

Organisational Practices and the HR Role Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Engagement in the IT and ITES Sector: An HR Perspective

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Abstract—Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has moved from the periphery of business strategy to a position close to its centre, and among its less obvious effects is the influence it exerts on the people who work within an organisation. This paper examines the relationship between CSR and employee engagement through a human resource (HR) lens, with particular reference to the information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services (ITES) sector. Drawing conceptually on insights from research into workforce dynamics in this sector where engagement, communication, and a supportive culture were found to shape how employees relate to their organisations – the paper argues that CSR contributes to engagement chiefly through the meaning, pride, and sense of belonging it cultivates among employees. It reviews the contemporary literature on socially responsible HR, employer branding, and the human dimensions of sustainability, and considers how IT and ITES firms, competing intensely for skilled talent, can use CSR not merely as an external signal but as an internal force that deepens commitment. The paper concludes that the engagement value of CSR is realised through HR practice, and that authenticity rather than display is what distinguishes CSR that engages from CSR that does not.

Index Terms—Corporate Social Responsibility, Employee Engagement, Human Resource Management, IT and ITES Sector, Employer Branding, Organisational Commitment

I. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility has become a familiar feature of the modern organisation, expressing a commitment to act in the interests of society and the environment alongside the pursuit of profit. Much of the attention it attracts concerns its outward face reputation, branding, and relations with customers and communities. Less remarked upon, though no less important, is the way CSR reaches inward to affect the organisation's own employees, shaping how they feel about their work and how fully they give themselves to it. This inward effect is the concern of the present paper. Employee engagement the degree to which employees are absorbed in, committed to, and energised by their work has emerged as a central preoccupation of human resource management, not least because engaged employees tend to perform better, stay longer, and contribute more willingly than those who are merely present. The question this paper takes up is how CSR bears upon engagement, and why the connection between the two should run as strongly as the evidence suggests it does. The answer, it will argue, lies in the human meaning that responsible conduct carries for those who work under its banner. The discussion is set within the IT and ITES sector, where the competition for skilled professionals is fierce and the challenge of holding their commitment is correspondingly acute. It

draws conceptually on insights from research into workforce dynamics in this sector, in which engagement, organisational communication, and a supportive culture were found to influence how employees relate to new demands and to their organisations. The aim is not to present new empirical findings on CSR but to develop a conceptual, literature-grounded account of how, and why, socially responsible conduct deepens the engagement of employees – and of the part HR plays in making that happen.

II. Corporate Social Responsibility and the HR Function

Although CSR is often treated as a matter for strategy or marketing, a substantial part of its life is lived within the human resource function. It is HR that translates an organisation's broad commitments into the everyday experience of employees through fair treatment, ethical practice, opportunities for development, and a working environment that reflects the values the organisation professes. Reviews of the field have drawn attention to this HR dimension of CSR, mapping the many points at which responsible conduct and people management intersect (John & Tiwari, 2025). Where the two are aligned, CSR ceases to be an external gesture and becomes part of the fabric of working life. A growing body of work has linked human resource management explicitly to the broader sustainability agenda, arguing that the management of people is one of the principal means by which organisations advance their responsibilities to society (Campos-García et al., 2024). Socially responsible human resource management, in particular, has been shown to foster work engagement by strengthening employees' sense that they are supported and valued (Pimenta et al., 2024). The implication is that CSR and HR are not separate undertakings that happen to overlap, but mutually reinforcing dimensions of how an organisation treats and develops its people.

III. How CSR Fosters Employee Engagement

The link between CSR and engagement is best understood through the meaning that responsible conduct holds for employees. People generally wish to belong to organisations they can be proud of, and CSR offers a basis for that pride. When employees see their organisation acting with integrity toward society and the environment, they are inclined to identify with it more closely, to feel that their work serves a purpose beyond the transactional, and to reciprocate with greater commitment. Research has shown that perceived CSR fosters advocacy behaviour, prompting employees to speak well of and stand up for their organisation (Ahmad et al., 2022). This relationship is not unconditional. Studies have found that the engagement effect of CSR is shaped by intervening factors the strength of the employer brand, for instance, which conditions how perceived responsibility translates into commitment (Hosseini et al., 2022), and the generation to which employees belong, which colours how they interpret and respond to responsible conduct (Lee et al., 2023). The engagement value of CSR, in other words, depends on how it is perceived and by whom, a point of direct relevance to HR, whose task is to ensure that responsible conduct is both genuine and visible to those it is meant to reach. The conceptual grounding of this paper reinforces the centrality of perception and culture. In the workforce research from which it draws, employee engagement and a supportive organisational culture

emerged as influential in shaping how people relate to their organisations – the same conditions through which CSR makes itself felt. An organisation whose culture already values openness and support provides fertile ground for CSR to deepen engagement; one whose culture is indifferent offers far less.

Table 1. Pathways through which CSR Influences Employee Engagement

Pathway	How it operates	Indicative source
Meaning and pride	Responsible conduct gives employees a sense of purpose and pride in belonging, prompting advocacy on the organisation's behalf.	Ahmad et al. (2022)
Socially responsible HRM	Fair, supportive people practices signal care, fostering work engagement through perceived support and commitment.	Pimenta et al. (2024)
Employer brand (moderator)	The strength of the employer brand conditions how perceived CSR converts into engagement.	Hosseini et al. (2022)
Generational difference (moderator)	Employee generation colours how responsible conduct is interpreted and valued.	Lee et al. (2023)
Sustainability alignment	Linking HR to wider social and environmental goals strengthens the meaning employees attach to their work.	Campos-García et al. (2024)

Source: Compiled by the authors from the reviewed literature.

