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Book of Abstracts

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The relationship between corporate social responsibility and work engagement: the mediating role of affective commitment and the moderating role of responsible leadership

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Sustainable development goals (SDGs) impose added challenges to organizations. As key agents of such development pattern, organizations must integrate social and environmental considerations, along economic ones, in their daily activities and business strategies. While getting companies onboard is essential for the success of the 2030 agenda, the path forward is not always clear. Introducing corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices within the organization, companies can foster work engagement. This involves the voluntary adoption by organizations of practices encompassing environmental, social, and stakeholder concerns, which has emerged as a key instrument in their strategy to achieve success and gain an advantage in an increasingly competitive market (European Commission, 2001; Duarte & Neves, 2011). By having these types of practices on the organization, companies will be able to foster work engagement.

Work engagement is defined as work-related psychological state that is as a positive and fulfilling that stem from the combination of three interrelated dimensions: vigor, absorption, and dedication. Employees' engagement is one of the pillar components for the success of any organization (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Firms' involvement in CSR activities modify self-identity of the employees, leading them to invest more passion and energy in their daily tasks. These employees feel motivated and exhibit vigor when they identify themselves with the organization through their socially responsible work.

When organizational values match the employees' values, then they tend to show organizational identification and consequently affective commitment with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Employees that have a high affective commitment, they put more energy. Furthermore, by adopting socially responsible practices, organizations show their stakeholders including employees, regarding their commitment to serve the environment and society beyond any financial benefits (Haque et al., 2019; Raza et al., 2021).

Therefore, the existence of CSR practices in an organization is important for workers' work engagement as it contributes to them having positive work experiences and a greater emotional connection with the organization. All of this is reinforced when the direct supervisor himself/herself is seen as sharing CSR ideas, that is, if he/she is a responsible leader, as he/she is the one who ends up taking the lead in the company's management on a daily basis. Furthermore, these responsible leaders tend to be the main role models regarding ethical actions, attitudes and behaviors, being considered by employees as a positive and legitimate model from which they can learn. These leaders must also pay attention to employee motivation and satisfaction, motivating them to meet organizational objectives through their performance and to develop organizational citizenship behaviors (Maak & Pless, 2006; Voegtlin et al., 2012).

For testing the research model, a correlational study was conducted with 176 workers from different organizations. The respondents were invited to take a time-lag survey, with 3 weeks of interval between the two parts of the survey. The first part collected information regarding work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006) and affective commitment (Meyer et al., 1993), while the second part collected data on responsible leadership (Voegtlin, 2011) and corporate social responsibility (Duarte, 2011). Although this data collection procedure limited the sample size, it increased data robustness to same source bias (Podsakoff et al., 2024). All variables revealed high levels of reliability. Data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis using Process for SPSS. Model 6 allowed testing of the proposed sequential mediation model.

Findings revealed, as hypothesized, a statistically significant positive relationship between corporate social responsibility and work engagement, which are both directly and indirectly linked with affective commitment. Responsible leadership also emerged as a relevant moderator in order to explain the relationship between CSR and affective commitment, meaning is the perception of responsible leadership is high, the relationship between corporate social responsibility and affective commitment is higher. Additionally, responsible leadership also moderates the indirect relationship between CSR, affective commitment and work engagement.