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CSR and employee outcomes: a systematic literature review

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to consolidate and extend the current literature on employee outcomes of CSR (referred to as micro-level outcomes). The authors use a systematic review of the literature as a method to summarize and synthesise the different effects of CSR activities on employees based on 270 journal articles. The contribution of this paper is that it provides a comprehensive list of employee outcomes classified into different categories and a conceptual framework that maps desirable and undesirable outcomes of CSR activities on employees. The results show that various dimensions of CSR have different effects on employee outcomes. In addition, we explain mediators of CSR-employee outcomes relationships and moderators that could strengthen or weaken this relationship. The review reveals important gaps and offers a research agenda for the future. We have found only a few studies dealing with the negative impacts of CSR on employees as well as only a few studies that explain how different dimensions of CSR affect employees differently. The study has also practical implications for companies, as understanding different effects of CSR on employees helps organizations to design and implement CSR strategies and policies that foster employees' positive attitudes and behaviours as well as prevent or reduce the negative effects, and hence create a business value and sustainable growth for the company.

Keywords Corporate social responsibility · Micro-level · Employee outcomes · Employee attitudes · Employee behaviours · Employee well-being · Systematic review

ملخص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تجميع وتوسيع الأدبيات الحالية حول أثر المسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات على الموظفين. وقد استخدم الباحثون أسلوب المراجعة المنهجية للدراسات السابقة كوسيلة لتلخيص و تجميع التأثيرات المختلفة لأنشطة المسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات على الموظفين بناء على 270 مقالاً علمياً. وتتمثل مساهمة هذا البحث في توفير قائمة شاملة للتأثيرات على مستوى الموظفين المصنفة في فئات (أقسام) مختلفة وإطار مفاهيمي يرسم

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النتائج المرغوبة وغير المرغوبة لأنشطة المسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات على الموظفين. وقد أظهرت النتائج أن الأبعاد المختلفة للمسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات لها تأثيرات مختلفة على الموظفين. كما تناولت الدراسة المتغيرات الوسيطة والمعدلة التي تؤثر على العلاقة بين المسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات من جهة و مواقف و سلوكيات الموظفين من جهة أخرى. وقد أسفرت الدراسة عن وجود فجوات مهمة وقدمت أجندة بحثية للدراسات المستقبلية، فلقد وجدنا عدد قليل من الدراسات التي تتناول الآثار السلبية للمسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات على الموظفين، وكذلك عدد قليل من الدراسات التي توضح كيف تؤثر الأبعاد المختلفة للمسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات على الموظفين بشكل مختلف. وتتضمن الدراسة أيضا التطبيقات العملية للشركات، حيث أن فهم التأثيرات المختلفة للمسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات على الموظفين يساعد المنظمات على تصميم وتنفيذ إستراتيجيات و سياسات المسؤولية الاجتماعية التي تعزز المواقف والسلوكيات الإيجابية للموظفين وكذلك منع أو تقليل المواقف والسلوكيات السلبية، وبالتالي خلق قيمة مضافة وتحقيق نمو مستدام للشركة.

1 Introduction

Although there is an extensive discussion in the literature about the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), most of these studies are interested in its impact at the organizational level. Few studies analyse its effect on individuals and, in particular, on employees. Only in the last decade, since 2010, some researchers began to focus on studying the relationship between CSR and employees of a company (e.g., Glavas 2016; Lee and Chen 2018; John et al. 2017; Du et al. 2015). A strong link was found between CSR and employees for two reasons: On the one hand, employees are one of the most important stakeholders that the organization should be responsible for (Farooq et al. 2014a, b; Siltaoja et al. 2015). They are affected by a company's policies and activities including CSR, whether internal or external CSR, and form different perceptions about these activities. On the other hand, employees are seen as a driver that is relevant for the business benefit of CSR (Gao and He 2017; De Roeck and Farooq 2018). Employees react, according to their perceptions about CSR, through different attitudes and behaviours such as participating in, and even leading CSR programs, work satisfaction, organizational commitment, and in-role and extra-role performance which, in turn, affect the economic performance of the company (Gao et al. 2018). So, companies should consider that employees have different views, needs, expectations, and motivations when designing and implementing CSR programs to improve the well-being of employees and achieve a competitive advantage (De Roeck and Maon 2018; Evans and Davis 2014; Park et al. 2018).

Most of the studies linking CSR to employee outcomes, which include employee attitudes and behaviours that could result from CSR actions and policies, investigate isolated outcomes such as employee satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviour, or organizational commitment. In addition, they focus mainly on the desirable outcomes of CSR on employees and not potentially the undesirable ones. What is missing is a comprehensive picture that maps the full spectrum of employee outcomes, whether desirable (i.e., being good for employees and/or the organization/society) or undesirable (i.e., being detrimental for employees and/or the organization/society). Moreover, simply asking *if* CSR creates certain employee outcomes underestimated the role of contextual factors such as individual differences (e.g., collectivism, empathy, demographic factors)

and organizational factors (e.g., organizational support, overall justice, ethical leadership, etc.). In fact, whether CSR has desirable or undesirable outcomes critically depends on the conditions under which it unfolds.

While scholars have investigated many of these influencing factors, there is, so far, no comprehensive overview of mediators and moderators that explain and could affect positively or negatively the relationship CSR can have on employees. Thus, advancing our understanding of employee outcomes of CSR can help companies to design and implement CSR strategies and programs that consider employee needs and expectations, which, in turn, foster supportive employee attitudes and behaviours that increase business returns.

To address this research gap, we conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) of 270 papers to give a full overview and to develop a conceptual framework of the relationship between CSR and employees, including current employees, job seekers and prospective employees. We systematically review articles that include not only the positive impacts of CSR on employees, but also the negative ones or the so-called “dark side of CSR” by Maon et al. (2019). In addition, some researchers differentiate between different dimensions of CSR, such as internal and external CSR, or Carroll’s four dimensions of economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary CSR. Hence, we specifically clarify the different effects of various dimensions of CSR on employees. Furthermore, we incorporate the mechanisms (i.e., mediators) that mediate these relationships and boundary conditions (i.e., moderators) that could strengthen or weaken these relationships.

As the field of CSR and employee outcomes is widely dispersed and spans different types of outcomes, the purpose of this study is to summarize and structure extant employee outcome research, including contextual, hindering, and catalysing factors and to outline a research agenda for CSR-employee outcome research as a multi-effect, multi-dimension phenomenon. To achieve this purpose, the following questions will be answered in the subsequent sections:

- What kind of employee outcomes can CSR generate?
- How can these outcomes be categorized?
- What are the mechanisms (mediators) that explain the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes?
- What are the boundary conditions (moderators) that could affect the relationship?
- What are the effects of different kinds of CSR on employee outcomes?

The organization of our paper proceeds in five steps: First, we provide a brief overview of the CSR concept and explain its different dimensions. Second, we introduce the research methodology of the SLR and provide a descriptive and thematic content analysis of the selected literature to give a general overview of the data. Third, based on the findings, we explain the different employee outcomes that could be generated by different kinds of CSR and clarify the mediators and moderators that could affect the relationship. Fourth, we classify employee outcomes into different categories/groups and develop a framework that links all employee outcomes

to CSR. Finally, we summarize our theoretical contribution and discuss practical implications, gaps, and a research agenda for the future.

2 Brief overview of CSR and employee outcomes

In this section, we define CSR, clarify its different dimensions, and explain what we mean by employee outcomes of CSR. Then, we will give a brief overview of the previous systematic literature reviews on the topic.

There is no consensus or widely accepted definition of CSR. The arguably most popular definition in the literature is that of Carroll (1991). He stated that “social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (philanthropic) expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (Carroll and Buchholtz 2009, p. 40). Another popular definition of CSR is the one articulated by The Commission of the European Communities (CEC), which defines CSR as “a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis” (CEC 2001, p. 4). On the other hand, many of the researchers in micro-CSR research, which is concerned with the study of the effects of CSR on individuals, adopt the definition of CSR as “context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders’ expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance” (Aguinis 2011, p. 858). Our focus in this paper is reviewing the literature on one part of the micro-CSR, namely with a focus on employees, and we, therefore, exclude other individuals such as investors, consumers, executives, and managers.

Researchers have classified CSR into multiple dimensions due to their different perspectives of what defines CSR. The most frequent classification of CSR used in the literature distinguishes between internal and external CSR (e.g., Hur et al. 2019; Edwards and Kudret 2017; Aggarwal and Singh 2022). Internal CSR (ICSR) refers to the activities, actions, and policies of the organization that are directed to the internal stakeholders of the organization, such as employees, while external CSR (ECSR) refers to activities, actions, and policies directed toward other stakeholders such as customers, governments, communities, and the environment (Zhao et al. 2020; Story and Castanheira 2019; Ouakouak et al. 2019). Some researchers differentiate between the four dimensions of CSR of Carroll, which are economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (e.g., Maignan and Ferrell 2001; Lin et al. 2012; Kim et al. 2018; Mohammed et al. 2022). Other researchers group CSR dimensions according to stakeholder groups such as community, employees, consumers, and environment CSR (e.g., Farooq et al. 2014a, b; Park et al. 2018), whereas few researchers such as Bohlmann et al. (2018) distinguish between social, economic, and environmental CSR.

Although there is no consensus about CSR definition in the literature, Dahlsrud (2008) reviewed and analysed 37 different definitions and developed the following five CSR dimensions:

- The stakeholder dimension, which refers to the organization's responsibility to all stakeholders such as customers, employees, shareholders, investors, government, community, and the environment.
- The economic dimension, which refers to the organization's obligation to generate profits to the shareholders and investors.
- The discretionary dimension or the voluntary activities of the organization that extends beyond the law.
- The social dimension, which includes the responsibility of the organization to have a positive impact on society.
- The environment dimension, which includes the organization's responsibility to protect and preserve the natural environment and promote green behaviours.

Most studies that investigate the CSR-employee-outcomes relationship have focused either on CSR's overall effects on employee outcomes, or on the effect of only one dimension of CSR on employees. There are few studies that differentiate between the effects of different dimensions of CSR on employee outcomes. Therefore, in our analysis, we follow the Dahlsrud's (2008) five CSR dimensions, as they cover almost all aspects of CSR mentioned in the definitions of CSR in previous studies and investigate whether each CSR dimension affects employee outcomes differently or not.

