relationship between CSR and employee engagement with other variables to provide a more comprehensive view of employee behavior with the firm. Moreover, Vietnam is a developing country, sustainable development is an urgent requirement because the hot development in recent years has posed problems about the natural environment. Therefore, people are increasingly interested in environmental issues, quality of life and consider this as the standard that firms need to be responsible for. Firms implementing CSR is a requirement not only of external customers but also of internal employees. Studies also show that when employees are aware of the corporate social responsibility they feel more proud of the firm [14] through which a commitment to firms will appear [15] thereby stimulating employee loyalty to the firm [4].

However, the above studies only stop at the study of individual relationships, there is no research to clarify the mechanism of impact of social responsibility on employee engagement through the mediating variable, pride and identification of employees with the firm. Therefore, this study wishes to clarify this mechanism of impact in the context of the hotel sector in Vietnam. Specifically, this study will answer the following questions:

Question 1: To what extent does the CSR affect employee loyalty?

Question 2: What role does pride play in the relationship between CSR and employee loyalty?

Question 3: What role does employee commitment to the firm play in the relationship between CSR and employee loyalty?

Question 4: What solutions can be proposed to hotels in improving CSR?

## II. BACKGROUNDED THEORIES AND RESEARCH MODEL

### A. Theory of organizational behavior

Developed in 1999 by Luthans, this theory focuses on personal characteristics that can be developed and improved through improving the working environment and method management. At the same time, this theory offers a new approach to improve employees' positive behavior through the assessment and development of psychological factors of employees, such as internal factors, identification and commitment. Luthans et al. (2004) argue that this research applies to people's psychological capacity in a positive way and the power of resources can be measured, effectively developed and managed for improvement nonstop at work [16].

To date, the concepts of positive psychology that are often mentioned in research and reflect quite comprehensively on the criteria of this theory such as hope, adaptability, optimism, and confidence [16, 17]. This combination of components is called the psychological competence of the employees. This theory has been applied vastly to understand positive behaviors of employees in all sectors of our life [17].

### B. Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

In this study, corporate social responsibility can be understood as a form of self-regulation of firms in firm activities. Social responsibility is the responsibility of firms and employers for the whole society, for the products they make, for consumers, for employees, or for natural resources and environment... Archie Carroll, CSR includes economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibility [18]. With the current trend of globalization, in order to be able to occupy more niches of the market as well as increase the brand value for firms, it is imperative that firms perform well through their social responsibility activities for society. There are six types of social activities that firms can do to become a corporate citizen: the first is charity work, the second is volunteering for the community, the third is selling products beneficial to the social community, fourth is promoting and promoting campaigns that benefit the community, fifth is marketing that has social meaning and finally marketing to change social behavior [19]. Any activity that wants to be done well must come from the core of the problem and CSR is not an exception. CSR in a large scale is the face of the country, and in a narrower scope, it is the face of the main firm, so employees are the core of the construction.

The influence of CSR is controlled by employees' perceived actions, so this positive relationship is very strong [20]. The perceived social responsibility of employees will trigger a chain of cognitive, emotional, and attitudinal behaviors. Drawing from the theory of emotional evaluation, it is concluded that perceived CSR is related to emotions (specifically, organizational pride), to work attitudes (specif-

ically, loyalty of employees) [21]. Immediately afterwards, the perception of person-to-organization fit, organization identification, and organizational support were perceived to mediate the positive and important relationship between CSR and affective commitment [22]. In other words, firms that perform well on social responsibility affect employees' attitudes and behaviors at work, improve employee loyalty and love for work as well as the firm [23].

### C. CSR and employee loyalty

There are many different conceptions of corporate social responsibility in modern society. From the community's point of view, the social responsibility of firms is the voluntary and self-consciousness of firms to carry out their responsibilities in production and firm in order to gain benefits for their firms, for the society. but must ensure sustainable development for the sake of economic, social and environmental protection. From the point of view of human resource management, the social responsibility of the firm is derived from the relationship between the firm and the employee, which has a positive relationship. In the current market economy conditions, technology and people are the two basic factors that determine the production and firm efficiency of firms [24]. Employee loyalty to the organization is reflected in two aspects: First, behavioral loyalty: each individual wants to receive rewards from the organization or vice versa, fulfilling his/her obligations to that firm. in a way that forces himself with his own actions [25] and second, attitudinal loyalty: is the similarity of employees' uniform behavior towards the organization and employees' active participation in the activities of the firm. Over time, close relationships are evident when employees think about their relationship with the firm and perform activities that clearly reflect the company's strategy. CSR leads to the sustainable development of firms, allowing firms to improve profits and create social values. On the contrary, if the firm implements CSR in a specific way and there is fairness among employees, reflected in the following tools: salary, bonus, supervision [25] or organizational culture as systems of core values, beliefs and behavioral patterns that create a unique identity for a firm.