Figure 1. Pathway from CSR to Employee Engagement (HR Perspective)

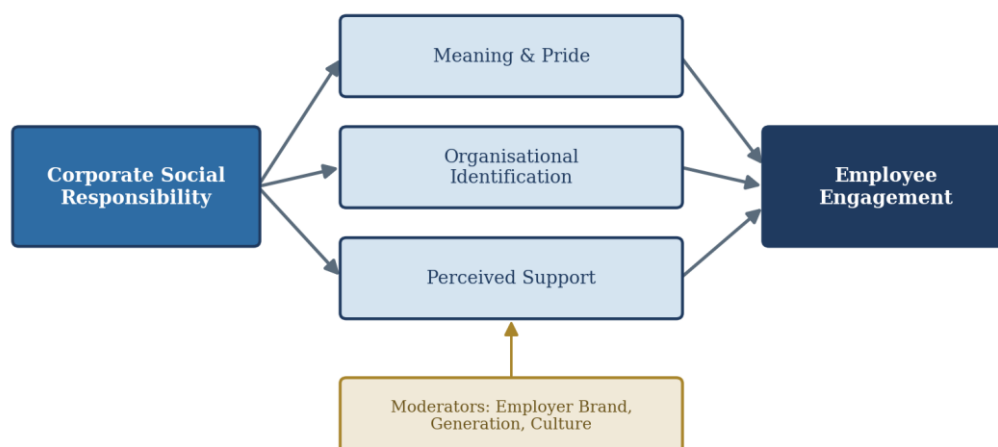


Figure 1. Conceptual pathway from CSR to employee engagement through human perception, moderated by employer brand, generation, and culture.

IV. CSR, Engagement and the IT and ITES Sector

Nowhere is the engagement value of CSR more consequential than in the IT and ITES sector, where organisations compete relentlessly for skilled professionals and where the cost of losing them is high. In such a setting, CSR offers a means of distinguishing an organisation as a place worth belonging to, strengthening the employer brand that helps to attract and retain talent. The sector's workforce, often young and attentive to

questions of purpose and values, is precisely the kind for whom an organisation's social conduct can weigh heavily in the decision to join, to stay, and to commit. Much of the recent literature situates CSR within a broader movement toward sustainability and responsible management, examining how organisations align people practices with environmental and social goals (Jiang et al., 2024; Ziyadeh et al., 2024; Zihan et al., 2024). For IT and ITES firms, the lesson is that CSR works best on employees when it is woven into the organisation's identity rather than appended to it when responsible conduct is something the workforce experiences in its own treatment and development, not merely something it reads about in a report. Engagement follows from authenticity, and authenticity is built through consistent HR practice.

V. HR Implications and the Question of Authenticity

For HR practitioners, the central implication is that CSR cannot be expected to engage employees unless it is credible to them. Responsible conduct that is confined to public relations, unmatched by how the organisation actually treats its people, is liable to breed cynicism rather than commitment. The engagement value of CSR is therefore inseparable from the integrity with which it is practised, and HR is the function best placed to ensure that integrity – by aligning internal practices with external commitments, by communicating responsible conduct honestly, and by involving employees in it rather than treating them as its audience. This places a constructive responsibility on HR. Engagement is deepened when employees are not merely informed of an organisation's CSR but invited to participate in it, finding in it an extension of their own values. The conceptual grounding of this paper, with its emphasis on communication and culture, points to the same conclusion: CSR engages most powerfully when it is communicated openly and embedded in a culture that employees recognise as genuinely their own.

Table 2. HR Levers for Translating CSR into Engagement in IT and ITES Firms

HR lever	Action	Engagement effect
Authentic practice	Align internal treatment of employees with external CSR commitments.	Builds credibility and trust
Transparent communication	Communicate responsible conduct honestly rather than as display.	Reduces cynicism, raises pride
Participation	Involve employees in CSR initiatives rather than treating them as an audience.	Strengthens identification
Employer branding	Use genuine CSR to position the firm as a place worth belonging to.	Aids attraction and retention
Cultural embedding	Weave responsibility into everyday culture and development.	Sustains long-term commitment

Source: Compiled by the authors from the reviewed literature.

VI. Conclusion

Corporate social responsibility contributes to employee engagement not through grand declarations but through the meaning, pride, and belonging it cultivates among those who work within an organisation. This paper has argued, on conceptual and literature-grounded terms, that the connection between CSR and engagement runs through human perception and is realised through human resource practice, and that in the talent-intensive IT and ITES sector this connection carries particular weight. The same conditions that shape engagement more broadly open communication and a supportive culture are the conditions through which CSR makes its influence felt. The practical message for HR is that the engagement value of CSR depends on authenticity. Responsible conduct deepens commitment only when employees recognise it as genuine and experience it in their own working lives. Managed with integrity and communicated with honesty, CSR becomes more than a statement of values; it becomes a source of the engagement on which organisational success increasingly depends. In a sector defined by the contest for talent, treating people responsibly is among the surest ways to secure their commitment.

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