

The Affective and Behavioral Consequences of Employee Participation in Corporate Social Responsibility: Field Experimental Evidence

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to discretionary organization-sponsored practices and policies to preserve and contribute to society's welfare (e.g., Barnett, 2007; Matten & Moon, 2008; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). Corporations worldwide are increasingly implementing socially responsible programs and policies (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Ong, Mayer, Tost & Wellman, 2018). Over the past decades, research on CSR focused on building the business case for CSR, which has evolved from a very narrow approach, focusing on the direct link between CSR and financial performance, to a more complex and broader perspective (De Roeck & Maon, 2018). Although the business case for CSR is critical to several organizational actors (e.g., corporate boards, upper echelon business executives, CEOs), the goal of CSR is to contribute to society's welfare. Alas, the overwhelming focus on the business case for CSR has prevented the field from providing substantive insight into how CSR can fulfill its promises to society (Barnet, Henriquez, & Huste, 2020). This study addresses this research imperative by examining whether employee participation in CSR initiatives can influence employees' engagement in corporate-sponsored volunteering activities "for delivering care and compassion to causes and communities in need" (Grant, 2012; 589).

Corporate volunteering (CV) refers to corporate-sponsored activities through which employed individuals voluntarily bestow time and effort for an external or social cause (e.g., Grant, 2012; Rodell et al., 2016) and is a critical component of most organizations' corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies. Over the past two to three decades, companies increasingly offer some sort of support for employees to volunteer (e.g., Points of Light Foundation, 2006; Committee to Encourage Corporate Philanthropy, 2018). Moreover, CV has become the world's fastest-growing type of voluntary activity (Bussell & Forbes, 2008; United Nations Volunteers, 2018), and is an important vehicle to address critical societal challenges worldwide (Rodell, Booth, Lunch, & Zipay, 2017). For example, IMPACT 2030, a global private sector-led collaboration¹, aims to mobilize corporate volunteers to contribute directly and sustainably to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study examines whether and how participation in CSR can influence employees' decision to become corporate volunteers and the frequency with which employees volunteer—behaviors that directly benefit society.

Employees often describe participation in social impact activities as "feel good" experiences (e.g., Rodell et al., 2017; United Health Group, 2013). Thus, participation in CSR underscores an affective experience for employees. I build on affective events theory (AET; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) as a guiding framework to explain the enduring emotional mechanisms through which employee participation in CSR can have downstream behavioral effects. I posit that the episodic emotions employees experience when participating in a CSR initiative will influence enduring emotions (organizational pride, organizational gratitude, and workplace empathy), which in turn influence subsequent employee engagement in corporate volunteering programs. In addition, because affect has, in turn, downstream effects on behaviors (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Frijda, 1994), these three enduring emotions are hypothesized to be

¹ IMPACT 2030's founders include Google, IBM Corporation, Johnson & Johnson, SAP SE, UPS, and The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company.

potential mediators of the effect of participation in CSR on subsequent corporate volunteering behavior.

This study accomplishes its objectives by evaluating a field experiment in which 221 new employees in a large bank were randomly assigned to participate or not in a CSR initiative as part of their official new-employee orientation process. As part of the CSR treatment, randomly assigned employees participated in a day-long community outreach initiative designed to provide one-on-one vocational coaching to high school students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Employees' affect was self-reported in a survey two weeks after implementing the CSR initiative, and their subsequent corporate volunteering behavior was provided by the bank seven months after that. Compared to employees in the no-treatment control group, randomly assigned employees participated at a higher rate and more intensely in subsequent corporate volunteering initiatives. Moreover, treated employees reported higher levels of workplace empathy and organizational pride, but not of organizational gratitude. Workplace empathy is the only robust mediator examined herein of CSR's effect on subsequent engagement in corporate volunteer initiatives.

I seek to contribute to three distinct bodies of literature: CSR, corporate volunteering, and emotions in work-life. I extend the CSR literature by evaluating whether and how CSR can improve society's welfare through its effect on employees. Specifically, using a rigorous field experiment, this paper shows that employee participation in CSR can have a treatment effect on employees' subsequent engagement in corporate volunteering. Thus, I contribute to the nascent research on whether CSR can fulfill its promises to society (Barnet et al., 2020). I also extend the CSR literature by offering robust causal evidence for the influence of participation in CSR on both affective and behavioral employee outcomes. Researchers have not been able to assess if there is, in fact, a treatment effect of participation in CSR because employees tend to self-select into these programs (Bode & Singh, 2018; Grant & Wall, 2009). This study addresses this challenge head-on to examine whether random assignment and participation in a CSR initiative can influence employees' subsequent engagement in corporate volunteering through affective mechanisms.

I contribute to the corporate volunteering literature by (1) examining employees' assignment to a CSR initiative as a novel and impactful antecedent of corporate volunteering behavior and (2) concurrently approaching CV as both employees' likelihood of becoming volunteers and frequency of participation in subsequent CV initiatives. I extend positive emotions theories by emphasizing the role of enduring emotions as important mechanisms linking the experience of episodic emotions to downstream behaviors. Specifically, I develop and test a model where the affective experience triggering positive episodic emotions (CSR initiative), mediated by enduring emotions (organizational pride, organizational gratitude, workplace empathy), influences behavioral outcomes (engagement in corporate volunteering). As such, this study also responds to calls for more CSR and corporate volunteering research on emotions and affect (Gond et al., 2017; Rodell et al., 2016; Rupp & Mallory, 2015). Finally, this study points to relevant practical implications for organizational leaders searching to promote employees' corporate volunteering behaviors and psychological resources.