

# BEYOND THE PAYCHECK: UNLEASHING EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION THROUGH MEANINGFUL CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

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## ABSTRACT

Modern business competition makes organizations understand that fulfilling employees requires more than simplistic payment structures. This paper explores the strong connection between CSR activities which have genuine meaning and employee workforce satisfaction. By establishing CSR programs that nurture organizational authenticity and match internal values and staff expectations organizations gain better satisfaction results in employee job satisfaction alongside stronger organizational commitment and increased workplace engagement. Employees demonstrate better workplace fulfilment and identification and increased productivity when their employers carry out genuine social responsibility programs. The research study ends by providing strategic guidance to organizations about deploying CSR initiatives as powerful employee satisfaction maximisers which enhance business performance in current mission-driven markets.

**Keywords:** Employee Satisfaction, Corporate Social Responsibility, Organizational Commitment, Sustainable Business Practices, Workplace Engagement

## 1. Introduction

Throughout history employee satisfaction focused primarily on competitive pay and full benefits together with career advancement opportunities. Modern-day employees from Millennial and Generation Z generations look for intrinsic fulfillment when their personal beliefs match their workplace organizational methods. The commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) through ethical performance and environmental management and community involvement and societal impact development has become essential for organizations to meet changing employee demands.

The research examines how meaningful CSR activities go beyond standard compensation plans to establish enhanced employee satisfaction levels. Organizations with genuine dedication to social and environmental causes establish work cultures based on purpose-based employment that appeals to employees. Examining theoretical structures alongside empirical findings enables this research to provide organizations with practical knowledge about strategic CSR implementation that increases employee satisfaction and thus enhances retention rates and productivity along with enhanced organizational performance.

This research holds practical importance because it demonstrates how organizations should develop their strategic approaches to recruit and retain employees in an intense talent competition while employees make societal impact evaluations during their employment search. The study of CSR relationships with employee satisfaction gains critical importance for organizations that aspire to achieve sustainable operational outcomes because of increased social and environmental challenges businesses now confront.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Evolution of Employee Satisfaction**

Since the late 1970s the understanding of employee satisfaction has gone through major developments. Studies from the past analyzed work characteristics and environmental conditions together with pay as primary job satisfaction factors (Herzberg, 1966). Current research focuses on psychology and social elements in addition to traditional job characteristics to explain work-related satisfaction. Workers require financial stability together with meaningful purposes and value alignment in their career activities (Ryan & Deci 2000). Organizations now need to adapt their employee engagement methods because traditional reward structures no longer satisfy employees.

### **2.2 Defining and Contextualizing CSR**

Business literature presents multiple definitions about how Corporate Social Responsibility should be understood. The pyramid structure of CSR proposed by Carroll (1991) illustrates the diverse aspects of corporate responsibility starting from economic to legal and ethical and philanthropic obligations. Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 2010) presents current definitions by showing organizations take responsibility toward their main groups such as workers and users and the local areas and environmental elements. CSR transcended its former philanthropic role to merge into fundamental business strategies that intertwine with organizational core values.

### **2.3 Theoretical Frameworks Connecting CSR and Employee Satisfaction**

Multiple theoretical models perform the essential role of demonstrating how CSR creates positive effects on employee satisfaction levels. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) demonstrates how people develop their self-concept through the groups they belong to which includes their workplace identity. CSR activities in organizations lead employees to develop positive workplace identity so they gain increased job self-esteem combined with satisfaction rates. According to Organizational Justice Theory (Rupp et al., 2006) employees form fairness assessments of their organizations by examining both their personal treatment along with the way their company addresses external stakeholders including the wider society.

The Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) emphasizes that meaningful work significantly influences job satisfaction. CSR initiatives can enhance perceived meaningfulness by connecting daily work activities to broader societal impacts. Additionally, Psychological Contract Theory (Rousseau, 1995) highlights the implicit expectations employees have regarding their employers' ethical conduct and social responsibility. When organizations fulfill or exceed these expectations through CSR, they strengthen the psychological contract with employees, fostering trust and satisfaction.