Regarding employee outcomes' definition, we go beyond the traditional focus on financial compensation to include all the employees' attitudes and behaviours that could result from the organization's actions and policies. These outcomes could be desirable or undesirable. Desirable employee outcomes include two subcategories, namely the desirable employee outcomes that have a positive relationship with CSR as well as the undesirable employee effects that have a negative relationship with CSR and are thus reduced. Similarly, undesirable outcomes or the so called "dark side of CSR" include two subcategories of detrimental employee outcomes of CSR, namely undesirable employee outcomes that have a positive relationship with CSR and desirable employee outcomes that decrease with CSR due to a negative relationship with it.

Concerning prior reviews that investigate the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes, Gond et al. (2017), in their systematic review of CSR at the individual level, consolidate and extend prior reviews of Aguinis and Glavas (2012), Rupp and Mallory (2015), Glavas (2016). They also clarify drivers, processes, and reactions of individuals to CSR and explain the mechanisms and boundary conditions that affect the relationship. Although this review is valuable and insightful in summarizing and analysing the effects of CSR at the individual level, we found various reasons for an up-to-date systematic review: First, they examined the CSR's overall effects on employees without differentiating between the different effects of different dimensions of CSR; second, they did not include undesirable employee outcomes of CSR; and third, they reviewed articles published until 2016, and we found a massive increase in the micro-CSR literature in the past six years, as 187 articles out of 270 (69%) examined in our review were published in the six years since their review.

We also found three additional reviews that are published recently which are Wang et al. (2020), Zhao et al. (2020), and Macassa et al. (2021). All of them were not inclusive because they, first, include only empirical studies; second, they did not include undesirable employee outcomes nor the complete list of positive outcomes, mediators, and moderators.

Onkila and Sarna (2022), in their recent systematic review of employee relations with CSR, have contributed important insights to our understanding, as the authors classified the literature into three categories (organizational implementation of CSR, benefits to organizations, and differences in employees' perceptions of CSR). In addition, they identified mediating categories between the main categories. However, this review is not up to date, as it includes articles published only until 2018, and more than half of the articles reviewed in our literature were published in the four years since their publication (142 out of 270). In addition, this review is more concerned with the importance of organizational-level policies, practices, and leader behaviour, as well as the benefits of CSR to employees from the organization perspective than the employee one, such as organizational reputation, external image, and strong relationships with employees. To summarize: we have identified several gaps and limitations that warrant an up-to-date systematic review. The points we have highlighted include:

- **Differentiation of CSR dimensions:** The previous reviews we mentioned did not differentiate between the various dimensions of CSR and their distinct effects on employees. We were looking for a review that delves into how different aspects of CSR might impact employees differently.
- **Undesirable employee outcomes:** The reviews we discussed have primarily focused on desirable employee outcomes resulting from CSR initiatives. Maon et al. (2019), for example, in their systematic review stated that future research should investigate undesirable employee outcomes of CSR and explain mediators and moderators that could have effect on the relationship. Therefore, we were interested in a review that includes both the desirable and undesirable outcomes of CSR on employees.
- **Recent literature:** The existing reviews have a time gap in terms of the articles they include, with many of the recent articles not being considered. Our interest lies in an up-to-date review that takes into account the significant increase in literature over the past few years.
- **Inclusiveness of studies:** Some of the reviews, e.g., Zhao et al. (2020), only included empirical studies, potentially excluding valuable insights from other types of research.
- **Mediators and moderators:** Zhao et al. (2020), in their systematic review called for more research on new employee outcomes, mediators and moderators. Likewise, Gond et al. (2017) suggested that future research should investigate how mediators interact and consider new individual differences. Our review comprehensively identified and presented employee outcomes of CSR as well as the mediators and moderators of the relationship.
- **Employee perspective:** While some reviews focused on the organizational perspective and benefits of CSR, we were interested in a review that empha-

sizes the impact of CSR on employees themselves. Previous systematic reviews, such as Wang et al. (2020), and Onkila and Sarna (2022), suggested that future research should approach employee-CSR research more as individual-level phenomenon.

Given these considerations, conducting an up-to-date systematic review that addresses these gaps and limitations in the existing literature could indeed contribute significantly to the understanding of the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes. Such a review could help researchers, practitioners, and organizations gain a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the topic.

3 Methodology

We conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) to identify, analyze, and synthesize the knowledge on employee outcomes of CSR. We followed the structured multistage process of Denyer and Tranfield (2009) and Shabir and Rosmini (2016), which consists of a planning phase, a scoping study, the selection of search parameters, the selection of publications as well as the data analysis and the synthesis of the publications (Denyer and Tranfield 2009; Garkisch et al. 2017; Pilbeam et al. 2012, p. 360; Shabir and Rosmini 2016).

Regarding the choice of database, we decided to limit our search to a database with a precise fit with our topic. We thus departed from previous systematic reviews that used Scopus or Web of Science. Given their multidisciplinary nature, these databases are advantageous for SLRs that combine research insights from highly disparate research disciplines. Given our specific research interest in CSR and employee outcomes, however, we deliberately decided to use the Business Source Complete (EBSCOhost) database. As the leading database in the field of business, this database not only covers the journals relevant to CSR research but also includes

Table 1 Topic-related and Sector-related search terms

Topic-related search terms	Sector-related search terms
TI (Corporate Social Responsibility OR CSR OR Corporate Social Initiative* OR Corporate Responsib* OR Social Responsib* OR Corporate Citizenship OR Triple Bottom Line)	AB (staff response* OR staff attitude* OR staff effect* OR individual performance OR individual reaction OR individual effect OR individual well-being OR individual wel#being OR employ* consequence* OR personnel development OR employ* outcome* OR employ* performance OR employ* attitude* OR employ* behavio#r* OR employ* well-being OR employ* wel#being OR internal stakeholder* OR employ* response* OR individual outcome* OR employ* reaction* OR employ* effect* OR Human Resource* OR Human Capital OR labo#r market*)

psychology and human resource research relevant to our interest in employee outcomes. While excluding other databases is a certain limitation of our research, we opted for EBSCOhost as a database with an appropriate balance between multidisciplinary scope and thematic focus. Nevertheless, we compared the EBSCOhost findings with other databases and found that the search results in different databases produced fairly similar results. Therefore, we decided to focus on the EBSCOhost database to identify the relevant articles over a long-time span (22 years) and use many keywords related to CSR and employees (see Table 1) to obtain and cover the relevant conceptual and empirical articles. However, in cases where it was not possible to access the full text, we used other databases, including ABI (ProQuest), Google Scholar, Science Direct, and Emerald, to retrieve the full text of the previously identified articles. The search covered studies published from 2001 to 2022 in English language and yielded 798 peer-reviewed journal publications in academic journals. We conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the identified publications.

3.1 Keywords and search strings

We organized our search terms into Topic-related terms (CSR) and Sector-related terms (covering the employee outcome part), as shown in Table 1. For both a list was discussed with other researchers, and feedback was incorporated. The search in Topic-related terms was limited to “title only” because we found thousands of articles before this limitation. In contrast, the search in Sector-related terms was extended to include abstracts and more search terms in order to cover all the employee outcomes related to CSR.

3.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

We applied inclusion and exclusion criteria for the systematic selection of publications (Denyer and Tranfield 2009; Shabir and Rosmini 2016). As the focus of our study lies on the available scientific knowledge, we decided to narrow down our search using the following criteria (Maier et al. 2016; Seuring and Müller 2008):

- Focus on CSR and Employee Outcomes: We were interested specifically in studies that explored the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its impact on employee outcomes. We included studies that directly addressed this relationship. However, we excluded studies that examined the factors that lead to CSR initiatives (antecedents of CSR) as well as studies that looked at the broader organizational outcomes of CSR.
- Impact on Current and Prospective Employees: Our intention was to gather research that pertains to the influence of CSR on both current and potential employees. Studies that explored the impact of CSR on middle or top managers were excluded.

- **Time Period and Type of Studies:** By including studies conducted between 2001 and 2022, We captured a comprehensive overview of how the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes has evolved over time. Additionally, we decided to include both conceptual and empirical studies to make a balanced approach that considers both theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence.
- **Publication Type and Language:** We chose to exclusively include peer-reviewed scientific publications in academic journals published in English in order to add a level of quality assurance to our study. Peer-reviewed articles are subject to rigorous evaluation by experts in the field, ensuring a certain standard of research quality. Thus, we excluded unpublished or grey literature, which may not have undergone the same level of scrutiny as peer-reviewed articles. By limiting the search to academic journals and English language publications, we further ensure that the sources are reputable and accessible to a wide audience.

After going through the titles, abstracts, and conclusions of the retrieved articles and applied our predefined criteria to determine whether the articles meet our research focus, we reduced our sample to 336 publications.

The preliminary screening was followed by a more comprehensive evaluation of the full texts to ensure they truly aligned with our inclusion/exclusion criteria. This thoroughness enhances the credibility of our systematic review by minimizing the risk of including irrelevant or inappropriate studies. We excluded 66 additional studies that were upon closer inspection not in line with our inclusion/exclusion criteria. Our final sample thus consists of 270 peer-reviewed journal studies (Table 2).

3.3 Qualitative data analysis

Our approach to qualitative data analysis is detailed and systematic. Here's a breakdown of the steps we have taken and the tools we have used for analyzing the 270 identified publications:

- **Data Set and Software Usage:** We utilized the 270 publications that we had previously selected as our data set for qualitative content analysis. To facilitate this analysis, we employed MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software known for its capabilities in structuring, coding, and analyzing qualitative data. This soft-

Table 2 Numbers of publications per search step

Description	Number of publications
Relevant peer-reviewed publications in the specified period	798
Publications after reading of Abstracts and Conclusions	336
Final publications after reading of content	270

ware helps in managing the complexity of handling a large number of publications and their content.

- **Deductive and Inductive Coding:** We applied a combined approach of deductive and inductive coding. We had deductive overarching categories (e.g., CSR outcomes, mediators, moderators, and CSR dimensions), while when it comes to filling these categories with content such as types of outcomes, that was inductive coding. This dual approach allowed us to both explore emergent themes and validate concepts that were predefined based on existing knowledge (deductive).
- **Code Reorganization and Merging:** After the initial coding, we moved on to reorganizing, merging, and structuring the codes. This step likely involved identifying relationships between codes, grouping similar ones together, and creating a more organized framework of thematic elements.
- **Code Consolidation:** As a result of organizing and structuring the codes, we arrived at a total of 18 different codes that encapsulated the key concepts, themes, or patterns present across all 270 publications.
- **Conceptual Framework Development:** The qualitative data analysis yielded valuable insights that guided the development of a conceptual framework. This framework outlines the various employee outcomes that can result from embracing different dimensions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). By synthesizing the themes identified through coding, we have created a structured representation of the complex relationship between CSR and employee outcomes.