Employee loyalty represents a work-related mental state characterized by feelings of excitement, accomplishment, enthusiasm, absorption, and dedication [26]. Firm through employee management / internal communication associated with employee loyalty; enhancing supportive communication behaviors that reduce employees' intention to leave the organization [27]. Another study proved that job skill diversity is the main predictor of employee loyalty. In addition, job characteristics and organizational support as well as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and loyalty mediate relationships that build money. subject and consequences [28]. According to another opinion, the loyalty of employees to the organization is even tighter when firms use CSR activities that allow employees to bring their full capacity to work, making them feel satisfied and proud [29]. Based on the links of previous studies, the paper makes a hypothetical proposal:

*H1: CSR has the effect of promoting employee loyalty to the firm.*

*D. CSR and employee perception of pride towards the firms*

Employee pride is a series of cognitive, emotional, and attitudinal behaviors about the organization. Specifically, there are two types of organizational pride. First, employees may experience persistent and brief feelings of pride based on the perception of a successful event related to the organization. Second, employees may have a perceived and enduring prideful attitude due to the general perception of the organization. Two types of organizational pride that build relationships and influence each other on customer service commitment, creativity, and revenue intent for the organization itself [31]. According to another study, employee creativity impacts two aspects of their organizational pride (namely, emotion and bravery) [32]. In addition, two aspects of organizational skepticism (emotional skepticism and behavioral skepticism) also had a significant impact on employees' emotional pride in industrial organizations [22]... However, this study focuses on corporate social responsibility (CSR) affecting employees' pride in the organization. Aspects of CSR (external and internal) have a strong influence on employee pride in the organization [33]. Therefore, from previous studies, we can easily see the correlation between CSR and employee pride with the organization. And this study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H2: CSR positively affects employees' pride in the firm.*

*E. CSR and employee commitment.*

To date there are many definitions of employee commitment, each research context, and different fields have different points of view. Kahn (1990) defined work commitment as the exploration of organizational members about their job roles [34]. [35] define work commitment as the psychological state in which employees dedicate themselves to their work through health, cognitive and affective performance on tasks. Moreover, when employees commit to work, they will try to perform the work to the best of their ability [35] and know how to handle and solve problems of their work to achieve success, contribute to high efficiency for the organization. Organizational commitment is “the relative strength of close and wholehearted commitment of an individual in a particular organization” [36]. Following that, organizational commitment includes unity, effort, and loyalty. This concept refers to a positive relationship with the organization that keeps them willing to invest their efforts to contribute to the success and development of the organization”. According to [36] “Organizational commitment is defined as a member’s psychological state in the organization, reflecting the degree of personal appeal acquiring or adopting organizational characteristics” Kalleberg et al (1996) argued that “Organizational commitment is defined such as the willingness to devote all their efforts to the organization, the close commitment to the organization and looking to maintain a relationship with the organization”. According to Cohen (2007), “employee commitment is a psychological state that ties individuals to the organization” [37]. This definition has been applied a lot in many studies about employee commitment with the organization. Previous research showed that CSR has a positive effect on employee trust and commitment [38, 39]. Therefore, this research hypothesis that:

*H3: CSR has a positive impact on employee commitment to the organization*

*F. Pride perception, commitment and employee loyalty*

When a member of a corporate organization has a strong sense of pride in the organization they work for, they will

take positive actions and do their best to be worthy of being a member of the firm. Some studies show that when they are proud, their commitment to the firm increases and all actions are taken for the firm [40]. Other studies also show an indirect effect of pride and commitment to the organization. In addition, the commitment to the firm will make employees more loyal to the firm and tend to work for a long time, considering the firm as a second home to build and develop together. From that, the research team hypothesized:

*H4: Employee pride perception has a positive impact on employee loyalty.*

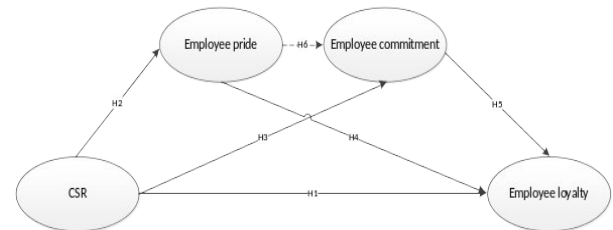
*H5: Employee commitment to the organization positively affects employee loyalty.*