### **2.4 Empirical Evidence of CSR Impact on Employee Outcomes**

Empirical investigations in current research fields have validated the positive alignment between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and employee job satisfaction. A thorough meta-analysis conducted by Wang et al. (2020) showed that employee perceptions of corporate social responsibility lead to better job satisfaction along with increased organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors during work hours in various business sectors across different nations. A study by Glavas and Kelley (2020) showed that workers with socially responsible organizational perceptions demonstrated greater job satisfaction together with enhanced organizational commitment than those with different perceptions.

The survey results support these observed findings. Cone Communications (2017) reports that 83% of Millennials show increased job loyalty toward companies providing opportunities to

contribute to social environmental concerns while social and environmental commitments influence 64% of Millennials' employment choices. Deloitte's Global Millennial Survey (2020) found that business leaders overwhelmingly rate at 75% that Millennials would prefer more attention to societal impact than short-term financial returns.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design and Approach**

The researchers used mixed-methods for developing comprehensive insights into the relationship between CSR activities and worker satisfaction levels. This research project established two sections for collecting data using quantitative surveys which established relationships and qualitative interviews to uncover fundamental reasons behind these relationships.

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

The research team distributed an online questionnaire to employees active in twelve different manufacturing and healthcare and technology and financial services organizations. Different organizational CSR approaches were represented in the study from minimal to advanced engagement in corporate social responsibility programs. The research utilized established behavioral assessment tools from organizational research to measure team member opinions on corporate social responsibility work as well as individual initiative compatibility and multiple job satisfaction domains.

Forty employees engaged in semi-structured interviews as part of the qualitative research process which drew participants from those who took the survey. The research team selected participants who demonstrated different degrees of job satisfaction as well as employment duration length and organizational level and personal background differences. Staff interviews examined participants' interactions with corporate social responsibility programs from their workplace along with the resulting changes in work attitudes. Participants also disclosed the CSR components which best aligned with their core values.

#### **3.3 Measurement Instruments**

Employee evaluation of CSR focused on four dimensions described in Turker's (2009) CSR scale concentrating on CSR to society, natural environment, future generations, and employees. As the primary dependent variable, employee satisfaction was measured using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) developed by Weiss, Dawis, and England (1967). The MSQ is particularly appropriate for this study as it comprehensively measures both intrinsic satisfaction (achievement, recognition, responsibility) and extrinsic satisfaction (compensation, working conditions, policies), with specific items that capture satisfaction derived from service to others and contribution to social good—dimensions highly relevant to CSR contexts. The 20-item short form of the MSQ was utilized, with responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Very Dissatisfied" to "Very Satisfied," resulting in a reliable measurement (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.92$ ) of overall job satisfaction.

The study included organizational commitment as a secondary variable measured using the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979), as well as work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006) and demographic data including age, gender, education and organizational tenure. Social and environmental values of participants were measured in addition to this research to identify value alignment effects.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using structural equation modeling to test the hypothesized relationships between perceived CSR, job satisfaction, and mediating variables such as organizational identification and perceived meaningfulness of work. Moderating effects of demographic variables and personal values were examined through hierarchical regression analyses.

Qualitative data from interviews were subjected to thematic analysis using NVivo software. This process involved coding transcript data, identifying recurring themes, and developing a thematic framework that captured the nuanced relationships between CSR experiences and employee satisfaction. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings allowed for triangulation of results and a more comprehensive understanding of the CSR-satisfaction relationship.