4 Descriptive results

Prior to our thematic analysis, a quantitative evaluation of the data set was conducted to condense the selected publications and to provide a holistic overview (Seuring and Muller, 2008; Tranfield et al. 2003). This includes the distribution of papers over time (1), the occurring journals (2), the applied research methodologies (3), and the mechanisms (theories) that explain the relationship (4).

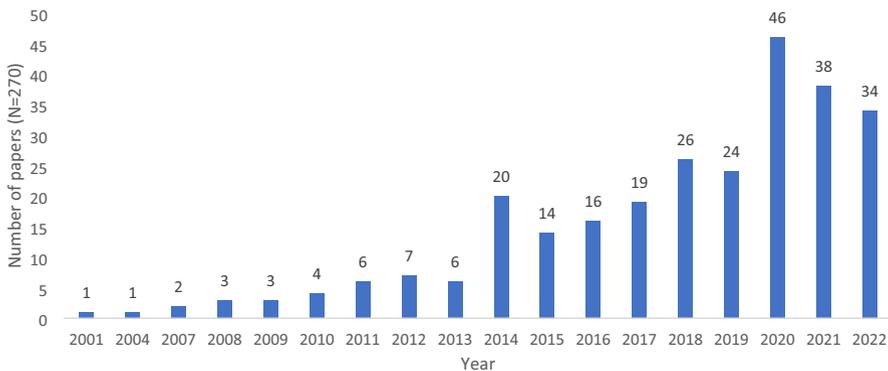


Fig. 1 Distribution of papers per year across time period studied

By putting the results into context, we derive conclusions and propositions regarding the future development of the research field.

4.1 Distribution of publications over time

The 270 publications are distributed along the selected time period of 22 years (2001–2022) as shown in Fig. 1.

The trend pattern shown in Fig. 1 suggests a clear evolution in the research landscape related to employee outcomes of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) over the 22-year period from 2001 to 2022. Let's break down the pattern step by step:

- **2001–2013: Few publications.** During this initial phase, spanning from 2001 to 2013, there were only a limited number of publications focused on employee outcomes of CSR. This could be due to several reasons, such as the relatively early stages of research interest in this specific aspect of CSR or a lack of awareness about the potential impact of CSR on employee-related issues.
- **2014–2022: Rapid increase.** Starting from 2014 and continuing until 2022, there was a notable increase in the number of publications on this topic. This increase could be attributed to a growing recognition among researchers, businesses, and academia about the importance of understanding how CSR initiatives influence employee outcomes. As organizations began to prioritize CSR and its impact on various stakeholders, including employees, researchers responded by investigating these connections and generating more publications.
- **2020–2022 vs. 2001–2019: Rapid catch-up.** One of the most striking observations is that the combined number of publications during the last three years (2020–2022) nearly matches the total number of publications in the preceding 19 years (2001–2019). This rapid catch-up signifies a substantial shift in research attention and resources toward understanding the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes. It also highlights a growing urgency among researchers to explore and analyze this topic comprehensively.
- **Recent trends: A notable surge and stabilization at a high plateau (2014–2022).** Within the 2014–2022 period, there was a particularly remarkable spike in publications in 2020, followed by a slight decrease in 2021 and 2022. However, the annual publication numbers for 2021 and 2022 remained higher than those of any year preceding 2020. This sustained high level of annual publications can be interpreted as reflecting two key aspects. On the one hand, the overall high publication number reflects the growing significance of employee-related CSR in business practices, a heightened awareness of the importance of employee well-being, and the prominence of micro-level views in CSR. On the other hand, the first two-year decrease in publication numbers in our sample suggests a consolidation of the research fields that mirrors a certain research maturity, thus presenting a strong case for synthesizing the body of scholarly knowledge.
- **The opportunity for a timely review.** Given the surge in publications, the pronounced interest in the topic in recent years, and indicators for growing maturity of the research field, conducting a review of the literature at this point appears to

be timely and relevant. The increased activity and engagement from researchers and academics during 2018–2022 present an opportune moment to synthesize the existing knowledge, take stock, identify remaining gaps, and offer insights that could guide future research and business practices in the realm of CSR and its effects on employee outcomes.

In summary, the trend pattern showcases a trajectory of growing interest and research output in the area of employee outcomes of CSR, with a significant acceleration in the past few years. This evolving landscape offers an exciting opportunity to better understand how CSR initiatives impact employees and to contribute valuable insights to both academia and industry.

4.2 Distribution in main journals

The total of 270 identified publications are derived from 92 different journals which cover a wide variety of different scientific fields, including fields such as CSR, Organizational Behaviour, Human Resource Management, psychology, management, and ethics.

The broad spectrum of academic journals makes sense because the topic of CSR and employee outcomes covers a great variety of disciplines and scientific studies which often results in interdisciplinary studies. Despite the great variety of scientific disciplines and academic journals, some journals deliver a stronger contribution to the existing body of literature, as shown in Fig. 2. Corporate Social Responsibility & Environmental Management clearly plays a leading role in the existing body of literature with a total of 42 publications, followed by the Journal of Business Ethics with 24 publications. Journals relevant to employees such as Human Resource, Psychology, and OB journals include a total of 40 publications.



Fig. 2 Overview of leading journals. Note that prior to 2021, the journal now known as 'Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility' was titled 'Business Ethics: A European Review'

4.3 Applied research methodologies

Research methodologies in the selected publications were grouped into three categories: qualitative methods; quantitative and mixed methods; and conceptual and literature review.

Most publications are quantitative and mixed methods (223 out of 270). Conceptual and literature review publications follow with 28 studies. As the least frequent method, 19 studies used a qualitative approach.

4.4 Underlying mechanisms (theories) of employee outcomes to CSR

After reviewing the literature, we found that researchers used different mechanisms to explain why CSR activities have an impact on employees. Most of the articles were linked to three theories, which are: Social identity and organizational identification theories, social exchange theory, and signalling theory. Other theories used include theories of justice, self-determination theory, cue consistency theory, social learning theory, attribution theory, expectancy theory, and stakeholder theory.

We give a brief overview of the most frequent theories that are used by researchers.

4.4.1 Social identity and organizational identification theories

Social identity and organizational identification theories are the most frequent theories that explain employee outcomes of CSR (108 out of 270 studies). According to these theories, employees are more likely to identify with organizations that have a good image, like those communicated by CSR. Being part of such organizations make employees feel pride and, hence, achieve their self-esteem need, which results in positive employee outcomes such as in-role and extra-role performance (e.g., Deng et al. 2020; Ali et al. 2020; Chaudhary 2020).

4.4.2 Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory is the second most frequent theory in our literature sample (63 out of 270 studies). According to this theory, employees react to the policies and actions of the organization according to their assessments of costs and benefits (Sanusi and Johl 2020). When they perceive mutual benefits from the interaction with the organization, they feel trust in the organization (Memon et al. 2020). CSR enhances the benefits for employees through enhancing overall justice, organizational support, trust, and the subsequent attitudes and behaviours such as job satisfaction, turnover intention, and organizational commitment (e.g., De Roeck and Maon 2018; Ahmad et al. 2020; Kim et al. 2020).

4.4.3 Signalling theory

Signalling theory, which is used 14 times in the studies reviewed, is related more to external CSR rather than internal CSR (Gond et al. 2017). Its use is linked to the attraction of job seekers and prospective employees through giving them signals or indications of the kind of treatment they will face once they are hired (Pfister 2020; Jamali et al. 2019). Companies embracing CSR activities give prospective employees an indication that these organizations are fair, trusted, and caring for their employees and society, and hence, they will expect a good treatment once they are hired to such organization (Rupp and Mallory 2015; Klimkiewicz and Oltra 2017; Tkalac Verčič and Sinčić Ćorić 2018).

To our knowledge, researchers have focused mainly on studying the effects of CSR on isolated positive employee outcomes. Few of them investigate potentially negative ones. In addition, these outcomes were fragmented and not categorized in groups. So, the next chapter will look at the methodology that enables us to synthesize the literature on CSR's effects on employees, put them in categories, explain how the literature is developed over time, and clarify the mechanisms and conditions behind this relationship.

5 Thematic findings

In this section, we review and structure the full range of effects that the literature discusses as effects of CSR on employees. In our analysis, we distinguish between the normative assessment of an effect (desirability) and the descriptive assessment of how CSR is related to it (correlation). Here, the normative assessment reflects whether a certain effect is seen as desirable (i.e., being good for employees and/or the organization/society) or undesirable (i.e., being detrimental for employees and/or the organization/society). In turn, the descriptive assessment reflects whether CSR is positively related to this effect (thus increasing it) or negatively related (thus decreasing the effect). In the combined analysis, desirable employee outcomes thus include two subcategories, namely the desirable employee outcomes that have a positive relationship with CSR as well as the undesirable employee effects that have a negative relationship with CSR and are thus reduced. Similarly, undesirable outcomes or the so-called “dark side of CSR” include two subcategories of detrimental employee outcomes of CSR: first, undesirable employee outcomes that increase due to a positive relationship with CSR; second, desirable employee outcomes that decrease with CSR due to a negative relationship with it. In addition, we clarify the mechanisms (mediators) that explain the relationship between CSR and each employee outcome as well as the boundary conditions (moderators) that could have an impact on the relationship.

