



The Effects of Perceived Substantive and Symbolic CSR on Employees' Outcomes: A Behavioral Approach

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Abstract

Recently, the interest in the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has expanded beyond traditional laws, institutional pressures, and macro-level perspectives, to also encompass its micro-level, incorporating employees' positive and negative work-related attitudinal and behavioral outcomes within organizations.

By differentiating between substantive and symbolic CSR practices, the present study examines the effect of employees' substantive CSR perceptions, versus symbolic CSR, on their extra-role behaviors both directly and indirectly, through organizational embeddedness serving as the underlying mechanism.

Employing a convenient sample of 445 employees from a wide range of governmental and private organizations, and utilizing the Structural Equation Modelling Technique; the findings have significantly highlighted the positive indirect effect of employees' substantive CSR perceptions on their organizational citizenship behaviors, via the organizational embeddedness full mediating role. In contrast, non-significant direct and indirect influences of employees' symbolic CSR perceptions on their OCB have been recorded.

Overall, the study findings underscore that employees' awareness of CSR activities as substantive fosters their positive outcomes (such as organizational embeddedness, and extra-role behaviors); whereas employees' perceptions of them as merely symbolic are not sufficient to promote these positive outcomes.

Keywords: Employees' Corporate Social Responsibility Perceptions, Substantive CSR, Symbolic CSR, Organizational Embeddedness, Employees' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors.

Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is usually perceived as a crucial organizational practice that plays a vital role in businesses, due to its positive influences, such as organizational performance, sustainability, and employees' positive outcomes (Nejati and Shafaei, 2023; Yassin and Beckmann, 2025). CSR also participates in fighting poverty, performing in reasonable ways, and encouraging fair practices, especially in developing countries (Arsic, Stojanović and Mihajlović, 2017).

In this regard, responsibilities of the organizations encompass economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic (discretionary) dimensions, which collectively influence organizational activities (Carroll, 1991; Carroll and Shabana, 2010). Accordingly, organizations need to maintain a balance between their interests and the societies in which they operate, so that CSR is considered as a real commitment between organizations and their different stakeholders, not just to their owners (Carroll and Shabana, 2010).

Although CSR has received considerable attention in prior research, it still attracts both theoretical and practical contributions, and offers multiple avenues for progress and success (Yassin and Beckmann, 2025; Liu, Ijlal, Hanif, Khurshid, and Ahmed, 2022).

From this perspective, scholars have different approaches to CSR. While some have adopted an *institutional approach*, and studied why and when organizations apply CSR programs as a result of laws, institutional, and stakeholders' pressures (i. e. Jastram, Otto, and Minulla, 2023), others have widely applied the *stakeholders' theory*; to determine its effects over different external stakeholders, such as customers' behaviors (i. e. increasing their intentions to purchase, their brand loyalty), as well as on brand equity (Sonia, Lehri, Rao, Othman, Babu, and Joseph, 2024); customer satisfaction and loyalty (Gezahegn, Durie and Kibret, 2025); and customer citizenship and participation behaviors (Mubushar, Cerchione, Rasool, Centobelli and Morelli, 2025).

Although most studies have focused on the *CSR macro level of analysis*; still, there is an essential requirement to focus on its *micro foundations (i. e. its micro level of analysis)*, and embrace some organizational behavioral insights. In other

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words, the focus should shift towards studying employees' CSR perceptions or attributions, rather than studying the objective CSR actions from the organization's perspectives (Ng, Yam, Aguinis, 2019). Thus, a growing scholarly attention has been further directed to examining the CSR's novel behavioral approach, and explaining its usefulness and necessity (Aguinis, Villamor and Gabriel, 2020; Remmer and Gilbert, 2025; Yassin and Beckmann, 2025).

Research Problem

To date, scholars adopting the new behavioral perspective have called for testing the degree to which employees perceive CSR practices as either embedded into (substantive), or peripheral (symbolic) to the organizations' key functioning. They have urged further investigation of those perceptions' influences on employees' attitudes and behavioral actions (i. e Aguinis, et al., 2020; Manzoor, Ullah, Ullah, Khattak, Han, and Yoo, 2023; Nejati and Shafaei, 2023; Shahzadi, John, Qadeer, Jia, and Yan, 2024). Moreover, Remmer and Gilbert (2025) have called in their recent meta-analytic study, for expanding more studies in the micro-CSR research, by embedding key actors' perspectives and interactions, and by assessing organizational outcomes.

One of the most important behavioral outcomes resulting from employees' CSR attributions is their in-role performance, through several mechanisms such as organizational identification and commitment (i. e Alnehabi and Al-Mekhlafi, 2023). However, there is still a need to study employees' perceptions influence over their discretionary extra-role behaviors (Yassin and Beckmann, 2025), especially in the case of public sector employees (Raza, Hamid and Ghani, 2023).

In this context, organizational citizenship behaviors have been chosen due to their positive effects over both internal and external stakeholders; so that those discretionary behaviors would increase organizations' internal harmony, and performance; in addition to contributing to service delivery, reputation, and customer satisfaction. Nevertheless, there are limited investigations of the main processes that would explain how employees' perceptions regarding CSR effectiveness may affect employees' OCB still exist, especially in the case of developing countries (Dukhaykh and Alshahrani, 2025).

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Moreover, further appeals have called for incorporating the underlying mediational processes (Hameli and Yaslioglu, 2025; Ng, et al., 2019; Yassin and Beckmann, 2025). Namely, there is a need to understand and explain why employees would respond positively to their organization's CSR initiatives, even when those initiatives do not offer employees considerable self-centered advantages (Hericher, Bridoux, and Raineri, 2023).

In this regard, organizational embeddedness (OE) has been suggested as a novel explanatory factor to mediate employees' substantive and symbolic CSR perceptions-their organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) relationships, and examine the various desirable and undesirable employees' outcomes of CSR activities (Aggarwal and Singh, 2022; Yassin and Beckmann, 2025). Organizational embeddedness (considered as an essential dimension of job embeddedness JE), is chosen as a job attitude construct, that expresses a psychological relationship between employees and their organization on the long run, relying on cumulative positive experiences (Crossley, Bennett, Jex, and Burnfield, 2007; Ng, et al., 2019). It also captures employees' global feelings towards their organization; which in turn may affect employees' positive outcomes (Ng, et al., 2019).

Building on the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), and the social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael, 1989); prior research has clarified that person organization fit (as an OE dimension) is considered as an underlying mechanism, by which employees would collect some information regarding their organization (in other words, they would perceive the CSR practices as substantive or symbolic); which in turn result in their evaluations about values' congruence between them and their organizations. Accordingly, employees reciprocate with high or low person-organization fit, and performance (Donia, Ronen, Tetrault Sirsly, and Bonaccio, 2019). In addition, person-organization fit has been found to play the full mediating role on the employees' perceptions regarding internal CSR activities and their OCB (Dukhaykh and Alshahrani, 2025).

Moreover, when employees perceive that CSR initiatives are aligned with organizational values, they would be more inclined to demonstrate beneficial behaviors for their organizations and society (He, Zhang, H. and Morrison, 2019;

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Iqbal and Parray, 2024). At the same time, further research is needed to address the variables and processes affecting employees' OCB; with particular attention to the job embeddedness factor (Ikram, Samreen, Rehan, and Ali, 2024; Mansour, 2022; Sakinah, Muhandi, Mulyaningsih, 2023).

From the above-mentioned calls and results, it can be equally argued that the importance of studying both positive effects resulting from employees' substantive CSR, and negative outcomes of symbolic CSR perceptions is still unfulfilled (i.e. employees' OCB). Thus, the current study aims at studying the effects of both employees' substantive and symbolic CSR perceptions on their outcomes (OCB); and investigating OE as a mechanism linking employees' perceptions, regarding substantive and symbolic CSR, to their extra role behaviors (OCB).

This study also carries empirical importance; by adding to the micro-CSR stream, through testing organizational embeddedness as a novel attitudinal factor on the employees' CSR interpretations and their OCB relationships. It also holds practical importance for organizations; as the findings would help managers in designing and carrying out better CSR practices that employees perceive as substantial for serving different stakeholders; thereby, enhancing their positive attitudes and behaviors; and reducing their negative outcomes.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

As previously mentioned, some recent scholarly appeals have been introduced to study the various outcomes of employees' perceptions regarding micro-level CSR; through different mechanisms and processes (i.e Remmer and Gilbert, 2025; Yassin and Beckmann, 2025). Thus, in response to those urgent calls, the present study adopts the suggested novel approach, rather than the traditional ones; in order to capture both positive and negative behavioral outcomes, resulting from employees' perceptions concerning their organizations' substantive and symbolic CSR activities; as well as the processes underlying those relationships as follows:

The Behavioral Corporate Social Responsibility Perspective

Micro-CSR is defined as the study of how employees perceive, evaluate, and respond to their organizations' corporate social responsibility initiatives (Girschik, Svystunova and Lysova, 2022; Gond, El Akremi, Swaen, and Babu, 2017; Manzoor, et al., 2023; Zhao, Wu, Chen, and Zhou, 2020).