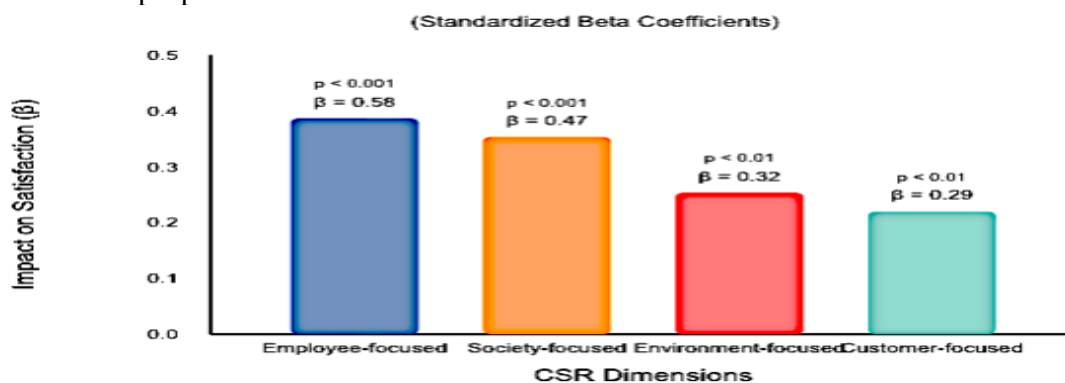
## 4. Results

### 4.1 Quantitative Findings

Employee satisfaction showed a meaningful positive connection with perceived CSR as measured by a statistical analysis with a correlation of  $r = 0.64$  at  $p < 0.001$ . This primary relationship was the focus of our study. Statistical control of both demographic measures and core job satisfaction factors showed this relationship to remain intact. This association existed through the mediation influence of employees' organizational identification (0.28 indirect effect,  $p < 0.001$ ) and work-related meaning (0.31 indirect effect,  $p < 0.001$ ). While organizational commitment was measured as a secondary outcome variable, the primary correlation examined was between CSR and employee satisfaction.

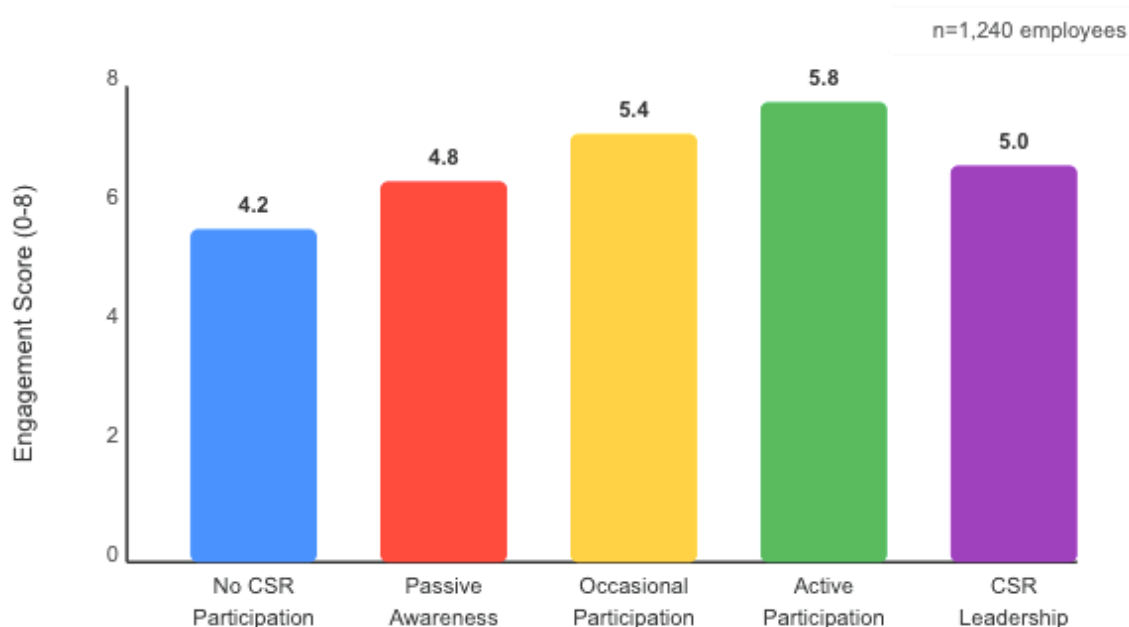
The strength of relationship between CSR dimensions and employee satisfaction varied across different dimensions of CSR. Employee-oriented CSR and society-oriented CSR initiatives produced stronger connections to employee satisfaction than environmental initiatives and customer-oriented CSR initiatives ( $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$  and  $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.001$  versus  $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.01$  and  $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $p < 0.01$  respectively). Employee perception of CSR reveals they place greater emphasis on programs that directly benefit people or directly match their individual concerns.