Table 3 Descriptive summary of thematic findings

Outcome	Num-ber of articles	Key theories	Mediators	Moderators
Organizational pride	4	Implicit theory, appraisal theory, affect social exchange theory		perceived work motivation Patterns
Organizational identification (OI)	40	Social identity & social exchange theories	Perceived external prestige, organizational pride, organizational trust, overall justice	Collectivism, other-regarding value orientation, empathy, CSR importance, organizational support, first-party justice, overall justice, ethical leadership, high-commitment working systems, & corporate ability
Organizational commitment (OC)	63	Social identity theory	Employee engagement, O justice, work meaningfulness, organizational support, OI, external prestige, CSR involvement, organizational pride and trust	Gender, education, tenure, age differences, cultural differences, CSR typologies
Organizational attractiveness & job pursuit intentions	17	Signalling theory, social identity theory	Corporate image, reputation, organizational pride & OI	Person-organization fit, CSR education, other-regarding value orientation, age, area of knowledge
Employee engagement	26	Social identity & social exchange theories	External image, OI, organizational trust, job satisfaction, procedural and distributive justice, work meaningfulness, Employer brand	Top management support, gender, collectivism, CSR importance, employees' moral identity beliefs, employee age
Job satisfaction (JS)	38	Stakeholder, social identity & social exchange theories	Corporate image, OI, organizational pride, organizational embeddedness, fulfilment of job needs, work meaningfulness	CSR proximity, internal CSR perception, employee age, CSR typologies
Employee well-being	13	Social identity & social exchange theories	Organizational trust, work meaningfulness, gratitude, compassion at work, OI, OC, JS	CSR importance, CEO's humble leadership

Table 3 (continued)

Outcome	Num-ber of articles	Key theories	Mediators	Moderators
In-role performance	29	Social identity & social exchange theories	OI, OC, JS, quality of working life, employee engagement, OCB, prosocial motivation	Leadership styles, employees' work motivation patterns, managers' involvement in CSR activities, organizational reputation, employment type
Organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB)	51	Social identity, social learning, social exchange theories	OI, OC, JS, organizational trust, task significance, gratitude, compassion at work, prosocial motivation, ethical leadership, CSR reputation	First-party justice, moral identity, task significance, CSR importance, cultural differences, other-regarding value orientation, CSR typologies, contextual factors
Pro-environmental behaviours	20	Social identity theory	OI, OC, employee well-being, environmental orientation fit, moral reflectiveness, co-worker pro-environmental advocacy, environmental commitment	Corporate entrepreneurship, ethical leadership, green HRM, attachment styles of employees, employees' CSR motive attributions, empathy, environmental consciousness, environmentally specific servant leadership, tenure
Pro-social behaviours	8	Social identity, social learning, & self-determination theories	OI, organizational pride & trust, satisfaction of employees' psychological needs for competence and relatedness, employees' attitudes toward donations	Ethical leadership perception, organizational tenure
Other positive employee outcomes	19	Social identity theory	Organizational identification, employee intrapreneurial behaviour, work engagement and psychological safety	<i>Human capital, relational capital</i>

Table 3 (continued)

Outcome	Num-ber of articles	Key theories	Mediators	Moderators
Reduction of undesirable effects	45	Stakeholder, social identity & social exchange theories	JS, OC, OI, organizational trust, company's reputation, work meaningfulness & engagement, higher-order quality of work life, perceived ethical leadership, work engagement	Corporate ethical values, Satisfaction with pay, satisfaction with the job, age, contextual factors and employees' demographic features, CSR typologies
Undesirable effects	11	Social identity theory	OI, person-organization fit, work meaningfulness	Task significance, employees' public value awareness, moral identity, satisfaction with pay and the job

5.1 Descriptive summary of thematic analysis

Before explaining the desirable and undesirable employee outcomes of CSR in more details, the following Table (Table 3) serves to descriptively summarize our thematic results. It shows how many times each outcome is mentioned in our sample and links each outcome with the key theories, mediators, and moderators that explain the relationship between CSR and each employee outcome.

5.2 Desirable employee outcomes of CSR

CSR outcomes that ultimately result in desirable effects for employees encompass not only the desirable employee outcomes that are positively related with CSR but also the undesirable employee outcomes that have a negative relationship with CSR, as engaging in CSR activities help companies to reduce such undesirable impacts on employees. Most of the literature about employee outcomes of CSR was related to desirable outcomes (259 articles out of 270 studies). These employee outcomes could be directed at the individual, organization, and/or the society and environment.

5.2.1 Organizational pride

Organizational pride refers to “the extent to which individuals experience a sense of pleasure and self-respect arising from their organizational membership” (Jones 2010, p. 859). It is a positive feelings and emotions related to belonging to an organization.

Most of the studies reviewed investigate only the mediating effect of organizational pride on the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes such as employee performance (Donia et al. 2019; Edwards and Kudret 2017), job satisfaction (Dumitrescu and Simionescu 2015), organizational commitment (Zhou et al. 2018), employee voluntary pro-environmental behaviour (Raza et al. 2021), and employees’ desire to have a significant impact through work (John et al. 2017). On the other hand, we found only four studies from our sample dealing with organizational pride as a positive employee outcome, and not only a mediator, which leads to other positive outcomes in a causal relationship (Cheruiyot and Maru 2014); Zhou et al. 2018; Ng et al. 2019; Asante Boadi et al. 2019).

5.2.2 Organizational identification (OI)

Organizational identification (OI) is the most frequently mentioned attitude in our sample, as a mediator and outcome. Since in addition to being mentioned frequently as a mediator in many articles, it is mentioned 40 times as a positive outcome. OI is defined as the “perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization, where the individual defines him or herself in term of the organization(s) of which he or she is a member” (Mael and Ashforth 1992). Ahmed and Khan (2019), in their

survey of 277 employees in companies in Pakistan, state that OI has two dimensions: affective and evaluative OI. Affective OI is linked to employee's emotional attachment to the organization, while evaluative OI is related to the employee's positive assessment of the organization's CSR (Ahmed and Khan 2019). Based on social identity and social exchange theories, CSR enhances the relationship between the organization and the employee through enhancing OI and organizational trust (De Roeck and Maon 2018). Cheema et al. (2020a, b), through their survey of 374 employees assert that employees identify with a socially responsible organization when they perceive that it has a positive image among stakeholders. They feel pride of being part of it, which in turn, increases their self-esteem and self-worth (Wang et al. 2020; Mascarenhas et al. 2020; Rodrigo et al. 2019). Some researchers state that there is a positive direct relationship between CSR and OI (e.g. Evans and Davis 2014; He et al. 2019; Shen and Benson 2016), while others argue that this relationship is not direct and is mediated by other factors such as perceived external prestige and organizational pride (e.g. De Roeck et al. 2016), organizational trust (e.g. de Roeck and Delobbe 2012; Ghosh 2018), or overall justice (e.g. de Roeck et al. 2014).

Few researchers distinguish between the different effects of different dimensions of CSR on OI. For example, Ahmed and Khan (2019) state that ICSR has a stronger link with affective OI, while ECSR is related more with evaluative OI. Also, Kim et al. (2020), based on a survey from employees of a hotel company in the USA, state that only ethical and philanthropic CSR had significant direct effects on employee OI, while Zhao et al. (2019) argue that economic and philanthropic CSR increase pride and external image of the organization, which leads to higher OI. Based on data collected from 378 employees working in South Asian local and multinational companies, Farooq et al. (2014a, b) conclude that employee CSR has the strongest effect on OI, followed by community CSR, and then consumer CSR. On the other hand, environmental CSR has no significant effect on OI according to Farooq et al. (2014a, b).

In addition, our review revealed that individual differences and organizational factors could strengthen or weaken this relationship. Individual differences that proved to affect this relationship include collectivism (Farooq et al. 2014a, b), other-regarding value orientation (Evans et al. 2011a, b), empathy (Tian and Robertson 2019), CSR importance (Korschun et al. 2014). Organizational factors include organizational support (Shen and Benson 2016), first-party justice (Ghosh 2018), overall justice (De Roeck et al. 2016), ethical leadership (De Roeck and Farooq 2018), high-commitment working systems (Lin and Liu 2019), corporate ability (Brammer et al. 2015), and CSR communication (Wang and Pala 2020).

5.2.3 Organizational commitment (OC)

Organizational commitment (OC) is the most frequently mentioned outcome of CSR in the literature (63 out of 270 studies reviewed). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001, p. 301) define OC as "a force that binds an individual to a course of action that is relevant to a particular target" (Lu et al. 2020). It has three dimensions: affective organizational commitment (AOC), normative commitment, and continuance commitment

(Rodrigo et al. 2019). AOC refers to “an emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization” (Allen and Meyer 1990, p. 1), while normative commitment is related to the ethical and moral obligation of employees to remain in the organization (Rodrigo et al. 2019). Finally, continuance commitment is related to the employees’ perceived benefits and costs that result from remaining in the company (Ahmad et al. 2020). Most of the studies investigating the CSR effects on commitment have focused mainly on AOC (e.g., Mory et al. 2016; Muel-ler et al. 2012; Zhu et al. 2014).

Although organizational commitment, especially AOC, seems similar to OI, they are different constructs. OI, which implies the feeling of oneness with the organization, is not necessarily followed by other actions or behaviors. On the other hand, AOC involves intention to act as well as potential reactions to the organization’s CSR (Rodrigo et al. 2019). According to social identity theory, OI is an antecedent to AOC. When employees feel pride of being part of a socially responsible organization, they identify with it and achieve self-concept and self-esteem, which in turn, increase their affective organizational commitment. Few studies investigate the effect of CSR on normative commitment. For example, Mory et al. (2016), in their study of the effect of ICSR on organizational commitment, found that AOC plays a mediating role in the relationship between CSR and normative commitment.

Farooq et al. (2014a, b) state that only the discretionary dimension of CSR is related to OC, while Farooq et al. (2014a, b) argue that employee CSR has the strongest effect on OI, trust, and affective OC, followed by community CSR. Our review also revealed that only one study clarifies the additional variance on employee commitment that is explained by CSR (54.1% of the total variation is explained by CSR) (Mensah et al. 2017).

Overall, researchers examined the indirect relationship between CSR and OC through some mediators such as CSR involvement (Carlini and Grace 2021), job satisfaction (Chatzopoulou et al. 2021; Loor-Zambrano et al. 2020), employees’ psychological capital (Papacharalampous and Papadimitriou 2021), employee engagement (Gupta 2017; Gupta and Sayeed 2016), work meaningfulness and perceived organizational support (Glavas and Kelley 2014), organizational identification and organizational trust (De Roeck and Maon 2018; Farooq et al. 2014a, b; Malik 2015; Suh 2016), perceived external prestige (Bravo et al. 2017), organizational CSR climate and employees’ CSR-induced attributions (Lin et al. 2022), and organizational pride (Supanti et al. 2015; Tahlil Azim 2016; Zhou et al. 2018). Regarding moderators, individual differences (e.g., gender, education, tenure, age differences, and cultural differences) found to have a moderating effect on the relationship between CSR and OC (Brammer et al. 2007; Bravo et al. 2017; Hofman and Newman 2014; Mensah et al. 2017; Mueller et al. 2012). In addition, George et al. (2020), in their attempts to identify the relationship between perceived CSR and employees’ affective commitment, state that CSR importance moderates the relationship between CSR and affective commitment through organizational trust.

5.2.4 Organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intentions

Organizational attractiveness (OA) refers to the benefits that potential applicants or current employees perceive in working for a specific company (Jiang and Iles 2011). Signalling theory and social identity theory are the most frequent mechanisms that explain the relationship between CSR and organizational attractiveness (12 out of 17 studies). According to signalling theory, CSR has a positive effect on attracting job applicants and talented people to apply for organizations (Pfister 2020). Organizations reduce the information asymmetry in the market through sending signals to prospective employees about their positive working conditions and other responsibilities related to society and environment and hence, attract them to apply for such organizations (Farooq et al. 2014a, b; Lin et al. 2012). Similarly, social identity theory suggests that CSR enhances corporate image and reputation, which in turn increases the expected pride, identification, and consequently organizational attractiveness of potential employees (Bohlmann et al. 2018; Klimkiewicz and Oltra 2017).