*G. The mediating role of pride and commitment*

CSR is communicated to create awareness among employees in the firm and will have a positive effect. Especially when there is a crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic, many firms donate hundreds of billions of dong for epidemic prevention such as Vingroup, Vinamilk, etc. Employees in these firms will feel proud because of the good actions of firms where they work with the community, contribute to the development of the country, and protect the ecological environment. From there, employees will feel like they have done useful things for society. Usually, when employees feel really members, they will have positive behaviors that speak well for the firm and are ready to serve customers better. These things will stimulate them to be more loyal to the firm and stick with the firm longer. Furthermore, their active and regular participation in environmental activities within the organization strengthens their understanding of the environmental policy and objectives of the firm, which in turn leads to a sense of belonging and responsibility and commitment of employees to environmental issues [41]. Based on these theoretical arguments, the team proposes that:

*H6: CSR affects employee loyalty through the serial mediation of pride and commitment to the firm.*

From the above hypotheses, the research model is depicted as follows:



III. METHODOLOGY

To test the proposed hypotheses, this study applies the survey method through questionnaires and applies the PLS-SEM model using SmartPLS software.

*A. Questionnaire design*

To collect data, this study uses a questionnaire with employees working in small and medium firms in Hanoi. The research team selected this respondent because they work at the firm and they have a good understanding of the firm's activities in general as well as the CSR activities. Through which employees will have positive or negative feelings towards the firm where they work. This study applies the scales given by previous studies and adjusts them to suit the research context in Hanoi, Vietnam. All scales are in the form of a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agreeing.

In which, the CSR scale is applied from the research of [42] with 3 observed variables, one of the observed variables is “The firm I’m interested in contributes to social welfare activities”. Employee pride scale of the firm adjusted from the study of [43] with 3 observed variables, one of the observed variables is “I feel proud to be a member of my firm”. The employee commitment scale includes 6 questions that are applied and adjusted from the research of [44]. A typical observed variable of this scale is “I commit to doing my best to be effective”. Finally, the employee loyalty scale consisting of 8 questions is applied and adjusted from the research of [45]. One of the typical observed variables is “If I choose to work again, I still choose this firm”. To increase the reliability of the questionnaire, the research team applied the reverse translation method by linguists and firm administration experts.

#### B. Data collection

The research team applied a simple convenience sampling method through questionnaire surveys with staff at hotels in Moc Chau national tourist area (Son La). The questionnaire consists of 2 main parts (demographic question part and main question part) with 20 questions. So follow [46] The minimum number of sample sizes to be surveyed is 100. Results after 4 weeks, the research team collected 210 questionnaires. Demographic data includes 108 women, accounting for 51.4%; The age group from 25 to 45 includes 176 people, accounting for 69.6%; income from 5 to 10 million, including 122 people, accounting for 58.4%; There are 111 people with high school or vocational college qualifications, accounting for 52.9% and 99 people with 1 to 5 years of working experience, accounting for 47.1%.

### IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

This study applies the PLS-SEM path model to test the proposed hypotheses through SmartPLS software. Compared with other empirical analysis methods, the proposed research model is suitable for this method because it tests the complex relationship between variables. Moreover, the sample size is quite small, so this method is suitable to ensure reliability.

#### A. Measurement evaluation

To evaluate the scale, the study used Cronbach’s alpha ( $C\alpha$ ), composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). Research results showed that the loading factors range from 0.650 to 0.881 ( $>0.5$ );  $C\alpha$  values range from 0.71 to 0.86 and CR values from 0.84 to 0.89 are both greater than the minimum level of 0.7 according to Bagozzi’s (1988) [47]. The results show that the reliability of the scales is satisfactory; AVE values ranging from 0.51 to 0.68 all satisfy the 0.5 level according to Fornell’s (1981) [48]. The data demonstrated that the scales meet the requirements in terms of convergent validity (see Table 1).

Table 1. Measurement model

Variables	AVE	CR	$C\alpha$
CSR	0.69	0.87	0.77
Employee pride perception	0.63	0.84	0.71
Employee commitment	0.50	0.89	0.86
Employee loyalty	0.58	0.89	0.85

To test discriminant validity, this study first uses the AVE value of this variable in correlation with other variables (Fornell-Larcker criterion). Then, the analysis results show that the square roots of AVE are larger than the intercorrelation coefficient with other variables, proving that the scales ensure discriminant validity.