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This behavioral CSR approach was suggested earlier by Rupp and Mallory in 2015; to go beyond traditional firm- and institution-centered perspectives, and facilitate a thorough understanding of how the CSR may result in both positive, and unintended negative consequences. In 2016, Donia and Tetrault Sirsly further differentiated between *CSR initiatives focusing on a main cause which benefits others*, and those *focusing on acquiring benefits for the organization itself*. This distinction sheds light on employees' propensity to categorize those organizational behaviors as *selfless (embedded)*, as opposed to *self-serving (peripheral)*; and permits assessing employees' perceptions of both types, along with their positive and negative outcomes.

Later, Donia, Tetrault Sirsly, and Ronen (2017) referred to *real genuine CSR or interpreting the organization as a giver (achieving social justice and responsibility)*, as opposed to *greenwashing via impression management or perceiving the organization as a taker (achieving wealth and power)*. Accordingly, employees' CSR perceptions can result into greater or less individual-level advantages to their organization. Substantive CSR are perceived as serving the common good, and would generate positive outcomes, while, symbolic ones are perceived as achieving self-interest, for benefiting the organization's external image, and increasing profits, or as a reaction to interest groups' pressures, and would result in some negative outcomes (Castro-Casal, Vila-Vázquez, and García-Chas, 2024; Donia et al., 2019). In other words, this represents "the CSR dark side" (Aguinis, et al., 2020).

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

The initial OCB conceptualization was presented by Smith, Organ, and Near (1983), who introduced OCB as the discretionary behaviors which are not regarded as mandatory in the organization, and depend on the employees' personal will. Those behaviors are not included in the organization's formal rewarding system, they are subtle by nature, and are not easily detected. They are also classified into *altruism and generalized compliance* dimensions (Bezci, 2021).

Subsequently, Organ (1988) defined OCB as discretionary behaviors in their nature, that are not considered as part of employees' formal duties or requirements, yet they promote the effective functioning of the organization. He classified them into *altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue* types.

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OCB activities are also considered as extra-role behaviors (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter, 1990; Williams and Anderson, 1991). In this regard, Williams and Anderson (1991) classified OCB as employees' actions directed towards other employees within the organization (*i.e.*, OCB-I), or towards the organization itself (*i.e.*, OCB-O). Previous research termed the OCB-I as *altruism*, while labeling OCB-O as *generalized compliance* (e.g. Smith, et al., 1983). In 1997, Organ has further modified his definition of OCB, describing it as the behaviors that contribute and enhance social and psychological contexts which support task performance.

Recently, scholars have also declared that OCB is considered as a work behavioral form that is usually non-visible or taken into account. It must be preserved and strengthened by the organization with the reward system (Haryati, Widodo and Widodo, 2024). Those behaviors also incorporate positive and constructive actions which employees willingly engage in, to support their colleagues, and benefit the organization (Li and Traiwannakij, 2024).

Accordingly, and in line with the above-mentioned behavioral approach, and the urgent calls for investigating how employees' CSR perceptions influence their positive and negative outcomes, as well as the underlying mechanisms (Hericher, et al., 2023; Khaskheli, Jiang, Raza, Qureshi, Khan, and Salam, 2020; Ng, et al., 2019; Raza, et al., 2023); the current study presents the relationships under investigation, and their related outcomes as follows:

Perceived Substantive and Symbolic CSR and OCB

CSR micro-research scholars have mainly relied on several theories. According to the social exchange theory, employees reciprocate positive workplace attitudes and behaviors with their organization when they perceive that it offers them valuable benefits (Blau, 1964). Additionally, in reference to stakeholders' theory (Freeman, 1984), CSR advocates contend that different organizations have obligations towards various stakeholders (Ali, Yin, Manzoor, and An, 2023). Moreover, the deontic theory of justice, represents a strong framework for studying how employees respond both emotionally and behaviorally, when they observe that their organization acts fairly or unfairly towards another party (Hericher, et al., 2023).

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Also, grounded on the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), employees are likely to feel prouder of their organization and be more identified with, when it goes beyond their own interests and advocates its different stakeholders' well-being (in other words, when it would be involved in substantive CSR). In this case, if those employees perceive that CSR practices are conducted by an authentic and real desire to contribute to the well-being of the various stakeholders and society, they would then perceive those initiatives as substantive, generating pride and belonging feelings, which will stimulate them to go beyond their formal jobs, and become more engaged in voluntary work behaviors (Afridi, Afsar, Shahjehan, Khan, Rehman, and Khan, 2023). Moreover, those positive feelings towards their organization are usually transferred into voluntary behaviors; and vice versa for symbolic CSR attributions (Castro-Casal, et al., 2024).

Accordingly, prior CSR researchers have been interested in studying how employees' individual positive outcomes are influenced by their CSR perceptions (Castro-Casal, et al., 2024). For example, a positive influence of public sector employees' CSR persuasions over their OCB has been recorded (Raza, et al., 2023). Moreover, whenever employees perceive their organizations' CSR initiatives positively, they would be more engaged in behaviors exceeding their formal responsibilities (Ahmad, Ahmad, Islam, and Kaleem, 2020; Aggarwal and Singh, 2023; Ali, et al., 2023; Aukhoon, Junaid, and Parray, 2024; Bezci, 2021; Furtado, Moreira, Rodrigues, and Mota, 2024; Iqbal and Parray, 2024; Khan, Qureshi, Hussaini, Abbas, and Munawar, 2023; Khaskheli, et al., 2020; Li and Chen, 2023; Li and Traiwannakij, 2024; Tian and Phromphithakkul, 2024). Furthermore, employees' substantive CSR attributions have strengthened the CSR perceptions-voluntary pro-environmental behaviors positive relationship, while employees' symbolic CSR ones have weakened this relationship (Afsar, Al-Ghazali, Rehman, and Umrani, 2020).

In their recent meta-analytic review, Hasan, Singh, and Kashiramka (2024) revealed that employees' perceptions of their organizations' CSR promote their OCB. Furthermore, employees' perceptions regarding internal and external CSR initiatives positively affected their OCB towards coworkers (OCB-I), via family-supportive supervisor behaviors' intervening role (David, Kim, Kwan, and Liu, 2024). Similarly, employees' CSR perceptions are further translated into

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discretionary behaviors towards other employees inside the organization (OCB-I) (Aguinis and Glavas, 2019). Meanwhile, Rupp, Shao, Thornton, and Skarlicki (2013) argued that employees have better knowledge of their OCB-Os, compared to their coworkers or supervisors (OCB-I). Additionally, employees' perceptions of both employee-oriented CSR and customer-oriented CSR positively impacted employees' OCB (Rustam, Fatima, Tamerlan, Rafig, and Farida, 2024). However, a different result has been also recorded, showing that both embedded and peripheral CSR have positively impacted employees' OCB (Liu, et al., 2022).

Recent research has shown interest in studying the effects of CSR practices on employees' behaviors in some Egyptian organizations. For instance, Yassin, Akel and Abd Rabou, (2025) revealed that green behaviors are considered as essential components in Egyptian hospitals. Furthermore, green behaviors and management are positively correlated with the nurses' organizational citizenship behaviors. Moreover, Soliman and Saad (2021) stated that employees' perceptions regarding CSR and their OCB are highly correlated, and are mainly considered as pivotal interests for the managerial decisions among Egyptian hotels' employees.

Thus, drawing on the above-mentioned results that indicate positive outcomes of substantive CSR, versus the negative ones that result from symbolic CSR attributes, alongside related theories that make it suitable for studying the suggested relationships, H1 and H2 are introduced as follows:

Hypothesis One: Perceived substantive CSR positively affects employees' OCB.

Hypothesis Two: Perceived symbolic CSR negatively affects employees' OCB.

As a response to recent urgent appeals calling for studying the OE explanatory role on the CSR activities-employees' OCB relationships (i.e. Yassin and Beckmann, 2025), the current study presents the organizational embeddedness as a mediating mechanism to link employees' substantive and symbolic CSR attributions to their discretionary behaviors in the following sections as follows:

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Organizational Embeddedness

The “Job embeddedness” JE construct has been introduced as the degree to which employees are ingrained into their organization or their community (Reitz and Anderson, 2011). It also refers to employees’ engagement into their organization via social networks: trust and cohesion. It represents all the factors that connect employees to their jobs, where there is a match between work values, and community values with their own values (Haryati, et al., 2024).

The “job embeddedness” term has been basically used by Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, and Erez (2001) as an *overall construct*, that consists of both “on-the-job”, and “off-the-job” embeddedness dimensions, which incorporate three main components, namely; fit, links, and sacrifice.

Later, “*on-the-job*” has been referred to as the “*organizational embeddedness*”; whereas “*off-the-job*” is referred to as the “*community embeddedness*” (Reitz and Anderson, 2011). “*Organizational embeddedness*” represents the organizational environment aspects that may embed employees into their organization; whereas “*community embeddedness*” focuses on community aspects that may also embed employees into their jobs. Each dimension is further categorized into three components; fit, sacrifice and links (i.e. Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee, and Mitchell, 2012; Lee, Burch, and Mitchell, 2014; Setthakorn, Rostiani, and Schreier, 2024; Singh, Shaffer, and Selvarajan, 2021; Tian, Cordery, and Gamble, 2016). On one hand, “*on-the-job*” takes into consideration work effects, namely, the job-relevant skills, and employees’ interpersonal links with their colleagues, coworkers and managers. On the other, the “*off-the-job*” considers the non-work factors, such as pleasant weather, daycare facilities, and social links with their families, which retain employees into their jobs (Mitchell, et al., 2001).