Some studies examined whether different aspects/ dimensions of CSR have independent association with job applicants' attraction to organizations e.g. (Pfister 2020; Bohlmann et al. 2018; Lin et al. 2012). According to signaling theory and expectancy theory, Lin et al., (2012) assert that there is a positive effect of the economic and legal dimension of CSR on organizational attractiveness and career success expectations, while the ethical and philanthropic dimension of CSR do not have an effect on career success expectations. Also, Lis (2012), who used a policy-capturing design to explore how job applicants' attraction to organizations is affected by different CSR dimensions. He examined different aspects of CSR (i.e., product, diversity, environment, employee relations) and found that the strongest effect on organizational attractiveness was related to diversity and employee relations aspects of CSR as compared to the other two dimensions. Moreover, based on the categorization of CSR dimensions as social, economic, and environmental, Bohlmann et al. (2018), based on an experimental vignette methodology, revealed that the positive effect of the social dimension of CSR was the strongest on organizational attractiveness as compared to other dimensions. Likewise, Pfister (2020) confirms that the social dimension of CSR has the strongest effect on organizational attractiveness, followed by the ethical dimension, and then the environmental dimension.

In addition, according to the person-organization fit perspective, applicants prefer to apply for organizations that reflect their values and preferences (Kim and Park 2011; Zhang and Gowan 2012). For example, strong formalists are affected more with ethical and legal aspects of CSR, whereas high Machiavellians are less attracted to organizations with high ethical and legal performance (Zhang and Gowan 2012). Other individual factors that were found to moderate this relationship include: CSR education and other-regarding value orientation (Evans and Davis 2011; Evans et al. 2011a, b), age, and area of knowledge (Barrena-Martínez et al. 2015).

5.2.5 Employee engagement

Employee engagement refers to “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al. 2002, p. 74). It is also defined as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (Kahn 1990, p. 694). Simpson et al. (2020) differentiate between CSR engagement and organizational engagement. CSR engagement is the employee willingness to know about and participate in CSR activities, while organizational engagement refers to the complete involvement of employees to the organization and dedication to achieve its goals, values, and beliefs (Simpson et al. 2020).

Based on social identity and social exchange theories, there is a positive relationship between CSR and employee engagement (Glavas and Piderit 2014; Tahlil Azim 2016; Afsar et al. 2020a, b). According to social identity theory, CSR enhances the external image of the organization and OI, which in turn increases employee engagement (Ali et al. 2020; van Dick et al. 2019). Furthermore, according to social exchange theory, organizational trust mediates the CSR-employee engagement relationship (Memon et al. 2020). Other mediators include job satisfaction, procedural justice, and distributive justice (Lu et al. 2020), work meaningfulness (Afsar et al. 2020a, b), and employer brand (Hosseini et al. 2022). Moreover, Smith and Langford (2011) show empirically that CSR has an additional impact on employee engagement beyond the impact of traditional HR practices.

Regarding moderators, top management support is proved to strengthen this relationship (Opoku-Dakwa et al. 2018; Santhosh and Baral 2015). In addition, Farrukh et al. (2020), in their investigation of the effect of gender on the CSR-engagement relationship, have argued that women are affected more by CSR than men. Other moderators include collectivism (Lu et al. 2020), CSR importance (van Dick et al. 2019), and employees’ moral identity beliefs (Afsar et al. 2020a, b).

Regarding the impact of different kinds of CSR, Gupta and Sharma (2016), who conducted a comprehensive literature review to examine the impact of CSR on engagement and performance, state that internal CSR has stronger effects on employee engagement than external CSR. Also, according to Smith and Langford (2011), ethical CSR had a stronger relationship with employee engagement than did legal CSR. Saad et al. (2021) argue that CSR toward society and CSR toward employees have a strong effect on employee engagement, While CSR toward customers have no effect on employee engagement.

5.3 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is the “pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (Locke 1976, p. 1304). Vlachos et al. 2014; Khaskheli et al. (2020) distinguish between intrinsic job satisfaction (i.e., satisfaction with the job itself) and extrinsic job satisfaction (i.e., satisfaction with the job’s external factors such as pay, working environment, and co-workers).

Most of the studies used social identity, stakeholder, and social exchange theories to explain the effect of CSR on job satisfaction (e.g., De Roeck and Maon 2018; Low et al. 2017). As Story and Castanheira (2019); Mascarenhas et al. (2020) state, CSR, internal or external, enhances corporate image and OI, which leads to job satisfaction. In addition, Khaskheli et al. (2020), based on a survey conducted from employees of Pakistan organizations, reveal that employees' CSR perception has a positive and significant effect on intrinsic job satisfaction but a negative effect on extrinsic job satisfaction. Also, Sanusi and Johl (2020), who proposed a framework to evaluate the influence of ICSR perception on employee intention to job continuity, state that the positive internal CSR perception of employees increases their job satisfaction, which in turn, increase employees' intention to job continuity.

Overall, researchers investigating the relationship between CSR and job satisfaction include some mediators such as organizational pride & organizational embeddedness (Ghosh and Gurunathan 2014; Ng et al. 2019), fulfilment of job needs (Du et al. 2015; Lee and Chen 2018), organizational identification & organizational trust (De Roeck and Maon 2018; Ko et al. 2019; Lin and Liu 2019), company's reputation (Baric 2017; Dögl and Holtbrügge 2014; Voegtlin and Greenwood 2016), organizational justice (Chen and Khuangga 2021), and work meaningfulness (Glavas and Kelley 2014; Raub and Blunschi 2014). Furthermore, CSR proximity, which refers to "the extent to which employees know about and/or are actively involved in their organizations' CSR", moderates the effect of CSR on job satisfaction (Du et al. 2015). Employee age has a moderating effect in this relationship (Nyuur et al. 2022).

5.3.1 Employee well-being

Employee well-being includes physical, emotional, psychological, and social aspects (Krainz 2015; Promislo et al. 2012). The relationship between CSR and employee well-being could be direct or indirect through mediators such as organizational trust (Yu and Choi 2014) or work meaningfulness (Gazzola 2014). Guzzo et al. (2020), who aimed to understand how CSR leads to improving employees' well-being and OCB, distinguish between hedonic well-being, which is related to life satisfaction, and eudaimonic well-being, which is related to personal growth. They found a positive direct relationship between employees' CSR perception and eudaimonic well-being, while the effect on hedonic well-being was indirect and fully mediated by gratitude and compassion at work (Guzzo et al. 2020). In addition, Svergun and Fairlie (2020), based on a survey of 703 employees, argue that employees' CSR perception have a negative relationship with stress symptoms, and buffer the positive relationship between stress symptoms, on one hand, and negative employee outcomes of depression symptoms and turnover intention, on the other hand. They also found that job satisfaction and organizational commitment partially mediate the relationship (Svergun and Fairlie 2020).

Promislo et al. (2012) examined the effect of ethics and social responsibility on personal well-being, which includes: life satisfaction, vitality, job stress, and sleep problems. They found that a company's perceived role of ethics and social responsibility had a strong positive impact on life satisfaction and vitality but had no effect

on job stress and sleep problems. Zaighum et al. (2021) and Espasandín-Bustelo et al. (2021) state that internal CSR has a positive effect on employee's satisfaction and happiness. In addition, Kim et al. (2018) concluded that the economic and philanthropic dimensions of CSR enhance the employees' quality of working life, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life, while ethical and legal dimensions of CSR do not have a relationship with quality of working life (Kim et al. 2018). On the other hand, Kim et al. (2020) argue that economic CSR has a direct positive relationship with quality of working life, while ethical and philanthropic CSR has indirect positive relationship with quality of working life, through OI.

5.3.2 In-role performance

In-role performance (also named employee job/task performance or employee productivity) refers to "the behaviour directed towards formal tasks, duties, and responsibilities that are written in their job description" (Story and Neves 2015). Chaudhary (2020), who aimed to study the impact of employees' perception of CSR on their in-role and extra-role behaviours, state that all dimensions of CSR have a strong and positive effect on in-role performance. In contrast, Edwards and Kudret (2017), based on a case study in a multinational company, found that all CSR dimensions have an impact on in-role performance except CSR to shareholders. According to social identity theory, employees perceived external CSR is positively related to job performance through the mediation of OI (He et al. 2019; Shen and Benson 2016; Story and Castanheira 2019). On the other hand, social exchange theory explains the relationship between internal CSR and employee performance (Story and Castanheira 2019). In addition, although Almeida and Coelho (2019) as well as Edwards and Kudret (2017) found that organizational commitment mediates the relationship between CSR perception and in-role performance, Story and Castanheira (2019), based on a sample of 190 supervisor-subordinate dyads, did not support this argument and state that affective commitment did not mediate this relationship. They argue that job satisfaction partially mediates the ECSR-employee performance relationship, and fully mediate the ICSR-employee performance relationship (Story and Castanheira 2019). Other mediators include employee engagement and well-being (Ali et al. 2020; Kim and Kim 2020), quality of working life (Asante Boadi et al. 2020), job crafting (Hur et al. 2021), OCB (He et al. 2019), and prosocial motivation (Shin and Hur 2020).

Regarding moderators, perceived organizational support strengthen the relationship between CSR and job performance (Hur et al. 2021). Asante Boadi et al. (2019) investigate the moderating effect of employees' work motivation patterns (i.e., autonomous motivation and controlled motivation) and found that autonomously motivated employees have a stronger positive moderated impact on the relationship between employees CSR perception and their performance. In addition, Vlachos, Panagopoulos, and Rapp (2014) state that leadership styles and managers' involvement in CSR activities moderate the impact of CSR on employee performance. Employment type also has a moderating effect of CSR on job performance (Yu et al. 2022).

5.4 Organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB)

Organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is the second most frequent employee outcome of CSR in our literature sample, after organizational commitment (51 out of 270 studies). It is defined as “an individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ 1988, p.4). This behaviour could be directed at other individuals inside the organization (OCB-I) (Aguinis and Glavas 2019), or the organization as a whole (OCB-O) (Rupp et al. 2013).