#### B. Structural modelling evaluation

After evaluating the scales by testing reliability, convergent value and discriminant value, the research team applies the PLS-SEM model to evaluate the relationship between the variables in the research model by using SmartPLS software. The analysis results show that the more employees are aware of the CSR, the more pride they feel about the firms ( $\beta = 0.40$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ,  $t$ -value = 4.56). Besides, when employees feel proud of the firm, it will promote commitment to the firm ( $\beta = 0.531$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ,  $t$ -value = 6.99). From there, employees will feel more attached and loyal to the firm where they work ( $\beta = 0.755$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ,  $t$ -value = 7.85). Similarly, CSR has a positive effect on employee commitment to the firm ( $\beta = 0.373$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ,  $t$ -value = 6.73). The results of data analysis indicate that CSR has no direct impact on employee loyalty to the firm ( $\beta = 0.05$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ,  $t$ -value = 0.71). Similarly, employee pride does not affect employee loyalty with ( $\beta = 0.039$ ;  $p > 0.1$ ,  $t$ -value = 5.06). In summary, the analysis results proved that H2, H3, H5 are accepted and H1 and H4 are rejected.

To test the mediating role of both employee pride and commitment to the firm in the relationship between CSR and employee loyalty to the firm, an intermediate model is established [47] and tested through the application PROCESS v3.3 integrated in SPSS by Hayes. The testing results showed that CSR has no direct impact on employee loyalty. But CSR has an indirect impact on employee loyalty through the intermediate variables that are pride perception ( $\beta = 0.24$ ;  $p < 0.001$ , [-0.0063, .0173]) and through both the employee’s pride with the firm and the employee’s commitment ( $\beta = 0.13$ ;  $p < 0.001$ , [.08, .20]). The above results demonstrate that the accepted hypothesis H6 is supported.

### V. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In today’s life when life is increasing, employees working in firms not only stand at the basic needs level in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs but have gradually moved to higher levels. They want to work at a firm that ensures safety and they also want the firm to perform well on CSR so that they feel more proud and commitment. For them, firm is not only the firm work but also their second home. This study approaches CSR from the perspective of employees in the firm, thereby examining the impact of CSR on employee pride perception, employee commitment to the firm and employee loyalty.

The study has the following theoretical contributions: Firstly, the study is one of the first to evaluate the relationship between CSR and employee loyalty in the context of the hospitality industry in Vietnam. This study is different from some previous studies when it showed that CSR has no direct effect on loyalty to the firm [5]. This is a very interesting and meaningful new discovery to help us better understand the mechanism of CSR’s influence on employee

loyalty. Second, research showed that CSR promotes employee loyalty through employee commitment to the firm. This means that when the firm practices the CSR well, employees will feel like they are doing good and meaningful work themselves. This is similar to what previous studies have suggested [49] but is considered in the new context of the hospitality industry in Vietnam. Third, research shows that CSR affects employees' pride in the firm, but pride perception is not enough to create employee loyalty in the firm [50]. This is an interesting finding because the logical thinking is that when employees are proud of the firm, they will tend to work for the long-term and be loyal to the firm.

Besides the theoretical contribution, the research also has some practical contributions as follows. Firstly, the research suggests for managers to understand the psychology of employees in the firm so that they can have effective management solutions. Specifically, firms need to perform CSR well and have communication solutions to employees so that they understand and have positive behaviors. In the article, it is shown that when employees perceive CSR of the firm, it will promote their pride in the firm, thereby promoting positive behavior of employees, improving the efficiency of production and firm activities. Secondly, managers understand the great role of good CSR implementation to employees, employees will form a commitment to the firm, considering the main firm as themselves so that they can promote dynamism and creativity and work efficiency. Moreover, when they see the firm as themselves, they will have behaviors to protect and promote the brand image of the firm with people around, in the social network community. Third, managers understand that the impact mechanism of CSR on corporate cohesion is a long and complex process, not directly but indirectly through promoting employee pride in the firm, thereby stimulating employee commitment, ultimately improving employee loyalty to the firm. The loyalty of employees to the firm is of great significance in stabilizing production and firm activities, avoiding creating disturbances in the firm. Because we all know that when employees quit, firms have to hire new people, it will take time and effort to recruit, train and foster so that they can perform the required jobs.

The study has some limitations as follows. Firstly, this study only focuses on employees at Moc Chau NTA, so it may not be representative of all employees in the hospitality industry in Vietnam. Second, the sample size is small (210), so it is reasonable to use the PLS-SEM model. However, the next study can increase the sample size more and apply other research methods. Third, the current study only considers two intermediate variables, which are the pride perception and commitment of employees to the firm, so many other important variables may be missed. Finally, the current study only considers corporate commitment as a first-order construct, future studies can go deeper by dividing commitment into categories such as affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment [51].

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