The Organizational Embeddedness Mediating Role

The OE mediating role could be further explained via social exchange theory (Blau 1964), and reciprocation norm (Gouldner, 1960). When employees perceive that their organization is engaged in CSR activities, they would reciprocate more trust towards that organization; as a result of experiencing positive interactions and exchanges (Donia, et al., 2019; Rupp and Mallory 2015). Furthermore, according to the conservation of resources theory (COR),

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both individuals and groups seek to acquire, retain, strengthen, and protect valued things; such that employees would invest in gaining resources, and preventing losses (Hobfoll, et al., 2018).

Moreover, referring to the social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael 1989), employees would possibly identify themselves with their organizations which possess positive values, such as CSR practices (Rupp and Mallory, 2015). Those employees would be strongly identified with their organization when perceiving that it is engaged in substantive CSR, as opposed to when it is more engaged in symbolic CSR (Donia, et al., 2019).

The job embeddedness theory presented by Mitchell, and his colleagues (2001) may be further counted on, to describe that employees who are embedded into their jobs would be less likely to leave the organization. Thus, the more fit, links, and sacrifice of leaving the job and the organization, the more employees would become more stuck into those jobs and organizations (more embedded); which will impact various employees' outcomes (Peltokorpi, and Allen, 2024).

Therefore, depending on the above-mentioned theories, scholars have been interested in studying the mechanisms that may link employees' perceptions regarding substantive and symbolic CSR, with favorable and non-favorable attitudes and behaviors as follows:

Perceived Substantive and Symbolic CSR and Organizational Embeddedness

In this context, some studies have revealed that CSR positively influenced the person organization fit (Bharadwaj, 2023). Employees' perceptions regarding substantive CSR (cause-serving) positively affects person-organization fit; while symbolic CSR (self-serving) negatively affects it (Donia, et al., 2019). It was also found that employees' CSR attributions will make them more or less embedded into their organization, which would strongly influence organizational outcomes. Accordingly, employees' perceptions regarding substantive actions would positively influence different employees' outcomes, via the organizational embeddedness moderating role; meanwhile symbolic CSR does not have significant association (Nejati and Shafaei, 2023).

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Additionally, employees who perceive higher fairness levels, would be more likely to perceive high compatibility between themselves and their organizations, develop powerful links with others and deter sacrifices (Mehmood, Malik, Nadarajah, and Saood Akhtar, 2023). Kang and Matsuoka (2023) have further revealed that higher corporate social responsibility-corporate social irresponsibility domain overlap circumstances, versus lower corporate social responsibility-corporate social irresponsibility domain overlap circumstances, negatively affects the attitudes towards the sponsors, through their perceived firm-serving motive for the CSR actions, and their CSR perception towards the sponsor, as two consecutive mediators in the sport sponsorship field.

Organizational Embeddedness and Employees' OCB

Conceptually, the more employees are job embedded (i.e. socially enmeshed) to their organizations, the more they tend to exhibit citizenship behaviors. In this case, employees may be linked or interdependent to each other. Helpful behaviors may be consistent with their comfort feelings that would stem from being part of those social networks. In other words, the more employees fit into their jobs, colleagues, and their organizations (on-the-job embeddedness), the more they tend to display citizenship behaviors (Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton, and Holtom, 2004). Particularly, employees' perceptions towards the CSR practices would offer some information regarding values' congruence among themselves and their organizations; which would in turn affect their key organizational attitudes and behaviors (Donia, et al., 2019).

By reviewing literature relying on the job embeddedness theory, it was observed that organizational embeddedness was also found to have a positive impact over employees' OCB-I and O (Singh, et al., 2021; Zia, Naveed, Bashir, and Iqbal, 2022).

Moreover, employees who feel the attachment sense towards their jobs tend to contribute more to the organizational activities (i.e OCB) (Maharani and Satria, 2024); such that organizational embeddedness (on-the-job), and community embeddedness (off-the-job) positively influence employees' OCB (Baiqhakiki and Nurmayanti, 2024; Maharani and Satria, 2024; Mansour, 2022). Moreover, job embeddedness work-related elements (i.e. job satisfaction, relationships with coworkers, and advancement opportunities), and non-work-related elements (i.e.

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local integration and community ties) positively affect employees' discretionary organizational citizenship behaviors (i.e. helping coworkers, volunteering for performing additional tasks, and participating in innovative ideas) (Sharma and Mishra, 2023).

In addition, in content analyses studies, job embeddedness (organizational and community) positively affects employees' OCB (Majumdarr and Dasgupta, 2024; Shah, Csordas, Akram, Yadav, and Rasool, 2020). Furthermore, in their bibliometric evaluation of the JE field, JE positively affected employees' OCB (Xue, Rafiq, Meng, and Peerzadah, 2023).

Job embeddedness further influences employees' OCB positively (Aftab, Bokhari, and Ali, 2024; Dwiyantri, Hadi, and Kurniawan, 2024; Ikram, et al., 2024; Lo Presti, De Rosa, Kundi, Mamcarz, and Wołóńciej, 2024; Mashudi and Erdiansyah, 2023; Singh, Chauhan, and Mahlawat, 2024). JE also affects employees' OCB positively in a governmental institution (Probosari, Ningsih, and Ardhanariswari, 2024), and in a state-owned public firm (Haryati, et al., 2024).

Another stream of research has studied the effect of job embeddedness on Egyptian employees' OCB; such that JE is positively related to Egyptian nurses' OCB in El Mansoura international hospital (Elsabahy, Awad and Ibrahim, 2019).

Additionally, the three JE dimensions are positively correlated with employees' extra-role behaviors at El Menoufia University Hospitals. In this regard JE dimensions are considered as the main sources for increasing hospitals' competitive advantage, and employees' OCB (Nafei, 2015).

Consistently, and relying on the above-mentioned different theories, prior research, and arguments, the current study claims that when employees perceive CSR programs as substantive, they would invest in higher psychological resources; such that they would exhibit higher fit with their organizations' values, stronger ties, and would have more possible sacrifices when leaving their organizations and losing those psychological resources. They would in turn practice more citizenship behaviors directed towards other employees and their organization, and vice versa when perceiving CSR programs as symbolic ones. Therefore, the following hypotheses are expected:

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Hypothesis Three: Perceived substantive CSR - OCB positive relationship is mediated by organizational embeddedness.

Hypothesis Four: Perceived symbolic CSR - OCB negative relationship is mediated by organizational embeddedness.

Accordingly, referring to the above-suggested hypotheses, the research model is introduced as follows:

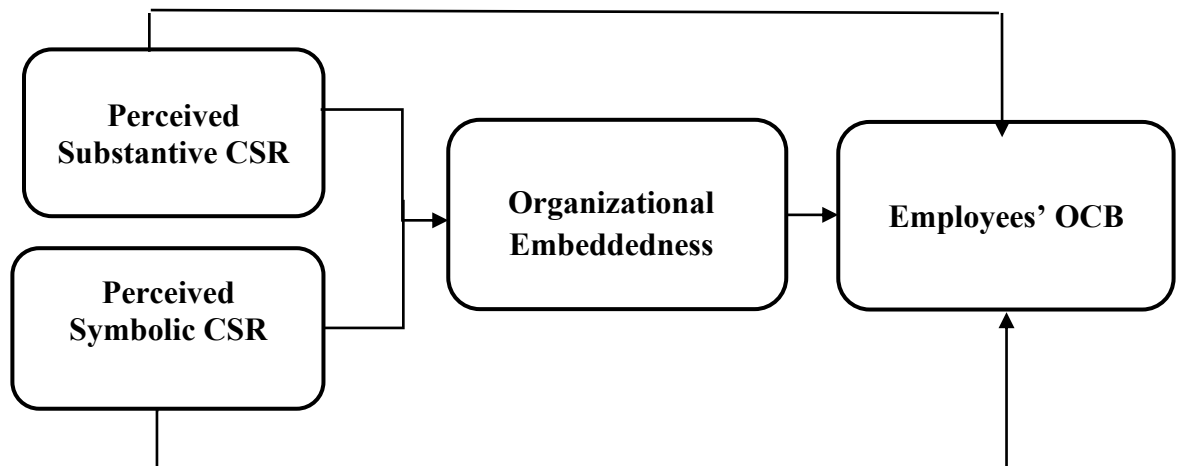


Figure (1): Research Model

Source: The Author

Research Methodology

Pilot Study

Before conducting the current research, a pilot study has been applied to detect the availability of the under-study variables in both governmental institutions and private organizations in different sectors; in addition to the possibilities of gathering data from respondents working in those sectors. In this regard, the researcher has targeted the EDBA students, in the Faculty of Business, Alexandria University. 47 students who currently work in both governmental and private sectors (such as petroleum, oil and gas, and petrochemical companies, in addition to Alexandria Bibliotheca), and representing three EDBA cohorts have been addressed, while attending their courses during the spring 2025 semester.

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Using semi-structured interviews, respondents have been asked to designate social responsibilities' processes in their organizations, in addition to their views regarding the significance of those practices. They have been further asked to describe their responses and behaviors towards their organizations, and judge those practices as real significant, or peripheral actions.