Most of the researchers used social identity and social exchange theories to explain the positive relationship between CSR and OCB. For example, (De Roeck and Maon 2018; Evans and Davis 2014; Hansen et al. 2011; He et al. 2019; Park et al. 2018; Tourigny et al. 2019) found that organizational identification and organizational trust mediate the positive relationship between CSR and OCB. Likewise, Yates (2020) has confirmed the claim that organizational trust mediates the relationship between CSR perceptions and OCB. In contrast to these previous studies, Ahmad et al. (2020), in their investigation of the impact of perceived CSR on OCB in Pakistani universities, found that organizational trust does not mediate the relationship. Other mediators include: CSR reputation (Chomvilailuk and Butcher 2022) task significance (Raub and Blunschi 2014), organizational commitment (Tahlil Azim 2016), job satisfaction (Álvarez-Pérez et al. 2020), gratitude and compassion at work (Guzzo et al. 2020), prosocial motivation (Ong et al. 2018), CSR involvement (Carlini and Grace 2021), and supervisors’ ethical leadership (Gao and He 2017).

Regarding moderators, Rupp et al., (2013), based on a scenario-based experiment and a survey, found that while employees’ first-party justice perceptions weaken the positive relationship between CSR and OCB-O, their moral identity strengthened this relationship. Other moderators include task significance (Ong et al. 2018), CSR importance (van Dick et al. 2019), cultural differences, i.e., collectivist and feminine personal traits (Jamali et al. 2019), organizational tenure (Wong et al. 2021), and other-regarding value orientation (Evans et al. 2011a, b).

Few researchers distinguish the different effects of different types of CSR on OCB. Evans et al. (2011a, b), based on social learning theory, revealed that only the economic dimension of CSR was significantly related to OCB, while other dimensions not. On the other hand, Wong et al. (2021) state that ethical and philanthropic CSR enhance employee’s attitude toward CSR, job satisfaction and OCB, whereas economic and legal CSR do not have a significant impact on attitude toward CSR. In addition, Hur et al. (2019) found that internal CSR perceptions are more strongly related to OCB than external CSR perceptions are. Furthermore, Ahmed and Khan (2019) state that employee and community dimensions of CSR have a direct and indirect (through OI) relationship with OCB. Contrary to the findings of Evans et al. (2011a, b), Chaudhary (2020) found that all CSR dimensions (i.e., CSR toward employee, customer, government, society, and environmental) have a significant and positive impact on in-role performance and OCB.

5.4.1 Pro-environmental behaviours

Although few studies were found in the literature that examine the relationship between CSR and employees' pro-environmental behaviours (20 out of 270 studies), there is an increasing interest in recent years about the topic. In fact, more than two thirds of the studies examining the relationship were published from 2020 to 2022 (14 out of 20 studies), and the rest of them were published since 2017. So, this topic is considered new in the literature, which can explain why prior reviews examining employee outcomes of CSR did not address this relationship.

Pro-environmental behaviour or organizational citizenship behaviour for the environment (OCB-E) or green behaviours refer to the "discretionary acts by employees within the organization not rewarded or required that are directed toward environmental improvement" (Daily et al. 2009, p. 246). Although OCB-E is derived from OCB, the two constructs are not similar. As OCB include the set of voluntary behaviours that mainly benefit the organization, OCB-E encompasses the voluntary behaviours that are directed to the benefit of the environment (Cheema et al. 2020a, b). Ones and Dilchert (2012) group pro-environmental behaviours into five main categories: working sustainably, avoiding harm, conserving, influencing others, and taking initiative (Kongrerk 2017). In contrast, Cheema et al., (2020a, b) differentiate between three dimensions of OCB-E among employees: the first dimension is related to the participation of employees in organizational environmental programs (i.e. eco-civic engagement), while the second dimension is related to inspiring and helping co-workers to engage in pro-environmental behaviours (i.e. eco-helping), whereas the third dimension is related to taking initiative, suggesting and implementing new ideas that benefit the environment (i.e. eco-initiatives) (Cheema et al. 2020a, b).

The relationship between CSR and pro-environmental behaviours could be direct (e.g. Afsar et al. 2018) or indirect through organizational identification (e.g. De Roeck & Farooq 2018; Islam et al. 2019; Tian & Robertson 2019; Cheema et al. 2020a, b), organizational trust May et al., (2021) OI and co-worker pro-environmental advocacy (Shah et al. 2021), organizational pride and employee engagement (Raza et al. 2021), environmental orientation fit (Cheema et al. 2020a, b), organizational commitment (Kongrerk 2017), employee well-being (Raza et al. 2020), and employees' attitude toward CSR and job satisfaction (Wong et al. 2021). In addition, Afsar and Umrani (2020), through a survey to 560 employees, reveal that moral reflectiveness, co-worker pro environmental advocacy, and environmental commitment partially mediate the relationship between CSR and OCB-Es.

Different CSR dimensions have different effects on green behaviours, as based on a survey of 35 different companies in South Asia in the manufacturing industry, De Roeck and Farooq (2018) state that environmental CSR has a direct and indirect effect on green behaviours, while community CSR has no direct effect on green behaviours. Likewise, Islam et al. (2019) proved that environmental CSR positively affect pro environmental behaviours through OI. Moreover, Yang and Gao (2021), in their study of the effect of different dimensions of corporate environmental responsibility (CER) on employees, demonstrate that substantive

CER has a positive direct and indirect (through OI) effect on pro-environmental behaviours of employees. While symbolic CER has a negative direct effect on pro-environmental behaviours (Yang and Gao 2021). Likewise, Yin et al. (2021) found that employees' environmental passion and empathy mediate the relationship between environmental CSR and environmental citizenship behaviour.

Regarding moderators, Luu (2017), who collected data from 637 employees and 214 department managers in the hotel industry in Vietnam business context, revealed that corporate entrepreneurship acts as a change force for employees' behaviours and interact with CSR in predicting OCB-E. He also found that the attachment styles of employees moderate the relationship between CSR and OCB-E, as attachment anxiety strengthened, and attachment avoidance weakened the positive relationship between CSR and OCB-E. Likewise, Cheema et al. (2020a, b) state that corporate entrepreneurship and environmental consciousness moderate the positive effect of CSR on OCB-Es. Furthermore, perceived ethical leadership and environmentally specific servant leadership strengthen the effect of CSR on green and societal behaviours (Afsar et al. 2018; De Roeck and Farooq 2018). In addition, Afsar et al. (2020a, b) have examined the moderating effect of employees' CSR motive attribution and found that substantive CSR motive attribution strengthened the positive relationship between CSR perception and OCBEs, while symbolic CSR attribution weakened this relationship. Other moderators include green HRM and responsible leadership (He, Morrison, & Zhang, 2020), empathy (Islam et al. 2019; Tian and Robertson 2019), employees' workplace spirituality (Yang & Gao 2021), and organizational tenure (Wong, Kim & Hwang, 2021).

5.4.2 Pro-social behaviours

Prosocial behaviours or societal citizenship behaviours refer to the voluntary acts by employees that are directed to the well-being of the whole community (De Roeck and Farooq 2018). We found very few studies that investigate the employees' CSR outcomes that are directed to the society (8 out of 270 studies). John et al. (2017), based on a case study of a firm in Pakistan, reveal that organizational identification and organizational pride fully mediate the positive effect of CSR on employees' desire to have a significant impact through work, which refers to the employees' preference to do a job that has a major impact on the society and the lives of others. Moreover, according to self-determination theory, involving employees in the CSR decision making increases their intention to persistently engage in prosocial behaviours through the satisfaction of employees' psychological needs for competence and relatedness (Tao et al. 2018). In addition, according to social identity and social learning theories, employees' identification with socially responsible organizations increases their engagement in CSR donation programs at work, which in turn, increases their societal citizenship behaviours, such as donations and volunteering, outside of work (Lewin et al. 2020).

Regarding the different effects of different CSR dimensions on prosocial behaviour, De Roeck and Maon (2018) reveal that internal and external CSR have a positive effect on society-oriented employee outcomes through the mediation of OI

and organizational trust. Moreover, De Roeck and Farooq (2018) found that community CSR has a direct and indirect impact (through OI) on employees' societal behaviours, while environmental CSR has only an indirect effect on societal behaviours. They also found that ethical leadership perception moderates the relationship between perceived environmental and community CSR and employees' societal behaviours (De Roeck and Farooq 2018). In addition, Sultan (2014) reveals that employees' perceptions of discretionary CSR have a positive indirect effect on their donation intentions outside the work through the mediation of OI and employees' attitudes toward donations, respectively. Moreover, Wong, Kim & Hwang, (2021) state that ethical and philanthropic CSR enhance employee's attitude toward CSR, job satisfaction and pro-social behaviour, whereas economic and legal CSR do not have a significant impact on attitude toward CSR.

5.4.3 Other positive employee outcomes

CSR has a positive direct and indirect relationship (through OI) with employee creativity and innovative behaviour (Brammer et al. 2015; Glavas and Piderit 2014; Luu 2020; Afridi et al. 2020; Dung 2021), and organizational innovation (Wang 2014; Ubius and Alas 2012; Li et al. 2019). In addition, organizations can use CSR programs to improve the knowledge, skills, and competencies of employees (through, for example, educational programs and professional training), which in turn, reduce the skill gaps in the labour market (Camilleri 2016). Also, CSR can enhance knowledge sharing behaviours of employees (Farooq et al. 2014a, b), sustainable safety behaviours (Hur et al. 2022), intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (e.g., Getele et al. 2020; Kunz 2020), as well as employee advocacy intention in social media (Lee 2021).

5.4.4 Reduction of undesirable employee outcomes

We found that 45 studies of our sample lie in this category. Most of them (35 studies) are related to the role of CSR in reducing turnover intentions of employees (e.g., Ouakouak et al. 2019). Turnover intention refers to the employees' desire to leave the company due to dissatisfaction with their company and/or potential better opportunities with other companies (Hansen et al. 2011). Vitaliano (2010) proved empirically that engaging in CSR activities can have an additional impact on turnover intentions of companies. Other researchers found that job satisfaction and organizational commitment leads to lower turnover intentions (e.g., Camilleri 2016; Hollingworth and Valentine 2014; Low et al. 2017; Tao et al. 2018). Furthermore, different dimensions of CSR have a different effect on turnover intention. For example, Park et al. (2018), based on an online survey to 455 employees at the largest travel company in South Korea, found that employee and customer dimensions of CSR have a positive effect on employee intention to stay in the organization through the mediation of work engagement, while environmental and community dimensions of CSR do not have a significant impact on work engagement. Moreover, J. (Sunny) Kim et al. (2020), based on survey from employees of a casino hotel company in

the USA, state that ethical and philanthropic dimensions of CSR have a positive and indirect effect on intention to stay through OI and higher-order quality-of-work-life (HQWL), while economic CSR has a significant indirect effect on intention to stay through HQWL only. Regarding moderators, Vlachos et al. (2014) found that employee satisfaction with pay strengthens the positive effect of CSR on intention to stay, while satisfaction with the job itself tempers such effect. Moreover, contextual factors and employees' demographic features have a moderating effect on the relationship between CSR and turnover intentions (Wisse et al. 2018; Garrido-Ruso and Aibar-Guzmán, 2022).