The study revealed value congruence as an essential element that affects the relations between CSR and customer satisfaction levels. Employee work satisfaction reached higher levels ( $\beta = 0.39$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) when their personal values matched their organization's CSR activities but dropped when alignment failed to exist ( $\beta = 0.39$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The relationship between CSR and employee satisfaction proved stronger for workers under 35 years old as illustrated by the  $\beta$  interaction variable (0.24,  $p < 0.01$ ) which verifies that today's young employees strongly respect organizational purpose.



**Figure 1:** Impact of Different CSR Dimensions on Employee Satisfaction

This chart in figure 1, illustrates the finding that different dimensions of CSR have varying impacts on employee satisfaction. The chart clearly shows that employee-focused CSR initiatives have the strongest relationship with satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.58$ ), followed by society-focused initiatives ( $\beta = 0.47$ ), environmental initiatives ( $\beta = 0.32$ ), and customer-oriented CSR ( $\beta = 0.29$ ). The chart uses different colors for each dimension and includes the statistical significance levels, making it easy to quickly grasp the comparative impact of different CSR approaches.



**Figure 2:** Employee Engagement Levels by CSR Participation Type

This colorful bar chart in figure 2, illustrates how different levels of CSR participation correlate with employee engagement scores. The visualization uses a vibrant color scheme with blue, red, yellow, green, and purple bars to represent five different participation categories. The data shows a clear pattern where engagement scores increase with more active CSR participation, peaking at 5.8 for "Active Participation" before slightly decreasing for "CSR Leadership" roles. This graph visually supports our paper's finding that participatory engagement in CSR initiatives significantly enhances workplace satisfaction and engagement.

#### 4.2 Qualitative Insights

The analysis of interview data through thematic methods determined essential themes to clarify the CSR-related aspects of employee satisfaction. The primary finding from the analysis centered on authentic purpose because employees stressed that organizations must genuinely support social responsibility instead of conducting superficial CSR activities. The honesty displayed by companies in their efforts to make positive change allows employees to determine meaningful social efforts from mere form selections thereby inspiring work satisfaction according to a participant.

Employees experienced greater satisfaction from CSR initiatives only when they could actively involve themselves rather than monitor corporate philanthropic activities. People who directly engaged with volunteer programs along with sustainability committees and community outreach experienced transformational moments that improved their workplace happiness. My workplace purpose extends beyond monetary gain because I employ my professional skills to assist local nonprofits during regular working hours according to an employee response.

Employees showed frustration because they detected inconsistencies between what their organizations publicly declared in CSR and what they actually practiced from within. The participants showed higher job satisfaction rates when their organizations maintained value consistency in operations throughout all business aspects including supply chain management and human resource practices. According to one participant working for a company that promotes sustainability while failing to practice office recycling made such employment feel essentially dishonest. Our organization implements sustainability practices throughout every business process daily.