Based on their responses, it could be declared that some respondents have stated that although some governmental institutions, and private organizations within different sectors are engaged in the CSR practices, they have criticized those processes, because they would make use of applying CSR "self-serving" programs, to reflect the positive image of the organizations. They would further focus on superficial and peripheral CSR, rather than fostering genuine change and initiatives. Those CSR activities do not adequately involve, address, support or satisfy different stakeholders' real needs, and focus on short term projects devoted to the community.

Some other deficiencies have been represented, particularly that CSR programs are lacking strategic alignment with the core business activities. They are characterized by having a limited scope of engagement with the community, NGOs, and different stakeholders to assess and prioritize CSR critical issues; in addition to insufficient programs towards employees, insufficient resources, and inadequate fundings dedicated towards the CSR activities. They have also added that their main concern is to conform or comply with laws, policies and regulatory requirements with limited proactive environmental initiatives. Moreover, they lack measurable indicators to evaluate and monitor CSR performance and programs; which may have some negative impacts over different internal and external stakeholders.

Other respondents have referred to their CSR programs and initiatives, as they are embedded in the organizational culture. They have further added that those programs have taken into consideration different stakeholders; which would have positive employees' outcomes such as leveraging their attitudes and behaviors (i. e. loyalty, satisfaction, identification, commitment, embeddedness, OCB, and retention).

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Data collection Method

Field-research has been employed to answer the study's queries, drawing on distributing a self-administered questionnaire on the study's respondents. The questionnaire incorporates three basic sections for examining the main independent, mediating, and dependent constructs. Moreover, respondents' personal information questions have been added in the fourth section.

Population and Sampling

Based on the above pilot study findings, 500 handled questionnaires have been distributed to target employees working in some governmental, and public business institutions; in addition to several private commercial, service and industrial organizations that are engaged in CSR practices; such as banking, pharmaceutical, petroleum, oil and gas services, petrochemical companies, communication sector, food industries, logistics, consulting services, the customs authority, Alex Water Company, and Alexandria Bibliotheca (participants' features are presented in Table 1).

Based on Donia and her colleagues' work (2019), respondents have been chosen according to two main criteria at the time of answering the questionnaire; which include the facts that they work in organizations that are engaged in CSR practices, and their awareness of those organizations' CSR activities.

To overcome the obstacles for getting a complete sampling frame, the convenient sampling method has been applied, and referent persons in those sectors have given a hand to the researcher to facilitate reaching the targeted employees according to the specified criteria. A final valid number has reached 445 completed returned questionnaires, indicating a response rate of 89 %.

Descriptive Analysis for the Research Sample

Descriptive statistics is mainly considered as a statistical technique that provides an elaborated illustration regarding the research data. Participants' profile, and the research variables will be clarified in both Tables (1) and (2). In light of those descriptive analyses, Table (1) presents the sampling description, in which the respondents' profile's details are illustrated; followed by Table (2), demonstrating frequency, means (for measuring central tendencies), and finally, standard deviations (for assessing variability), as follows:

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Table (1): Participants' profile

	Frequency	Percent	Total
Age			
Less than 30	43	9.7	445
30 to less than 40	211	47.4	
40 to less than 50	164	36.9	
50 and more	27	6.0	
Organizational Level			
Top management	83	18.7	445
Middle management	229	51.5	
First Line management	133	29.8	
Gender			
Male	286	64.3	445
Female	159	35.7	
Sector			
Public Sector	137	30.8	445
Public Business Sector	126	28.3	
Private Sector	182	40.9	

As illustrated in Table (1), the demographic profile of the research participants has been clarified (N = 445). First, *the age distribution* shows that the majority of respondents are aged within the 30 to less than 40 category (47.4%), followed by respondents aged within the 40 to less than 50 category (36.9%); whereas only 9.7% are counted for the under 30, and 6% are categorized as 50 years or older.

As per *the organizational level*, over half of the respondents belong to the middle management category (51.5%), while 29.8% of them are classified within the first line management category, and 18.7% are reported within the top management one. In terms of *gender*, male respondents represent a clear majority of 64.3%, compared to 35.7% for females' category. Lastly, as for the employment sector, respondents are fairly distributed, with 40.9% working in the private sector, 30.8% working in the public sector, followed by 28.3% in the public business sector.

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Hence, it is clear that the precedent profile reflects a sample with a strong representation of mid-career professionals, predominantly male, and largely drawn from the middle, and first-line management, across both private and public sectors.

A further descriptive analysis will be also elaborated in the following Table (2), providing details for the study variables:

Table (2): Descriptive Analysis for the Study Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequencies				
	Statistic	Statistic	1	2	3	4	5
Perceived Substantive CSR	3.6112	0.89511	10	35	133	207	60
Perceived Symbolic CSR	3.6697	1.00499	14	35	133	165	98
Organizational Embeddedness	3.5843	0.78570	2	36	148	218	41
Employees' OCB	4.0157	0.69245	0	4	91	244	106

As mentioned in the above Table (2), perceived substantive CSR has been reported for a mean of 3.6112, and a standard deviation of 0.89511; indicating a moderately positive perception with some variability. However, perceived symbolic CSR has shown a slightly higher mean of 3.6697, and a standard deviation of 1.00499; reflecting a broader range of responses.

Regarding the organizational embeddedness, results indicated a mean of 3.5843, and a standard deviation of 0.78570; suggesting a generally positive sense of attachment to the organization. Finally, employees' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has reported for the highest mean at 4.0157, in addition to the lowest variability (SD = 0.69245); indicating a strong and consistent tendency among employees to engage in extra-role behaviors.

Measures

The Independent Variables: Perceived Substantive and Symbolic CSR

The current study has used the 14 items parsimonious measurement for measuring employees' perceptions regarding their organizations' CSR practices; namely, "The Corporate Social Responsibility—Substantive and Symbolic Scale" (CSR-SS); which has been developed and tested for its reliability and

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validity by Donia and her colleagues (2017). The measure represents two wide distinctive factors, namely; substantive and symbolic CSR attributions. The scale contributes to the micro-CSR research development, to assess employees' perceptions concerning their organizations' motivations and reasons towards engaging in CSR initiatives at different times. It also helps in assessing both positive and negative results of the CSR practices. The scale ranges from 1: Clearly does not prescribe my organization's motives for engaging in CSR initiatives, to 5: Clearly prescribes my organizations' motives for engaging in CSR initiatives (Donia, et al., 2017).

The underlying main factors are characterized as follows: **substantive CSR** (Q 1-8), and **symbolic CSR** (Q 9-14). Sample items include: please indicate your organization's main causes for engaging in CSR practices most of the time: "because it feels it is important to help those in need" (substantive CSR) and "to avoid criticism from the media and/or external actors it does business/interacts with" (symbolic CSR).

The Mediating Variable: Organizational Embeddedness

Organizational embeddedness refers to different global positive feelings, in which employees feel that they are psychologically attached to their organization, it is also a force that stimulates employees to stay in their current jobs (Ng, et al., 2019).

Although organizational embeddedness was essentially conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct (Mitchell, et al., 2001; Tian, et al., 2016), some studies have relied on an aggregated embeddedness measurement (e.g. Mitchell, et al., 2001).

The original job embeddedness measurement has been introduced by Mitchell and his colleagues (2001). They have initially developed a 42 items scale assessing the six main dimensions, comprising **fit, links, and sacrifice** for both the **on-job**, and the **off-job embeddedness**. Later, they have also added six items while interviewing their study's respondents.

The present study has used the shortened nine-item OE measure that has been later introduced by Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, and Tidd (2006); to assess the three **fit** (Q 15-17), **links** (Q 18-20) and **sacrifice** (Q 21-23) organizational

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embeddedness factors. Moreover, the scale has performed well in subsequent research (i. e. Felps, Hekman, Mitchell, Lee, Holtom, and Harman 2009; Holtom, Tidd, Mitchell, and Lee, 2013; Tian, et al., 2016).

In this regard, *the person-organization fit* refers to how employees are compatible with their organizations (Donia, et al., 2019), and well fit with those organizations, as well as *links*, which illustrates the connections of employees with other employees in their organizations. lastly, *sacrifice*, expresses the perceived advantages that employees may drop when leaving their organization (Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, and Westman, 2018; Mehmood, et al., 2023).

Sample items include the following statements “My job utilizes my skills and talents well” (fit), “I am a member of an effective work group” (links), and “I have a lot of freedom on this job to pursue my goals” (sacrifice).

The dependent Variable: Employees’ OCB

The OCB measurement has been developed by Smith and his colleagues (1983); which consists of 16 statements that describe both altruism (Q 24, 26, 28, 30, 35, 36, and 38); and generalized compliance (Q 25, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 37, and 39) dimensions. *Altruism* is defined as helping and assisting colleagues personally (Bezci, 2021). It also refers to the *OCB-I*, that benefit some individuals specifically, and contribute to the organization indirectly (Williams and Anderson, 1991); whereas *generalized compliance* refers to the impersonal helpful behaviors (Bezci, 2021) and refers to the *OCB-O* that generally benefit the organization (Williams and Anderson, 1991).

Altruism sample items include “I help other employees with their work when they have been absent”; while generalized compliance sample items include “I exhibit attendance at work beyond the norm (e.g., take less days off than most individuals or less than allowed)”. Q 27, 31, and 33 are reversed questions.

Finally, it is worth stating that both of the mediating and dependent measurements are rated on a five-point scale, ranging from 1: completely disagree, up to 5: completely agree.