In addition, we found a negative relationship between CSR and undesirable employee outcomes such as employee cynicism, deviance, and alienation from work. Cynical employees believe that their organization lacks fairness, integrity, and honesty and work for its self-interest over the interest of other stakeholders, which in turn produces negative feelings toward it (e.g., distress, pessimism, and hopelessness). As a result, they behave negatively at work through, for example, criticizing the organization to outsiders and reduce discretionary behaviours such as OCB (Serrano Archimi et al. 2018; Sheel and Vohra 2016). In a similar vein, employee deviance is a negative behaviour of employee that violates organization's norms such as stealing, acting rudely to others, working less, and covering up mistakes (Evans and Davis 2014). Finally, alienation from work arises when employees feel that work does not satisfy their needs and expectations, which result in a state of psychological separation from work, low enthusiasm, and concern for work (Sharma 2018).

Some researchers such as (Sheel and Vohra 2016) show empirically that there is a negative direct relationship between perceived CSR and organizational cynicism. Others argue that organizational identification and trust mediate the negative relationship between perceived CSR and employee cynicism and deviance (e.g., Evans and Davis 2014; Serrano Archimi et al. 2018). Moreover, Sharma (2018) demonstrate that corporate ethical values increase OCB and reduce alienation from work. In addition, Fairlie and Svergun, (2015) reveal that employees' positive perceptions of organizational CSR have a negative effect on stress symptoms, depression symptoms, and turnover intentions. Finally, Tafolli and Grabner-Kräuter (2020), reveal that there is a negative indirect effect between employees' perceived CSR and perceived organizational corruption, through the mediation of perceived ethical leadership and job satisfaction.

5.5 Undesirable employee outcomes of CSR

After reviewing all studies related to the employee outcomes of CSR, we found very few studies that discuss the undesirable employee outcomes of CSR (only 11 out of 270 articles). Note that undesirable employee outcomes of CSR include not only the undesirable employee outcomes that increase with CSR due to a positive relationship with it but also desirable employee outcomes that decrease because of a negative relationship with CSR.

Maon et al. (2019), in their review of undesirable outcomes of CSR, conclude that undesirable employee outcomes are driven by either exchange-related

(performing) and/ or identity-related (belonging) tensions. They argue that performing tensions could be linked to the attributions of corporate motivations for engaging in CSR or the perceived content and outcomes of such CSR engagement. On the other hand, belonging tensions arise when employees encounter opposing or inconsistent demands on their identity, which foster contradiction and strains in terms of their values, beliefs, or priorities (Maon et al. 2019). When employees face differences between their beliefs about the importance of CSR (i.e., the role of business in society) and their perceptions about their organizations' CSR engagement, they sense "CSR incongruence", which result in negative effects on their performance and quality of their work life (Maon et al. 2019).

When employees perceive that their organizations practice CSR activities for self-serving purposes (i.e., symbolic CSR), their relationships with the organization as well as the consequent work-related attitudes and behaviours are negatively affected (Donia et al. 2019; Donia and Tetrault Sirsly 2016). Also, when employees perceive too much altruistic motives for CSR, they believe that their organizations are not competent enough to take care of its business and, consequently, of its employees (Vlachos et al. 2014). Likewise, Story and Neves (2015) state that symbolic CSR attributions of employees leads to employee cynicism and negatively affects in-role and extra-role performance. At the same time, substantive CSR attributions alone is not enough and may also result in negative effects on employee outcomes. It is only the combination of both, substantive and symbolic CSR, that has positive effects on employee outcomes according to (Story and Neves 2015). In addition, Babu et al. (2020), in their investigation of the relationship between corporate hypocrisy and employee's engagement in CSR, found that corporate hypocrisy increases CSR symbolic attributions of employees, which in turn decreases employees' engagement in voluntary CSR activities, directed at the organization or society. They also state that this relationship is stronger for employees higher in task significance (Babu et al. 2020).

Moreover, Scheidler et al. (2019) investigate the impact of external–internal CSR jointly on employee attitudes, intentions, and behaviours. They state that employees' perception that the company invests more in external than internal CSR leads to increased perceptions of corporate hypocrisy, emotional exhaustion and, consequently, turnover intentions. In addition, it negatively affects the relationship between the organization and employees and increases deviant behaviours among employees (Maon et al. 2019). Jung and Kim (2016) argue that companies are more likely to focus more on external than internal CSR because of limited resources and competing demands. They state that companies' involvement in external CSR (i.e., community, consumer, and environmental CSR) is more likely to have a negative consequence on different employment relations outcomes. Considering limited resources, companies tend to implement HR policies (such as controlling employment growth, implementing restructuring policies, and increasing contingent employment) that increase organizational efficiency and reduce costs in order to offset the costs related to CSR activities, which, in turn, increases employees' insecurity and affects employee outcomes negatively (Jung and Kim 2016).

Deng et al. (2020) in their investigation of the relationship between different levels of external CSR and employee productivity, conclude that CSR could have a

negative impact on employee productivity. At low levels of external CSR, the impact on employee productivity is negative. At the same time, the same negative relationship between external CSR and employee productivity occurs because of the additional costs and burdens that the company incurs as a result of the high levels of CSR activities, which affects their financial performance, and hence, their employee productivity negatively. Only at a moderate level of external CSR, Deng et al. (2020) found a positive impact on employee productivity. Moreover, they tested the moderating effect of internal CSR on the relationship and found that high levels of ICSR increase employee productivity (Deng et al. 2020).

Brieger et al. (2020) investigate the relationship between CSR and employee work addiction, which refers to the employees' tendency to work excessively hard, which result in negative consequences in their personal lives, well-being, and families. They found that although organizational CSR has a negative direct relationship with employee work addiction, it has also a positive indirect effect on employees' work addiction through the mediation of OI and work meaningfulness. CSR increases employees' identification with the organization and their perception of work meaningfulness, which in turn increases their tendency to work hard at the expense of their well-being and personal lives. In addition, employees' public value awareness was investigated as a moderator in the relationship, and the results proved that the indirect effect of CSR on employee work addiction is stronger when employees' public value awareness is high (Brieger et al. 2020).

List and Momeni (2021) conduct a natural field experiment with over 1500 employees on the relationship between CSR and employee misbehaviour. They found that CSR can increase the tendency and intensity of employee's misbehaviour due to the effect of moral licensing. CSR enhances employees' self-image because of the ethical and pro-social acts of employees it brings. Consequently, CSR can increase employees' shirking on their primary job duties because of the moral licensing effect of CSR (List and Momeni 2021).

Regarding moderators, Donia and Tetrault Sirsly (2016) investigate the moderating effects of employees' moral identity and self-orientation on the relationship between perceived symbolic CSR attributions and employee attitudes and behaviors. They found that symbolic CSR attributions positively affects employees' counter productive work behaviors such as employee deviance and negatively affects employees' positive attitudes and behaviors such as OI, organizational commitment, and OCBs. Moreover, the relationships are stronger when employee moral identity is high and when self-orientation is low (Donia and Tetrault Sirsly 2016). Donia et al. (2019) reveal that CSR importance has a moderating effect on the negative relationship between symbolic CSR attributions and individual performance (through the mediation of person-organization fit), such that the relationship will be stronger when CSR importance is high. In addition, Vlachos et al. (2014) have examined the moderating effects of two types of employees' satisfaction (i.e., satisfaction with pay and satisfaction with the job itself) on the relationship between CSR and employees' intentions to stay and positive recommendations. They found that these two types of job satisfaction interact with CSR differently and could weaken (attenuate) the positive effect of CSR on employee intention to stay and positive recommendations

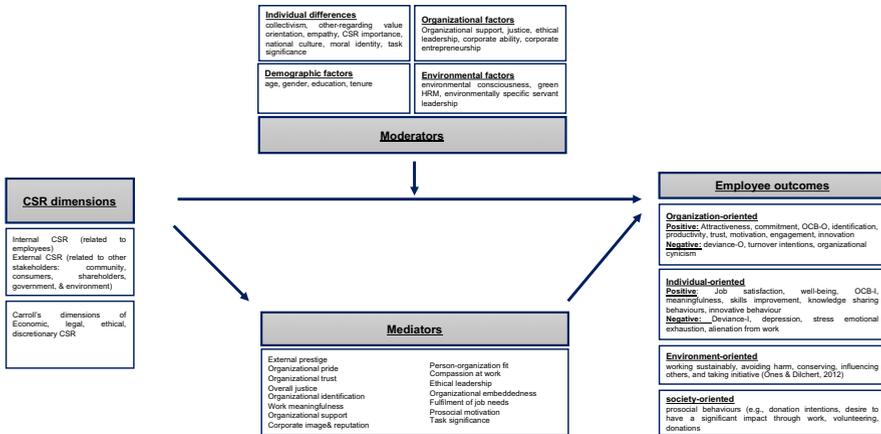


Fig. 3 Conceptual framework of employee outcomes of CSR

when satisfaction with pay is low and also when satisfaction with the job itself is high (Vlachos et al. 2014).

6 Discussion and conceptual framework

6.1 Theoretical contribution

Our systematic review contributes to the literature in different ways. It gives a comprehensive overview of desirable and undesirable employee outcomes of CSR classified into four groups: organization, individual, society, and environment-oriented outcomes. In addition, it clarifies the relationship between employee outcomes as well as the mechanisms and boundary conditions that influence the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes. Moreover, we explain the different effects of different CSR dimensions on employee outcomes, as we found that the different dimensions of CSR do not have the same effect on employee attitudes and behaviours.

We build a conceptual model (see Fig. 3) that summarizes and reflects the literature. First, CSR has different meanings, definitions, and dimensions. We clarify the most popular definitions in CSR and micro-CSR literature. In addition, we found that 60% of the studies reviewed in our sample examine the overall effect of CSR on employees without differentiating between the effects of different dimensions of CSR on employee outcomes. The rest of the studies in our sample (109 studies) investigate the effect of one or more dimensions of CSR on employees. In our framework, we include the two most mentioned categorizations in our literature sample. The classification of internal versus external CSR is the most frequent classification of CSR mentioned in our sample with 26 studies examining the effect of internal CSR, 5 studies investigating the effect of external CSR, and 24 studies investigating the effects of both kinds of CSR. The second most frequent classification of CSR

is Carroll's (1991) dimensions of economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary CSR, as we found 26 studies that distinguish between the different effects of these four dimensions of CSR on employees.