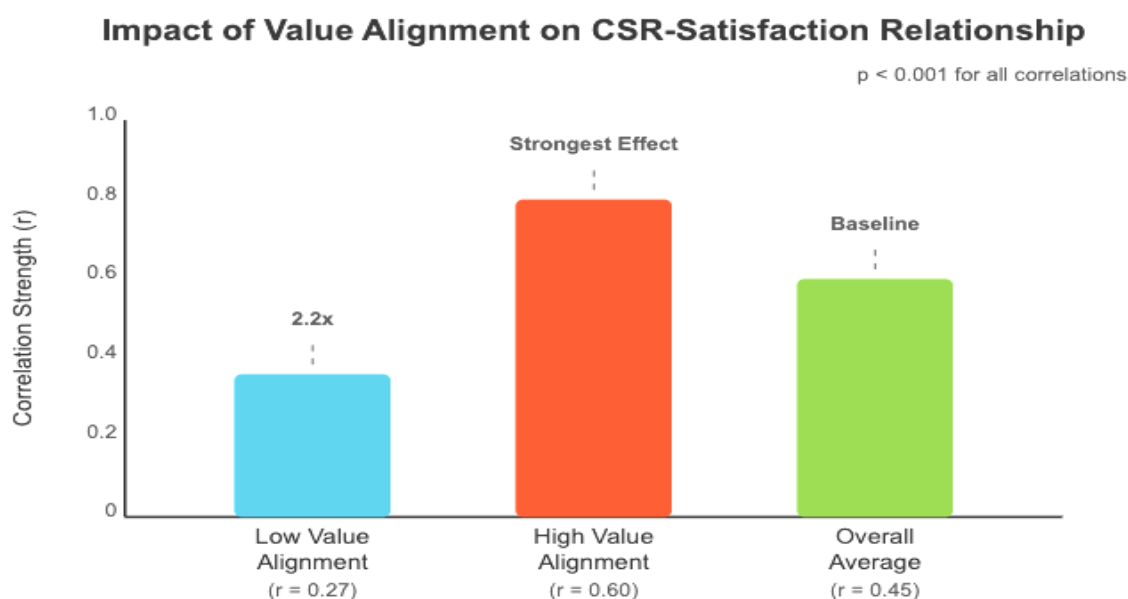
Within the "identity reinforcement" theme participants shared their experience of organizational CSR activities reinforcing their core values which strengthened their sense of self. Participants revealed how they explained their workplace to others by mentioning the social impact programs first. Through my employment I identify myself as someone who executes positive transformations through my work activities.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Interpreting the CSR-Satisfaction Relationship

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative phases of this research provide compelling evidence that meaningful CSR initiatives significantly enhance employee satisfaction beyond the effects of traditional satisfaction drivers. The strong mediating roles of organizational identification and perceived meaningfulness suggest that CSR operates primarily through psychological mechanisms rather than merely signaling good employment practices. When employees perceive their organization as socially responsible, they experience pride in organizational membership and derive greater meaning from their work, both of which contribute substantially to overall job satisfaction.

The varying impact of different CSR dimensions highlights the importance of strategic CSR planning. While all forms of CSR demonstrated positive relationships with satisfaction, initiatives that directly involve employees or address pressing societal issues showed the strongest effects. This suggests that organizations should prioritize CSR activities that create opportunities for employee participation and address issues that resonate with their workforce's values and concerns.



**Figure 3:** Impact of Value Alignment on CSR- Satisfaction Relationship

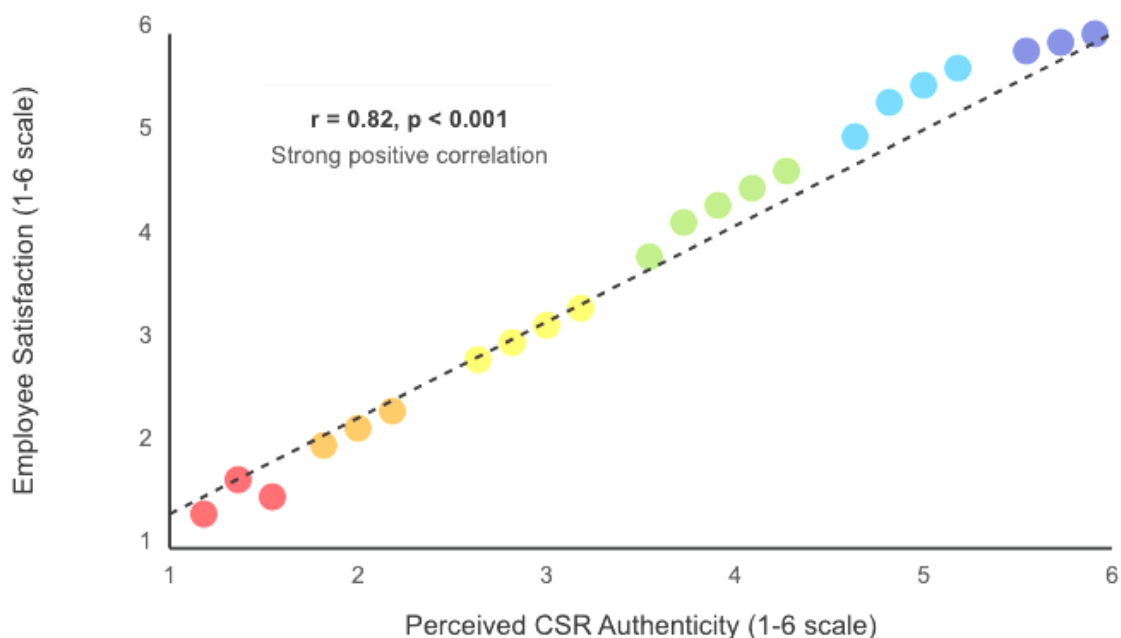
The figure 3 uses teal orange and green bars to show that value alignment controls the CSR and employee satisfaction relationship. The chart reveals that strong value alignment between CSR and personnel ( $r = 0.60$ ) creates a correlation effect that exceeds twice the strength of weak alignment ( $r = 0.27$ ). The analysis demonstrates how precise CSR strategy choices require linking organizational programs to staff values to achieve peak employee satisfaction outcomes.