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Demographic Variables

Respondents' personal information has been reflected in the questionnaire's fourth part (Q 40-44); indicating their gender, age, sector, industry, and administrative level.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis Methods

Ensuring both validity and reliability tests is *an essential prerequisite phase*, for confirming that the measurement tools are both precise and consistent; which would provide a strong foundation for further analysis. Cronbach's Alpha, and correlation analysis, are conducted using the statistical SPSS package-version 26. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), using AMOS 24 program is applied, for assessing reliability and validating the research model's constructs.

Then, as *a second main prerequisite step*, normality tests are conducted to determine whether the data follows a normal distribution, before conducting the statistical methods. *Finally*, for the purpose of testing the research hypotheses, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): SEM analysis-AMOS 24 program is employed, which enables a comprehensive assessment of the relationships among variables, and offers valuable insights into the structural relationships among those variables in the following sections:

Validity and Reliability Tests

A preliminary *content* and *construct validity* check (*both discriminant and convergent validity*), in addition to *data's consistency* verification (*reliability test*) have been first tested. In this context, it is an essential requirement to prove *the content validity*, as several HR and management professors who work in the Faculty of Business-Alexandria University have assessed the study scales; in which they proved and validated that those measures reflect the different under-study constructs.

Furthermore, the CFA, the correlation matrix, the KMOs, the AVEs, and the Cronbach's Alpha are employed to confirm *the construct validity, and the data reliability* as exhibited in the next Tables (3), (4), and (5):

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The Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is applied using AMOS 24 program, relying on the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation method in order to validate the measurement model before conducting the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). This will be exhibited in the next Table (3) as follows:

Table (3): The Fit Indices for the Measurement Model

Measure	Chi-square/df	P-value	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA
Results	1.787	0.001	0.922	0.904	0.909	0.952	0.958	0.055	0.042

A close look at Table (3) shows that the model fit statistics indicates an overall good fit. In this regard, the *Chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/DF)* has been recorded as $1.787 < 2$ with a p-value of 0.001 (< 0.01), which indicates a good fit and a statistical significance.

Moreover, the *Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)* has reached 0.922 (> 0.9), suggesting that the model has well explained the observed covariance; whereas, the *Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)* has been recorded for 0.904 (> 0.9), reflecting an acceptable fit, since it exceeds the ideal 0.90 threshold. Additionally, the *Normed Fit Index (NFI)* has been registered as 0.909, indicating an acceptable fit, when compared with a null model, and the *Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)*, which reached 0.952 (> 0.9); confirming a strong model performance.

Furthermore, the *Comparative Fit Index (CFI)* was recorded as 0.958 (> 0.95); supporting the model's strong fit. Lastly, the *Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)* has been registered as 0.055 (< 0.1); indicating some minimal differences among observed and predicted correlations, while the *Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)* was 0.042 (< 0.08); suggesting a close fit with minimal estimation error (Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2016). Thus, by comparing the above indices against recommended thresholds, it is concluded that the findings have further confirmed the measurement's model convergent validity.

In light of the above discussion, Figure (2) illustrates the confirmatory factor analysis execution, as it portrays the factor loadings via prominent arrows. The arrows signify strong factor loadings, exhibiting values that exceed the 0.4 requirement as follows:

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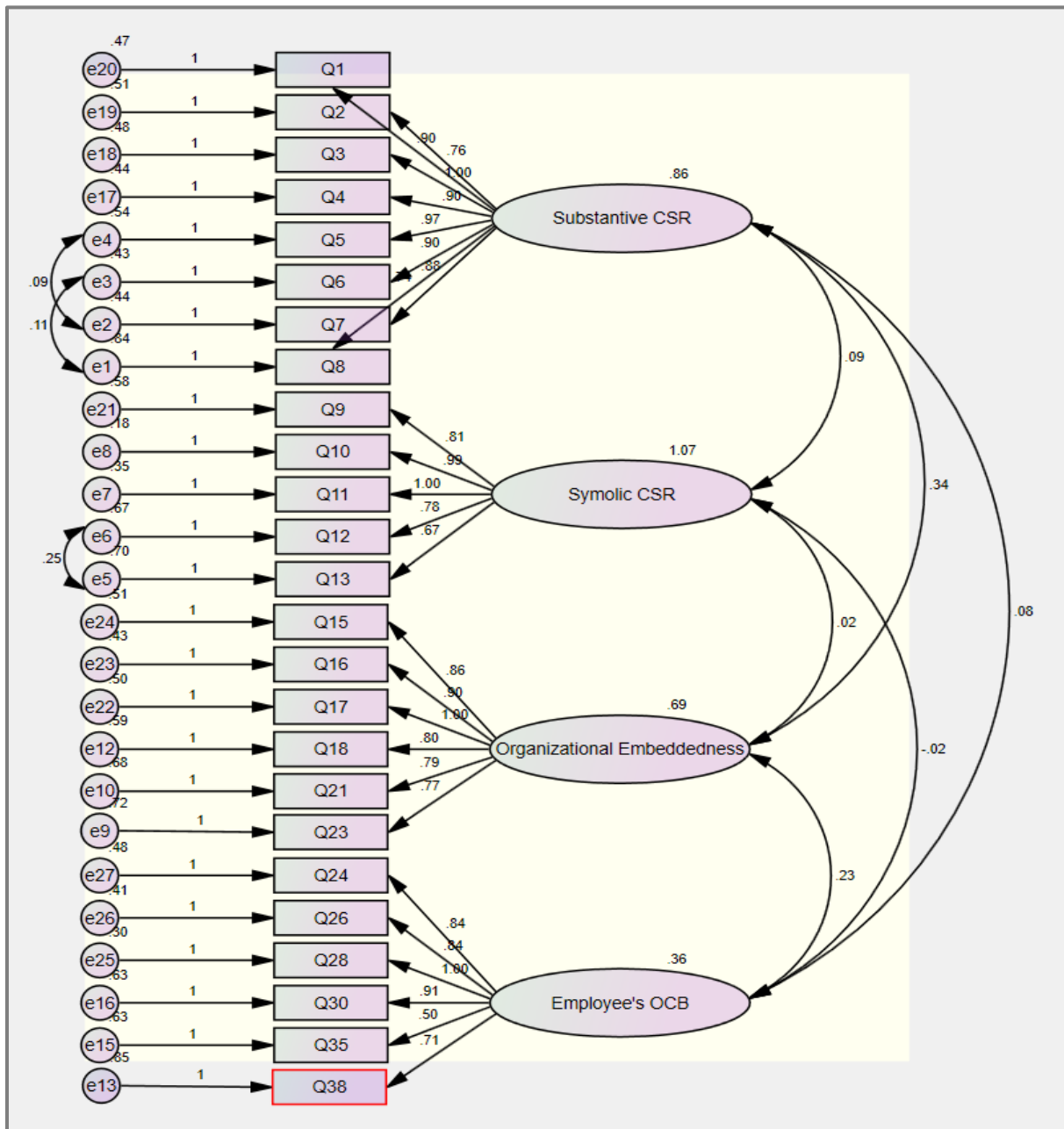


Figure (2): The Measurement Model According to the CFA

Source: The SEM Analysis Results

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A detailed examination for the above values; in addition to KMOs, AVEs, and Chronbach's Alpha results are also displayed in the following Table (4):

Table (4): Reliability and Convergent Validity Results

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	KMO	AVE %	Cronbach's α
Q1	<---	Substantive CSR	0.904	0.051	17.847	***	0.917	62.283	0.912
Q2	<---	Substantive CSR	0.755	0.048	15.669	***			
Q3	<---	Substantive CSR	1.000						
Q4	<---	Substantive CSR	0.904	0.050	18.153	***			
Q5	<---	Substantive CSR	0.973	0.055	17.770	***			
Q6	<---	Substantive CSR	0.899	0.050	18.108	***			
Q7	<---	Substantive CSR	0.876	0.050	17.690	***			
Q8	<---	Substantive CSR	0.737	0.057	12.930	***			
Q9	<---	Symbolic CSR	0.814	0.044	18.554	***	0.837	70.194	0.893
Q10	<---	Symbolic CSR	0.992	0.039	25.286	***			
Q11	<---	Symbolic CSR	1.000						
Q12	<---	Symbolic CSR	0.776	0.046	16.936	***			
Q13	<---	Symbolic CSR	0.673	0.045	14.966	***			
Q15	<---	OE	0.862	0.060	14.289	***	0.872	53.039	0.851
Q16	<---	OE	0.899	0.059	15.235	***			
Q17	<---	OE	1.000						
Q18	<---	OE	0.800	0.061	13.176	***			
Q21	<---	OE	0.789	0.063	12.520	***			
Q23	<---	OE	0.766	0.064	12.050	***			

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			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	KMO	AVE %	Cronbach's α
Q24	<---	Employees' OCB	0.839	0.082	10.224	***	0.871	51.758	0.840
Q26	<---	Employees' OCB	0.843	0.079	10.614	***			
Q28	<---	Employees' OCB	1.000						
Q30	<---	Employees' OCB	0.906	0.092	9.871	***			
Q35	<---	Employees' OCB	0.503	0.078	6.484	***			
Q38	<---	Employees' OCB	0.705	0.094	7.513	***			

As observed in Table (4), it is clear that it offers a thorough display of the factor loadings (FL), indicating item loadings' strength into their corresponding variables. Noting that all factor loadings consistently exceed the pivotal 0.40 threshold, affirming a robust validity of the examined variables, items which FL are lower than 0.4 have been deleted, which reinforces all the study constructs' validity and reliability.