Second, regarding employee outcomes, we use the distinction by De Roeck and Maon (2018) who classify employee outcomes of CSR into three groups: organization, individual, and society-oriented employee outcomes. In addition, we add a fourth group which is directed to the natural environment. Organization-oriented outcomes refer to the employees' attitudes and behaviours that have a direct impact on organizational performance, such as organizational commitment, OI, turnover intentions, and OCB directed at the organization. In contrast, individual-oriented outcomes are related to employees' attitudes and behaviours that affect their personal well-being, such as job satisfaction. We found that most of the studies reviewed were related to these two groups (242 out of 270 studies). On the other hand, society-oriented outcomes include the employee attitudes and behaviours that are related to the well-being of the whole community and the lives of others, such as donations to charities and volunteering in social programs. We found only 8 studies that investigate employee outcomes of CSR that are directed at society. Finally, the fourth group, environment-oriented employee outcomes, encompasses the employee attitudes and behaviours directed at the natural environment. Ones and Dilchert (2012) classify them into 5 main groups: working sustainably, avoiding harm, conserving, influencing others, and taking initiative. We found only 20 in this group, almost all of them published in the past few years. In addition, we identify the desirable and undesirable outcomes in each group and found very few studies that examine undesirable impacts of CSR on employees (11 out of 270) and all of them are directed to the individual and the organization. There is no study that addresses undesirable employee outcomes that are related to society and the environment.

Interestingly, the distinction between mediators, moderators, and outcomes is not clear. In fact, many outcomes are mediators for other outcomes, which can be explained by the fact that we have a multi-step process or causal relationships between outcomes with some theories explaining part of the process and other theories explaining the other part(s) of the process. For example, some researchers use social identity theory to explain the effect of CSR on employee behaviours through a multi-step process, as CSR enhances employee emotions such as organizational pride, which, in turn, increases the positive attitudes of employees such as organizational identification and organizational commitment in a sequential manner. These positive attitudes are translated into positive employee behaviours such as in-role and extra-role performance and pro-environmental behaviours. Other researchers use the social exchange path to clarify the relationship between CSR and employee attitudes and behaviours through the mediation of organizational justice and organizational trust, respectively. Hence, we conclude that most of the literature reviewed in our sample reveals that the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes is complex and follows a sequential model of mediations rather than a parallel mediation model.

Third, regarding mediators, many authors use social identity and social exchange theory to explain the mediating roles of organizational pride and organizational trust as a mechanism that explain the effect of CSR on employee outcomes (159 times).

Interestingly, almost all studies treat organizational pride and trust as mediators that explain the relationship and not as positive outcomes themselves. We found only 4 studies that consider organizational pride as a positive outcome and no study that examines organizational trust as a positive outcome. This is considered a gap in the literature and hence, we call for explicit research that treats these two factors as outcomes of their own, and not only as mediators. In addition, we found that some mediators are used as moderators by others such as person-organization fit, organizational support, overall justice, and ethical leadership. Therefore, more research is needed that distinguishes between their roles in the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes.

The last column in our conceptual model (Fig. 3) is related to the moderators that could strengthen or weaken the relationship. We classify moderators into four groups. The first group includes individual differences such as person-organization fit, collectivism, other-regarding value orientation, empathy, CSR importance, national culture, moral identity, and task significance, while the second group includes demographic factors such as age, gender, education, and tenure. In contrast, organizational factors include organizational support, first-party justice, overall justice, high-commitment working systems, ethical leadership, corporate ability, and corporate entrepreneurship. The last group is the environmental factors, which include factors such as environmental consciousness, green HRM, environmentally specific servant leadership. Figure 3 shows the conceptual framework of our review and summarizes CSR dimensions, mediators, moderators, and employee outcomes.

This review seems timely, as the last comprehensive review of Gond et al. (2017) reviewed the literature on micro foundation of CSR until 2016. We found a massive increase in the micro-CSR literature in the past six years, as 187 articles out of 270 (70%) examined in our review were published in the last six years. In addition, to our knowledge, this is the first review that explains and synthesizes the society-oriented and environment-oriented employee outcomes of CSR. Moreover, unlike previous reviews, we synthesized the literature about undesirable employee outcomes of CSR and classified them to individual or organization-oriented outcomes.

6.2 Practical implications

This systematic literature review delves into the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and employee outcomes, offering practical insights for companies seeking to understand and leverage these dynamics.

Firstly, there is a need for continuous monitoring and measurement of employees' perceptions of CSR. Managers should actively engage with these perceptions to respond promptly and cultivate a positive image of the company's CSR initiatives. This proactive approach contributes to strengthening relationships with employees, attracting and retaining high-quality staff, and fostering positive attitudes and behaviours. Additionally, addressing negative perceptions is crucial. Companies should be careful about potential negative attitudes and behaviours resulting from a poor perception of CSR, such as cynicism and counterproductive work behaviours.

Moreover, cultivating favourable CSR perceptions involves also embedding CSR into core business operations, ensuring congruence between actions and stakeholder expectations. Actively involving employees in CSR activities, from planning to implementation, contributes to building a positive employer-employee relationship. Detecting and rectifying these issues can lead to a competitive advantage and sustainable organizational growth.

The review highlights also the importance of understanding the differential effects of various CSR dimensions on employee outcomes. This knowledge empowers managers to design and implement specific types of CSR initiatives that meaningfully enhance positive employee outcomes. A proper balance between CSR for internal and external stakeholders is deemed crucial to avoid feelings of unfairness, breach of trust, and cynicism among employees. Managers should prioritize employees' well-being alongside external CSR efforts to maintain internal harmony.

The implications extend to human resources management, challenging the notion that economic rewards are the sole motivators for employees. Investing in CSR initiatives is portrayed as a tool in human resources management, serving to motivate employees and attract and retain talented individuals. Moreover, recognizing the conditions under which CSR positively influences employees allows companies to tailor relevant human resource management policies. For instance, CSR can be strategically used to retain talented managers and appeal to younger employees.

Finally, transparent CSR communication is essential. Organizations should articulate their CSR communications clearly, providing information about CSR objectives, relevance, and overall impact on the company, society, and employees. Transparent communication helps diminish employee skepticism, fostering a positive perception of CSR authenticity and cultivating a healthy and productive employer-employee relationship.

6.3 Limitations and future research directions

The review has limitations. The search was limited to specific databases, and different databases could have generated different results. In addition, we restricted our search to only titles that included CSR-related terms. In future studies, a more expansive approach could be adopted, considering the keywords as well. Moreover, we decided to limit the search to peer-reviewed journal articles, while there could be interesting book chapters and working papers on the topic.

Additionally, the focus of our literature was on the employee outcomes of CSR and mechanisms that explain these outcomes. Future research could include the drivers (antecedents) of CSR at the individual level in order to clarify the forces that trigger CSR engagement.

Most of the existing research primarily focuses on employee outcomes related to individual and organizational aspects. Only 28 out of 270 studies explore the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on outcomes directed towards society or the environment, such as pro-environmental behaviour. Future investigations should emphasize the influence of CSR on employees' attitudes and behaviours contributing to community well-being and environmental preservation.

Moreover, a noticeable gap exists in understanding employees' perceptions of their company's motivation for engaging in CSR, with only 8 out of 270 studies addressing this aspect. This gap may contribute to the scarcity of studies revealing negative impacts of CSR on employees, particularly when employees perceive CSR activities as self-serving (symbolic CSR), resulting in adverse effects on organizational relationships, work-related attitudes, and behaviours.

Additionally, there is a dearth of studies investigating undesirable impacts of CSR on employees, especially those related to society and the environment. Future research should delve into the undesirable outcomes of CSR initiatives, shedding light on potential adverse effects on employees and broader communities.

Further investigation is warranted to examine the role of contextual factors, such as geographical region, national culture, industry sector, and economic status, in determining employees' CSR outcomes. Additionally, there is a need to explore novel employee behavioural outcomes like creativity, innovative work behaviour, and employee advocacy behaviour, as well as adverse outcomes like organizational cynicism, employee deviance, counterproductive work behaviour, and perceived organizational corruption. These emerging themes require attention in future research to advance the existing knowledge base.

Future research should also consider societal factors in CSR-Employee outcomes relationship that may strengthen or weaken the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes. This includes investigating the influence of social needs, networks, role models, family support, and the societal and economic circumstances of employees' families.

7 Conclusion

The primary objective of this paper was to explore the correlation between various dimensions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and diverse employee outcomes. The methodology was a systematic review, which involved a thorough examination of existing literature pertaining to CSR and its impact on employee outcomes, leading to the development of a comprehensive conceptual framework. This framework not only delineates the desirable and undesirable outcomes of CSR activities on employees but also incorporates the underlying mechanisms (mediators) and contextual factors (moderators) influencing this relationship.

The analysis of the literature underscored that each dimension of CSR exerts distinct effects on employees' attitudes and behaviors. Notably, the majority of studies predominantly focused on outcomes at the individual or organizational levels.

The research reveals that out of 270 studies, only 28 investigate the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on societal and environmental outcomes, such as pro-environmental behaviour. Additionally, the understanding of employees' perceptions of their company's CSR motives is limited, with just 8 studies exploring this, potentially explaining why few studies report CSR's negative impacts on employees. These perceived negative impacts, especially when CSR is seen as symbolic or self-serving, can adversely affect organizational relationships and employee behaviour. Furthermore, there remains a scarcity of research on the potentially harmful effects

of CSR on employees, particularly in societal and environmental contexts. We call on future research to address these gaps.

In addition to its theoretical contributions, the review has practical implications. Recognizing the diverse effects of CSR on employees proves valuable for companies, enabling managers to discern the relative significance of these effects and, consequently, formulate and implement CSR strategies and policies that generate business value. A key recommendation is for managers to actively monitor and assess employees' perceptions of CSR, allowing for prompt responsiveness and the cultivation of a positive perception regarding the company's CSR initiatives. This proactive approach not only enhances the company's relationship with employees but can also facilitate the attraction and retention of highly qualified staff, thereby fostering increased productivity, commitment, and other positive attitudes and behaviors.

Moreover, by addressing negative perceptions stemming from CSR, such as cynicism, emotional exhaustion, and counterproductive work behaviors, companies can preemptively detect and rectify potential issues. This, in turn, culminates in a competitive advantage and sustainable growth for the organization.

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Data availability The authors confirm that all data generated or analysed during this systematic review are included in this article.

Declarations

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