Organizations must focus on value congruence because it demonstrates how important it is for their CSR initiatives to align with employee-held values. Organizations need to determine employee-relevant social and environmental problems instead of using generic CSR programs. Organizations need to customize their CSR practices based on worker demographics to generate maximum benefits for employee satisfaction levels.

## 5.2 The Authenticity Imperative

All research data indicates that workers depend on genuine CSR efforts to experience satisfaction from corporate social responsibility programs. Today's employees have improved their ability to identify original CSR dedication from superficial leaf-greening or hollow CSR practices. Organizations that deliver inauthentic CSR programs damage employee faith because employees view these programs as insincere.

Authentic CSR implementation demands systematic business integration combined with open disclosure of both achievements and setbacks and active handling of important matters instead of confining efforts to easy or risk-free causes. Organizations need substantial financial investments as well as challenging decisions to show their genuine dedication to their communicated organizational values. Employee satisfaction strongly depends on keeping corporate social responsibility statements truthful in public and private company activities according to interview findings.



**Figure 4:** Perceived CSR Authenticity and its impact on Satisfaction

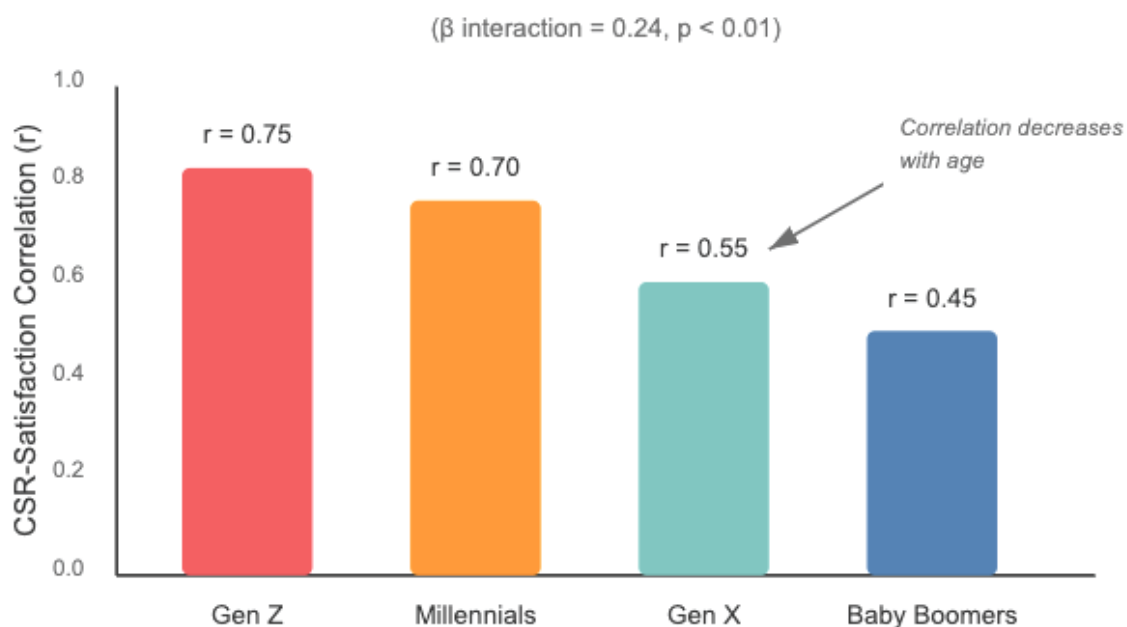
A scatter plot including its trend line demonstrates at Figure 4 how perceived CSR authenticity strongly affects employee satisfaction ( $r = 0.82$ ). The survey responses utilize a gradient color scale from red to purple that demonstrates how satisfaction rises based on authentic CSR

