Impact of Employees’ Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility on Organizational Citizenship Behavior: A Proposed Theoretical Model

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ABSTRACT

Perceived reality plays a more prominent role in shaping one’s attitudes and behaviors than the actual reality itself. Research on perceived corporate social responsibility (PCSR) has gained interest and this research study examines the specific relationship of PCSR with a discretionary behavioral construct, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Building upon social theories such as the social identity theory, social exchange theory, social learning theory, and social attribution theory, a conceptual framework is proposed that identifies the impact of internal and external moderators on the PCSR-OCB relationship. Through proposing the impact of external moderators, the researcher aims to bring in objectivity when assessing PCSR, a subjective construct. Further contributions to research and practitioners are highlighted and future avenues for research are discussed.

KEYWORDS

CSR, Employee, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Social responsibility at organizational-level and individual-level alike is being actively practiced and is highly noticeable in today’s era. The increased focus towards corporate social responsibility (CSR) has motivated practitioners to actively participate and identify the most profitable approaches. However, such strategic-driven intentions of organizations are readily differentiated by employees from value-driven motives of initiating CSR and is found to affect employees’ job satisfaction and job performance (Story & Neves, 2015; Vlachos, Panagopoulos, & Rapp, 2013). Moreover, with the growing application of CSR policies by organizations, studying the outcomes CSR leads to, has been highly sought after by researchers. The impact CSR policies have on the reputation of the firm, firm’s financial performance, consumer’s evaluation and choice of products/company, their loyalty, the firm’s position in the market, and firm’s internal capabilities have been extensively studied (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). While CSR policies impacting external stakeholders have been the focus of many CSR-outcome studies, relatively fewer researchers have looked into how CSR policies at an individual-level impact the internal stakeholders, specifically employees (Bolton, Kim, & O’Gorman, 2011).

One such concept that has been studied in terms of CSR’s impact is organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The ideology that exists behind OCB is the discretionary behavior that an employee exhibits in going beyond what is required, in order to contribute to his/her organization (LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002). Similarly, CSR also looks at the actions of an organization which indicates
its purpose of being socially responsible towards its internal and external stakeholders and doing so usually involves going beyond the firm’s interests and legal requirements (Bolton et al., 2011; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). Hence, both of these concepts relate to discretionary acts at the employee and organizational level. In spite of OCB being defined as a discretionary act, managers have been found to consider OCB when assessing a subordinate’s performance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Furthermore, organizations upon realizing the importance of other stakeholders (customers, employees, government, society etc.), in addition to shareholders, are now obligated to fulfill their demands of being a socially responsible organization (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). Hence, employees and organizations likewise have reached a point where such discretionary behavior i.e. OCB and CSR, is now required of them in order to continue survival.

As per the social attribution theory, perceived reality plays a more important role than the actual reality in defining one’s behavior and attitude. In a similar context, Shen and Zhu (2011) posit that an employee’s perception of the organizational policies has a stronger impact than the actual policies itself. Moreover, an employee’s perception of the organization’s CSR initiatives is empirically found to have a positive impact on employee’s OCB (Fu, Ye, & Law, 2014; Jones, 2010; Kim, Rhou, Uysal, & Kwon, 2017; Rupp, Shao, Thornton, & Skarlicki, 2013). While these studies identify the impact of perceived CSR on an employee’s OCB, not much is known in terms of what factors control this relationship. Considering the increasing demand of requiring employees to exhibit OCB and upon knowing that an organization through its CSR policies has the power to affect the extent to which an employee engages in OCB, it becomes crucial to identify the factors that strengthen or weaken this relationship and thereby motivate employees to exercise OCB more frequently.

Therefore, the main question that this research paper seeks to answer is what are the conditions that influence how an employee’s perception of the organization’s CSR policies impacts his/her OCB? Accordingly, the main objective of this paper is to provide theoretical support for the moderation impact on PCSR’s (perceived corporate social responsibility) relationship with OCB. The following sections provide a brief outlook on the methodology and an exhaustive literature review on the main constructs involved in this study namely, perceived corporate social responsibility (PCSR), and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Based on the extant literature, it is postulated how PCSR effects OCB. Further, propositions are made with regards to how internal (salience of CSR, meaningfulness of work, and generational gaps) and external moderators (ethical leadership, strategic CSR, and General CSR facilitation HRM) impact this relationship. The researcher makes use of various social theories to justify the propositions and to understand how these theories together enable a better understanding of the overall employee discretionary behavior. Lastly, a research framework is proposed to inform future research on PCSR-OCB relationship and to aid practitioners in understanding what is impacting employee OCB.

**METHODOLOGY**

Extant PCSR-OCB research has indicated the link of direct (Newman, Nielsen, & Miao, 2015; Story & Neves, 2015) and indirect (Fu, Ye, et al., 2014; Hansen, Dunford, Boss, Boss, & Angermeier, 2011; Kim et al., 2017; Ko, 2016) positive link between PCSR and OCB, where not much is known with regards to what effects the strength of this relationship. In order to fill in this theoretical gap, a literature search was run and empirical studies examining PCSR were looked at. Additionally, relevant theoretical studies and review papers further supplemented in conceptualizing the research model. Similar to Aguinis and Glavas (2012), the researcher here focused on two databases; EBSCO and ProQuest. To ascertain the quality of the research studies, specific journal criteria was applied where journals with an impact factor of 1 or more in the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) by Web of Science, or a ranking of A or more in the Australian Business Deans Council or a grade of 3 or higher in the British Academic Journal Guide were considered (Elbanna, Abdelzaher, & Ramadan, 2017). Furthermore, keywords relevant to the research topic were used, such as “perceived corporate social
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