It is necessary to underscore that the associated p-values uniformly dip below the pre-established 0.05 threshold; which underscores the substantive significance of the statements, regarding their connection with the respective variables.

Additionally, it is observed, from the previous Table (4), that the findings ensure *the convergent validity adequacy* for all the study variables. This is assured via the Average Variance Extracted (AVEs), the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMOs) values. In this sense, AVEs values of 50% or higher indicate that the construct has explained sufficient variance among its indicators.

Referring to the research findings, it is claimed that the AVEs values (51.758%–70.194%) have exceeded the 50% threshold. Moreover, KMO values (0.837–0.917) have confirmed the sample's adequacy. Furthermore, data's reliability has been evaluated through Cronbach's Alpha (Cronbach, 1951); where an 0.7 coefficient or above, signify data's internal consistency, and the measurements' stability.

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Furthermore, the correlation matrix, and the AVEs have been employed for assuring the discriminant validity, as exhibited in the next Table (5):

Table (5): Correlation Matrix for the Research Variables

	Substantive	Symbolic	OE	OCB
Substantive CSR	(0.789)			
Symbolic CSR	0.092	(0.838)		
Organizational Embeddedness	0.317**	0.025	(0.728)	
Employees' OCB	0.086	0.046	0.389**	(0.719)

N=445; ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed); the AVEs Squared Roots are displayed on the diagonal

The Research variables' discriminant validity was analyzed according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion; whereby each construct's squared root of the Average Variance Extracted (reported on the diagonal in parentheses), is compared with the inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal figures). As observed in Table (5), each construct's squared root of AVE is greater than its correlations with the other constructs; confirming the discriminant validity. Accordingly, the squared root of AVE for substantive CSR (0.789), symbolic CSR (0.838), OE (0.728), and employees' OCB (0.719) are all greater than their respective correlations with other constructs; indicating that all the research constructs are empirically distinct from one another.

Normality Tests for the Research Variables

A second essential requirement encompasses employing the normality tests. Normality is a key assumption in statistical analysis, verifying the data normalcy, in addition to determining whether parametric or non-parametric tests should be used or not.

In this regard, the Skewness and Kurtosis tests are commonly used for verifying normality. Accordingly, the Skewness and Kurtosis values have been computed, such that they were shown to fall within the accepted range of ± 1 ; implying that the research variables would display a normal distribution.

The following Table (6) exhibits the normality test results for the research variables, revealing the data' normalcy as follows:

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Table (6): Normality Testing

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Substantive CSR	0.268	445	0.001	-0.574	0.116	0.348	0.231
Symbolic CSR	0.220	445	0.001	-0.518	0.116	-0.069	0.231
Organizational Embeddedness	0.284	445	0.001	-0.351	0.116	0.002	0.231
Employees' OCB	0.277	445	0.001	-0.184	0.116	-0.415	0.231

Consequently, the research data are suitable for conducting parametric tests, such that the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) can be applied for analyzing the data under study, as presented in the following section:

Testing Research Hypotheses

Lastly, the current section exhibits a detailed examination for the study hypotheses, using the *path analysis through the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework*; given the research data's normal distribution.

The following Table (7) shows both *direct and indirect effects of the research variables* as follows:

Table (7): Direct and Indirect Effects

				Beta
Direct Effect	Organizational Embeddedness	<---	Symbolic CSR	-0.008
	Organizational Embeddedness	<---	Substantive CSR	0.382
	Employees' OCB	<---	Symbolic CSR	-0.015
	Employees' OCB	<---	Substantive CSR	-0.058
	Employees' OCB	<---	Organizational Embeddedness	0.340
Indirect Effect	Organizational Embeddedness	<---	Symbolic CSR	-0.007
	Organizational Embeddedness	<---	Substantive CSR	0.012
	Employees' OCB	<---	Symbolic CSR	0.002
	Employees' OCB	<---	Substantive CSR	0.155
	Employees' OCB	<---	Organizational Embeddedness	0.002

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The results exhibited in the previous Table (7) have revealed that substantive CSR has a significant positive direct effect on organizational embeddedness ($\beta = 0.382$). Moreover, substantive CSR has an insignificant direct impact on employees' OCB ($\beta = -0.058$), while it has a positive indirect effect on employees' OCB ($\beta = 0.155$), through organizational embeddedness, which highlights its role in strengthening employees' embeddedness into their organizations, and in turn promotes their extra-role behaviors. In contrast, symbolic CSR shows insignificant effects on both embeddedness ($\beta = -0.008$), and OCB (direct $\beta = -0.015$; indirect $\beta = 0.002$). This suggests that respondents perceived it as insincere CSR. Finally, organizational embeddedness directly predicts employees' OCB ($\beta = 0.340$), which confirms its mediating role on the perceived substantive CSR-employees' OCB relationship.

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis has been further used to evaluate the influence of the study variables; as evidenced in Table (8). Noting that the model fit indices, including CMIN/DF (1.787), GFI (0.922), CFI (0.958), AGFI (0.904), and RMSEA (0.042). They all fall within acceptable ranges.

The SEM findings, explained below, provide valuable insights into the relationships among the study variables:

Table (8): SEM Analysis for the Research Variables

			Estimate	P	R ²
Organizational Embeddedness	<---	Substantive CSR	0.394	***	0.192
Organizational Embeddedness	<---	Symbolic CSR	-0.015	0.709	
Employees' OCB	<---	Substantive CSR	-0.042	0.287	0.209
Employees' OCB	<---	Symbolic CSR	-0.017	0.576	
Employees' OCB	<---	Organizational Embeddedness	0.342	***	

It could be further observed from the above findings that there are no significant relationships regarding both positive substantive, and negative symbolic CSR-employees' OCB relationships; since an insignificant effect of substantive CSR on employees' OCB has been observed, as the corresponding P-value is more than 0.05 (P-value = 0.287). Additionally, there is an insignificant effect of symbolic CSR on employees' OCB, where the corresponding P-value is more than 0.05 (P-value = 0.576). Thus, both H1, and H2 are not supported.

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Concerning the third hypothesis, seeking to measure the OE mediating effect on the substantive CSR-employees' OCB relationship. **Firstly**, it is observed that there is a significant positive effect of substantive CSR on organizational embeddedness, as the corresponding P-value is less than 0.05 (P-value = 0.001), and the corresponding estimate is 0.394. **Secondly**, it is also noted that there is a significant positive effect of organizational embeddedness on employees' OCB, such that the corresponding P-value is less than 0.05, and the corresponding estimate is (Estimate = 0.342). **Finally**, with regards to the OE mediating role, based on the analysis results, it is recorded that there is a significant effect of substantive CSR on OE. Moreover, there is a significant effect of OE on employees' OCB. Thus, organizational embeddedness plays a mediating role on the substantive CSR-employees' OCB relationship. In other words, organizational embeddedness fully mediates the relationship between substantive CSR, and employees' OCB, as the direct effects became insignificant in the presence of OE; and the total effect is entirely carried by the OE mediating role; supporting H3.

As per the fourth hypothesis, it is observed that there is an insignificant effect of symbolic CSR on organizational embeddedness, since the corresponding P-value is more than 0.05 (P-value = 0.709). In spite the fact that there is a significant effect of organizational embeddedness on employees' OCB as the corresponding P-value is less than 0.05, and the corresponding estimate is (Estimate = 0.342), organizational embeddedness could not play the mediating role on the symbolic CSR-employees' OCB relationship. Accordingly, H4 is not supported.

To sum up, the findings underscore the OE full mediating role on the substantive CSR-employees' OCB relationship and highlight the limited direct impact of CSR perceptions—particularly symbolic CSR—on employees' citizenship behaviors. The findings further emphasize that genuine CSR initiatives, rather than image-driven efforts, are more effective in fostering employees' embeddedness into their organizations, which will in turn foster their citizenship behaviors.