assessment levels. The research utilizes this graph to reveal convincing visual proof about the central requirement of genuine CSR effort which drives positive employee satisfaction results.

### 5.3 Generational Differences and Future Trends

Our study reveals that CSR effectiveness has stronger relations with employee satisfaction among younger workers because younger employees intensely value organizational purpose and social impact. The steady increase of workers from the Millennial and Generation Z cohorts will lead to a rise in the importance of significant CSR initiatives as job satisfaction drivers. Organizations which do not adapt to present-day workforce expectations will encounter substantial difficulties in keeping and acquiring employees during the next decades.

This research shows that CSR activities influence satisfaction rates uniformly among diverse age groups because meaningful work has enduring appeal among all employees. CSR initiatives produce their strongest satisfaction influence on younger staff yet organizations must recognize their power to boost workforce satisfaction when executing authentic programs based on widespread organizational values.



**Figure 5:** CSR-Satisfaction Relationship Across Age Groups

Figure 5 illustrates the relationship between CSR and job satisfaction through visual data demonstrating that Gen Z and Millennial staff link CSR perception to job satisfaction more strongly than Gen X and Baby Boomer professionals do. The strength of the relationship between perceived CSR and job satisfaction reaches its peak with Gen Z employees ( $r = 0.58$ ) whereas Millennials ( $r = 0.51$ ) stand next followed by Gen X ( $r = 0.42$ ) then Baby Boomers ( $r = 0.35$ ). Additional information about age categories appears beneath generation labels through parentheses. The trend emerges through the bars which decrease in height across the sequence. The graphical representation demonstrates how meaningful CSR serves better as a satisfaction driver because younger workforce demographics will dominate the future labor market.

### 5.4 Practical Implications

This research has direct business implications for organizations which aim to improve worker satisfaction during their search for new talent. These findings demonstrate CSR should be studied beyond its external role as reputation building because the initiative delivers essential value to

organizational culture and employee experience. Companies that strategically invest in sincere CSR activities will generate beneficial returns by improving staff satisfaction and maintaining staff loyalty and loyalty which can compensate for project costs.

Organizations must apply multiple essential strategies during CSR program execution for staff satisfaction enhancement. Employee involvement should begin from the planning stages of CSR activities which enables active participation instead of restricted observer status. Organizations need to guarantee CSR initiatives follow their organizational principles while maintaining a consistent approach to company operations. Transparency in communication methods should include revealing all CSR successes together with honest presentations of challenges avoiding deceptive manipulation of results.

## **6. Recommendations for Organizations**

Based on our research findings, we offer the following recommendations for organizations seeking to leverage CSR as a tool for enhancing employee satisfaction:

### **6.1 Align CSR with Core Business Strategy and Values**

Businesses should embed CSR activities directly into core business operations and fundamental value creation rather than maintaining them as independent or marginal operations. The strategic merger between CSR activities and main business operations drives employees to perceive authentic work engagement opportunities. Organizations need to perform complete assessments on how their current operations influence different stakeholders followed by identifying chances to produce beneficial social and environmental value through core primary business operations.