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Lastly, figure (3) visually represents the SEM model that is employed to analyze the impact of the research model as follows:

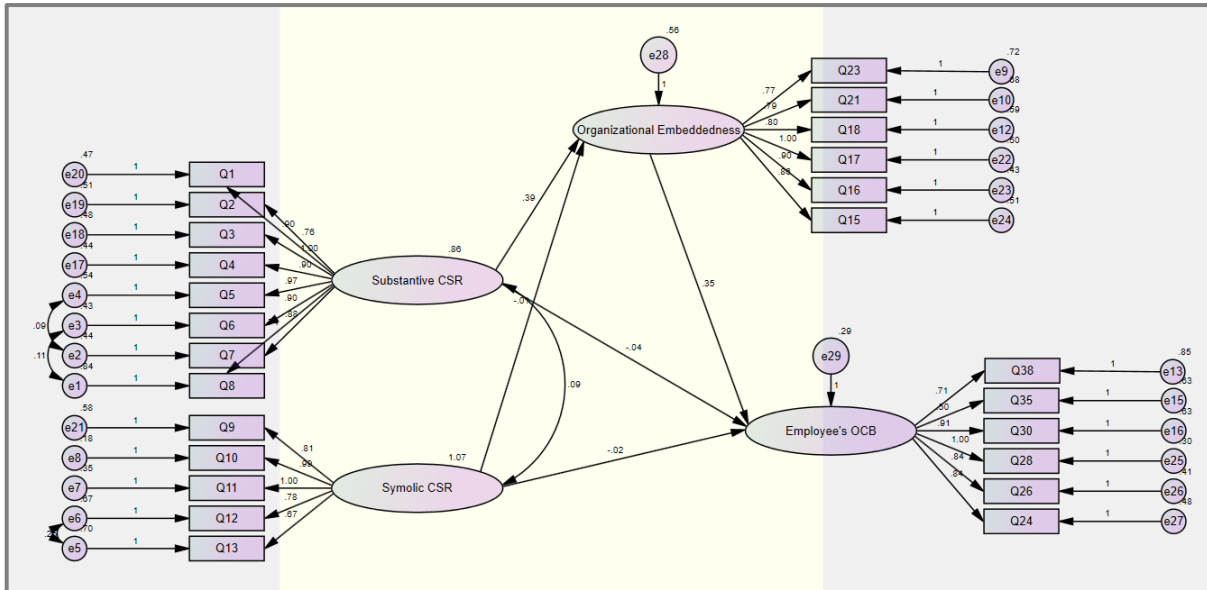


Figure (3): SEM Analysis for the Research Variables

Source: The SEM Analysis Results

Discussion

Referring to the previous statistical findings; it can be noticed that some research hypotheses were supported, while others were not confirmed. Accordingly, the following section exhibits a detailed discussion for the statistical results:

Regarding *the first hypothesis (H1)*, which refers to the perceived substantive CSR-employees' OCB positive relationship, the findings have declared that when employees perceive their organizations' CSR as substantive, this would not have directly impacted their discretionary behaviors, which leads to H1 rejection. Nonetheless, an indirect positive influence has been recorded over their extra-role behaviors (OCB) through their embeddedness towards their organizations. Thus, *the third hypothesis (H3) is accepted*, which has been supported in the expected direction.

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This would, in turn, shed light on the significant crucial OE full mediating role on the perceived substantive CSR-employees' OCB positive relationship. In other words, the effect of employees' perceptions regarding their organizations' CSR efforts as genuine on their extra role behaviors, would occur in the presence of their organizational embeddedness. This means that, employees' perceptions regarding their socially responsible organization, would develop embeddedness senses towards this organization, which would in turn increase their citizenship behaviors towards individuals (OCBI).

The above results are in the same line with those of Hameli and Yaslioglu (2025), who found that employees' perceptions regarding CSR are not directly associated with their OCB. However, the findings emphasize the significance of the indirect pathway, which is revealed through the organizational identification mediating role. The results are also in accordance with some results that did not support the direct positive and negative employees' substantive and symbolic CSR attributions-their extra-role service behaviors, unless indirectly mediated by work meaningfulness (Castro-Casal, et al., 2024) and fully mediated by perceived external prestige, and pride in the organization (Bogan and Dedeoglu, 2020). In addition to Tian and Phromphithakkul results (2024), who have revealed that when organizations implement certain CSR degrees to their stakeholders, then, those organizations give direct or indirect benefits to their employees. Thus, when employees recognize those benefits, they tend to reciprocate some positive behavioral outcomes.

In this context, it is also noticed that the results have only incorporated the OCBI items, while those of the OCBO statements have been omitted ($FL < 0.4$). In other words, the research findings have revealed that when employees perceive the organizations' CSR initiatives as substantive, they would be more embedded into their organizations, and would in turn exhibit more discretionary behaviors towards *other employees inside the organization* (such as colleagues, managers, and subordinates).

In the light of those findings, *the social identity theory* (Tajfel, 1978), *the social exchange* (Blau, 1964), *the stakeholders* (Freeman, 1984), *the deontic justice theories* (i. e. Hericher, et al., 2023), *the job embeddedness theory* (Mitchell, et al., 2001), and *the conservation of resources theory* (Hobfoll, et al., 2018) reflect a grounded base for explaining employees' positive behaviors as follows:

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Employees acquire, retain, strengthen, and protect valued objects. They further seek to gain resources, and prevent losses. Moreover, they exchange some positive attitudes and behaviors with their organization. For example, they would be prouder and more identified with it, in case they perceive that their organizations are acting fairly towards various stakeholders, in addition to exerting sincere efforts towards offering valuable and genuine CSR programs for different types of stakeholders. Those employees would then feel more fit, would be more compatible with organizational values. This is then, reflected in being *more linked and connected specifically with other persons inside their organizations* (such as their colleagues, managers and subordinates). Employees would also feel the perceived gains that they may lose, in case of leaving their organizations. They would be more embedded in them, and will in turn exercise more discretionary behaviors towards those individuals (OCBI).

Furthermore, the study findings refer to some prior research indicating that when employees perceive their organizations' internal and external CSR programs positively, they would be more involved in practicing more OCBs towards coworkers (OCB-I), through family-supportive supervisor behaviors' mediating role (David, et al., 2024) and towards other employees inside the organization (OCB-I) (Aguinis and Glavas, 2019). In the context of the current research, this relationship happens only when it is fully mediated by organizational embeddedness.

The findings of the present study are then consistent with the CSR micro prior studies, because when employees perceive CSR practices as authentic and genuine and contribute to the different stakeholders and society' welfare and benefits, this would in turn generate emotional and belonging feelings, and would be more involved in more OCBs (Afridi et al., 2023; Castro-Casal, et al., 2024). The results are also in Accordance with other studies, that revealed perceived substantive CSR-employees' OE positive relationship (Bharadwaj, 2023; Donia, et al., 2019; Nejati and Shafaei, 2023), as well as the wave of research that revealed a positive OE-OCB-I and O relationship (Singh, et al., 2021; Zia, et al., 2022).

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In this context, some prior studies in the Egyptian private and governmental contexts have shown that employees' perceptions regarding CSR would be positively correlated with nurses' citizenship behaviors within Egyptian hospitals (Yassin, et al., 2025) and Egyptian hotels (Soliman and Saad, 2021). Moreover, a further stream of research has found that Egyptian nurses' JE is positively correlated with their extra-role behaviors (Elsabahy, et al., 2019; Nafei, 2015). Accordingly, the current study findings are further consistent with those results, as OE plays the full mediating role on employees perceived substantive CSR-OCB relationship.

In support with *the pilot study results*, it is observed that some respondents have mentioned that their organizations are engaged in practicing several authentic CSR initiatives that are embedded into their strategies and culture, and directed towards various stakeholders. This would, in turn, result in some positive employees' outcomes, such as enhancing their attitudes and behaviors (i.e their embeddedness, and their discretionary behaviors).

As per ***hypothesis two (H2)***, and in contrast with the above results, it is deducted that employees' perceptions concerning their organizations' CSR programs as symbolic or peripheral, have not directly affected their citizenship behaviors; *hence, rejecting H2*. Furthermore, for ***hypothesis four (H4)***, which examines whether employees' OE has mediated the above-mentioned relationship, the findings have revealed that those perceptions have not influenced their embeddedness towards their organizations. This highlights that OE has not played the intervening role on the previous relationship. Therefore, the indirect negative symbolic CSR role over employees' OCB via their embeddedness was shown to be insignificant, which also leads to further *reject H4*.

Despite the fact that the previous results are not in the expected direction, namely that some of the CSR actions have been perceived as self-serving, which do not satisfy different stakeholders' genuine needs and focus on some short-term projects, those findings can still refer to some of the pilot study responses, where some of the respondents have stated that their organizations' engagement in peripheral CSR initiatives would not be a significant factor affecting their behaviors. Instead, they have pointed to the crucial role of internal CSR programs directed towards achieving some benefits for internal employees, as some

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employees would be interested in their organizations' involvement in genuine or authentic CSR programs for internal employees, in addition to substantive CSR programs which are directed towards external stakeholders and the society. This would in turn generate different positive outcomes; whereas employees show little interest in symbolic CSR, which consequently results in non-significant associations with their behaviors.

Although the above-mentioned results are not consistent with other studies which indicate that symbolic CSR (self-serving) would negatively affect person–organization fit (i. e. Donia, et al., 2019), they still collaborate with some prior studies which reveal that employees' perceptions regarding substantive actions positively influence different employees' outcomes (affective commitment). This relation operates via the mediating role of the meaningfulness through work, and the organizational embeddedness moderating role, *whereas symbolic CSR does not have significant associations with attitudinal and behavioral outcomes: including meaningfulness through work, and affective commitment* (Nejati and Shafaei, 2023).

Those results highlight that CSR would be effective in promoting employees' positive behaviors only when organizations adopt and remain committed to genuine and substantive activities, whereas, symbolic CSR practices are considered as inefficient use of the organizational resources, and are incapable of generating employees' positive outcomes (Nejati and Shafaei, 2023).

To sum up, the current research findings have fully supported (H3), while not supporting (H1) due to the pivotal full OE mediating role on the perceived substantive CSR-employees' OCB positive relationship. Employees would perceive CSR programs as embedded into their organizational culture and strategies. They would then invest in gaining higher psychological resources (higher fit with the organizational values, stronger ties, and more expected sacrifices when leaving their organizations and losing those psychological resources), which would in turn result in practicing more citizenship behaviors directed towards other employees. *On the contrary*, the results have not supported the negative role of perceived peripheral CSR over employees' discretionary behaviors either directly (H2) or indirectly through their OE (H4).

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Conclusion

The main objectives of this research were to investigate how employees would react towards perceiving their organization's CSR initiatives (either as substantive or symbolic); specifically, how those perceptions would influence their organizational embeddedness, and in turn, their involvement in practicing discretionary behaviors. In this way, the current research has contributed to the recent micro-CSR research and addressed some important issues and concerns with regards to employees' perceptions concerning both substantive and symbolic CSR programs, and the related attitudes and behaviors.

Accordingly, in a practical way, the present study would provide some meaningful managerial implications for practitioners and leaders within different organizations to stimulate more employees' positive outcomes. This would involve strengthening substantive internal and external CSR activities, for leveling up employees' embeddedness towards their jobs and organizations and enabling a culture of practicing more organizational citizenship behaviors.

Recommendations of the study

Relying on the previous statistical analysis results, and the above discussion concerning *the importance and main results of adopting integrative substantive CSR initiatives*, the current research would introduce the following recommendations:

A primary suggestion is that *organizations need to adopt genuine CSR programs, dedicated towards serving different stakeholders and society, rather than symbolic ones*. This would participate in shaping employees' perceptions regarding CSR as substantive, and would in turn affect those employees' attitudes and behaviors positively (i.e organizational embeddedness, and organizational citizenship behaviors).

In the same context, it could be further recommended that *the organizations are also required to reduce their employees' perceptions regarding their CSR activities as symbolic or self-serving for the reputation of the organization*. Those findings and recommendations would be further *compatible with the pilot study participants' answers*, as they have pointed to some related shortcomings regarding adopting symbolic CSR practices, in which there is a superficial

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engagement (i.e. greenwashing activities) to impress the public perceptions, rather than a meaningful contribution to the stakeholders, environment and community needs, along with a lack of stakeholders' engagement, such as local communities, NGO's in assessing and prioritizing CSR critical issues and all the stakeholders' needs. Participants have also referred to the lack of social audit and clear metrics, in addition to insufficient monitoring and evaluation systems for measuring their impact over the surrounding environment and employees.

Thus, for enhancing CSR genuine practices and overcoming those shortcomings, it is recommended that organizations need to implement an integrated CSR program, as follows:

A strong leadership commitment, which helps in setting clear objectives that can be measured and monitored. It is also important to establish a transformative business model that prioritizes ethical, social and environmental considerations alongside with achieving profitability. This would also help in setting clear identification of the targeted stakeholders, including employees, developing, designing, and implementing a CSR strategy aligned with the organizations' vision, mission and core values and allocating resources to support substantive rather than symbolic CSR activities.

It is also recommended to adopt pivotal CSR programs directed towards designing, implementing, and evaluating internal CSR programs (such as offering health and well-being programs, diversity, equity, and inclusion), in accordance with adopting substantive CSR initiatives towards external stakeholders in the society.

Those initiatives would also incorporate employees' inclusiveness in designing and implementing the CSR activities in addition to effective governance mechanisms that stimulate the CSR practices' adoption. Initiatives would also implicate a long-term CSR perspective, such as long-term sustainable investments in infrastructure, health and education, prioritizing environmental sustainability, engaging local community, alignment with international standards, enhancing transparent CSR programs, and the development of partnerships through collaboration with the government, civil society and NGOs to leverage additional expertise and resources.

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Lastly, it is suggested that evaluating progress is advised to identify areas of improvement (i.e setting CSR KPIs), in addition to conducting regular social auditing to assess, regulate and monitor the CSR practices, and capture the positive outcomes on employees and other stakeholders.

In this regard, Martin, Thapa, and Aguinis (2024), have also offered four interdependent, recommendations, in order to reduce organizations' employees' perceptions as a CSR-washer or symbolic. In the first place, organizations should integrate CSR initiatives into their core activities, rather than considering them as peripheral ones. Moreover, they have to adopt a CSR bottom-up approach. Then, they can develop an integrative performance-management/CSR process. Finally, organizations need to establish effective CSR communication strategies. *Thus, in line with Martin and his colleagues (2024), the current study could further recommend that those steps would help organizations in planning, implementing, and monitoring their CSR practices, while keeping those initiatives as substantive or authentic, and reducing the probability of being labeled as symbolic or CSR-washers.*

Limitations of the study

The current study could not employ a probabilistic sample, instead, it has conducted a non-probabilistic one (*a convenient sampling method*) for gathering data. This procedure was necessitated by some restrictions in obtaining a complete sampling frame, which may impact the generalization of the study findings.

Suggestions for future research

Based on the above results and discussions, the current research would introduce some interesting research avenues as follows:

The present research has revealed that employees' perceptions regarding substantive CSR actions would result in some positive attitudinal and behavioral practices; while symbolic CSR actions have not influenced employees' behaviors. This highlights the need for more studies that investigate *whether employees' awareness of symbolic CSR initiatives might generate other main negative effects in other contexts.*

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Referring to the pilot study results, respondents have revealed that *internal substantive CSR programs* would be as pivotal as external CSR, directed towards different external stakeholders. Hence, it could be suggested that future research would study the effects of both substantive and symbolic *internal* and *external* CSR initiatives, and would compare both results.

The current study would also recommend studying *other mechanisms*, such as organizational commitment and organizational identification for more explanations underlying the above-mentioned relationships. Additionally, further studies would be invited to incorporate several *moderating variables* into the different suggested relationships, such as different leadership types adopting authentic CSR perspective, organizational culture, and employees' engagement in CSR programs.

Further studies are warranted to examine the effects of both perceived substantive and symbolic CSR practices on *several behavioral outcomes*, such as individual and organizational performance, organizational effectiveness, and the distinction between employees' citizenship behaviors directed towards individuals (OCBI), and towards organization (OCBO).

The current study has tackled the OE variable as a unified construct. Thus, it is suggested to study the OE mediating role through its three main factors (fit, links, and sacrifice) for more explanations of the research relationships.

The current research also suggests studying the underlying relationships within *different organizational sizes*, to be able to differentiate between the CSR programs within SMEs and large organizations. In other words, it is important to investigate the extent to which *different SMEs, and large organizations adopt embedded or peripheral CSR programs*, and studying the related positive and negative behaviors, and comparing between the results. It also recommends future studies to differentiate between *private and governmental sectors* regarding the above-mentioned relationships, in addition to comparing the findings.

The study also recommends studying the relationships within *family businesses*, in order to capture the extent to which those organizations would adopt different CSR initiatives and the related positive and negative results. It also proposes

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studying *the corporate governance different factors* related to the *board of directors (such as gender, size, internal or independent boards members)* within different organizations working in various activities and sectors in adopting different CSR programs, and comparing the related results.

With regards to the “*off-the-job*” *embeddedness*, which takes into consideration the non-work variables, such as daycare facilities, and social connections between employees and their families (Mitchell, et al., 2001), the current study would lastly suggest studying its mediating role on the above-mentioned relationships, and comparing the results with those of “*on-the-job*” or *organizational embeddedness*.

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أثر المدركات الخاصة بالمسؤولية الاجتماعية الجوهرية والرمزية على نواتج العاملين: المدخل السلوكي

الملخص

تجاوز الاهتمام بمبادرات المسؤولية الاجتماعية للمنظمات حاليا المنظور التقليدي للقوانين والضغوط المؤسسية، والمنظور الكلي للمؤسسات، ليشتمل أيضا على المنظور الجزئي المرتبط بمدركات العاملين بشأن هذه المبادرات، ودراسة النتائج السلبية والإيجابية لهذه المدركات على اتجاهات وسلوكيات العاملين داخل المنظمات.

ومن خلال التمييز بين ممارسات المسؤولية الاجتماعية الجوهرية والرمزية للمنظمات، تسعى الدراسة إلى اختبار أثر مدركات العاملين بشأن المسؤولية الاجتماعية الجوهرية، والرمزية على سلوكيات المواطنة التنظيمية، بشكل مباشر وغير مباشر من خلال الدور الوسيط للتضمين التنظيمي.

وقد تم استخدام أسلوب نموذج المعادلات الهيكلية، بالتطبيق على عينة ميسرة، تشتمل على 445 من العاملين في العديد من المؤسسات الحكومية والقطاع الخاص. وقد أشارت النتائج إلى توافر الأثر المعنوي غير المباشر لمدركات العاملين بشأن المسؤولية الاجتماعية الجوهرية على سلوكيات المواطنة التنظيمية، من خلال الدور الوسيط الكامل للتضمين التنظيمي، في حين أثبتت النتائج عدم توافر الأثر المباشر، وغير المباشر لمدركات العاملين بشأن المسؤولية الاجتماعية الرمزية على هذه السلوكيات.

وتؤكد نتائج الدراسة على أهمية مدركات العاملين بشأن الممارسات الجوهرية في تدعيم النواتج السلوكية الإيجابية، والمتمثلة في التضمين التنظيمي وسلوكيات المواطنة التنظيمية. كما تشير أيضا إلى أن الممارسات الرمزية التي تقوم بها بعض المنظمات، لا تعد كافية لتحسين وتدعيم هذه السلوكيات.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

مدركات العاملين بشأن المسؤولية الاجتماعية، المسؤولية الجوهرية، المسؤولية الرمزية، التضمين التنظيمي، سلوكيات المواطنة التنظيمية.