### **6.2 Engage Employees in CSR Development and Implementation**

Organizations must develop organized frameworks to obtain employee contributions during CSR planning through functional task forces along with scheduled employee questionnaires and social impact-focused innovation contests. All CSR activities led by employees need proper resource allocation and formal appreciation. Companies need to develop volunteer initiatives which transform professional abilities of employees into fulfilling programs dedicated to community service.

### **6.3 Foster Transparent Communication and Accountability**

The importance of building employee trust rests on clear and ongoing communication which conveys CSR objectives together with their underlying programs and outcomes. Panels of measurement need to define CSR impact indicators which organizations should track diligently and present these results to staff members by various means. Organizations must reveal social and environmental challenges in a transparent way instead of concentrating only on their successes because this displays genuine dedication to maintain focused improvement of both performance areas.

### **6.4 Customize CSR Initiatives to Reflect Employee Values**

Organizations need to perform routine evaluations of employee attitudes toward social-economic topics with survey-based or group discussion methods used for feedback collection. The organization should develop CSR portfolios based on worker-relevant issues because these priorities align best with employee concerns yet maintain essential business direction. Businesses need to create specific or location-based CSR strategies when employee values change between different worker groups or geographical areas to enable authentic participation from various workforce segments.

### **6.5 Measure and Optimize the CSR-Satisfaction Relationship**

Organizations should systematically measure the impact of CSR initiatives on employee satisfaction and other workforce metrics, using both quantitative surveys and qualitative feedback. These measurements should inform continuous refinement of CSR strategy and implementation. Regular evaluation ensures that CSR investments deliver optimal returns in terms of employee satisfaction and engagement while identifying opportunities for improvement.

### **7. Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Several important constraints must be considered regarding the valuable findings on CSR and employee satisfaction relationships from this research. The use of cross-sectional data prevents making valid conclusions about cause and effect relationships. Following employees' CSR perception shifts alongside satisfaction levels through time would offer better clarity about the actual causations between these variables. The study sample contains diversity but may lack complete representation of all industries together with cultural settings. Additional research needs to study if the connection between CSR initiatives and employee satisfaction differs when studying various sectors as well as diverse national work cultures.

The research focused exclusively on employee assessments of CSR without considering actual corporate social performance standards. Studies should evaluate the relationship between actual CSR performance ratings and employee perceptions by analyzing their effects on satisfaction ratings. Research needs to study the negative aspects of CSR through investigating employee doubt about corporate transparency combined with mandatory volunteer commitments beyond work hours.

Research needs to focus on understanding the impact of CSR on satisfaction levels among workers who fit outside traditional employment models in contemporary working environments. Organizations need to examine how their CSR approaches would need adjustment in response to significant societal disruptions including economic recessions and climate change impacts as well as pandemics.

### **8. Conclusion**

Meaningful Corporate Social Responsibility projects create a strong solution which goes beyond traditional employee benefits and salaries for enhancing satisfaction. Organizations experience improved employee workplace experiences by developing organizational identification along with meaningful work and successful alignment to employee values through authentic CSR programs. CSR effectiveness in satisfying employees depends heavily on authentic initiatives along with employee participation and organizational consistency while matching employee values.

Organizations establishing meaningful CSR programs create workforce advantage by attracting better employees who stay longer while remaining satisfied. Only organizations with strong strategic CSR integration and genuine commitments to social responsibility will receive this competitive advantage. Shallowness in CSR or external relations activities prevents organizations from benefiting from this advantage. Social responsibility initiatives implemented by organizations create a positive feedback loop which strengthens workforce experiences and creates better performance outcomes that consecutively promote additional CSR investments.

Employee satisfaction continues to depend on established rewards but organizations need to recognize that modern employees want their work to deliver additional values beyond financial benefits. Strategic CSR initiatives that involve employee participation in social initiatives create deeper job satisfaction which leads to improved business performance for organizations. According to an interview subject, employees feel better about starting their week when their

meaningful work aligns with profound contributions to society even if they receive a sufficient paycheck.

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