

Thriving in change: examining the influence of organizational sustainability on employee performance in the post-COVID landscape

Ana Junça Silva

*Business Research Unit, ISCTE-Instituto Universitario de Lisboa,
Lisbon, Portugal, and*

Sofia Costa

Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, Escola Superior de Gestão de Tomar, Tomar, Portugal

Abstract

Purpose – The economic, financial and social crisis has heightened researchers' interest in the importance of organizational sustainability and resources (e.g. work engagement and psychological capital) for performance. Despite some studies demonstrating the significance of resources, such as work engagement and psychological capital, for workers' performance, there is limited knowledge regarding the role of organizational sustainability practices (OSP) in the relationship mentioned above. Therefore, this study drew upon the social identity theory to conceptualize and test the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between OSP and performance (both task and adaptive). Based on the conservation of resources theory, it was hypothesized that a worker's resource – psychological capital – would moderate the indirect relationship between social responsibility practices and performance (both task and adaptive).

Design/methodology/approach – To test the proposed model, 304 adults participated in a two-wave study.

Findings – The results supported the hypotheses, revealing that OSP had a positive and significant relationship with task and adaptive performance, occurring through work engagement. Furthermore, the indirect relationship between OSP and performance task and adaptive through work engagement was moderated by psychological capital, such that the relationship became stronger for workers with lower levels of psychological capital.



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Originality/value – The relevance of this research lies in its ability to identify the conditions and mechanisms in which corporate social responsibility initiatives are most effective, thereby enabling a more nuanced application of these practices across different sectors and organizational cultures. This study's theoretical and practical implications may assist organizations in devising strategies for implementing social responsibility practices to enhance their outcomes.

Keywords Organizational sustainability practices, Work-engagement, Performance, Psychological capital

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Recently, society has been marked by globalization that increasingly highlights the importance of practices contributing to its growth and development. Organizational sustainability practices (OSP) have been gaining prominence in organizational strategy due to the positive outcomes they foster (Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010).

Sustainable development is a comprehensive concept, often defined following the Brundtland Report (Powell *et al.*, 2013), which described it as “[...] development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, Chapter 2, Section 4). The realization of sustainability involves adopting actions, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, aimed at achieving sustainable development, which represents the ultimate goal of sustainability. Organizational sustainability aligns with these principles and is defined as the implementation of sustainability within organizational contexts (Baumgartner and Ebner, 2010; Dyllick and Muff, 2016).

There is a consensus that organizational sustainability often encompasses CSR. CSR can be understood as “business contribution to sustainable development” (Observatório das PME Europeias, 2002, p. 12). CSR practices refer to corporate policies and actions that lead organizations to take responsibility for societal interests and development (Carroll and Shabana, 2010). In other words, CSR practices manifest in corporate activities, such as policies, programs and voluntary strategies driven by the perceived expectations of different stakeholders in the company (Yadlapalli *et al.*, 2020). Davis (1973) described the concept as a combination of social benefits and economic gains where organizations promote societal improvement. Thus, it can be said that CSR practices involve the voluntary integration of good social, environmental, labor and economic practices into the operation of each entity, positively contributing to society and the management of each organization's impact (Demastus and Landrum, 2024). On the other hand, CSR practices involve a set of adapted policies and practices with specific goals to respond to internal market and community demands (Zhao *et al.*, 2022).

The social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1972) explains how CSR practices positively influence both the employee and the organization. The fundamental concept of SIT revolves around the idea that an individual's identification with a specific social group influences their behavior concerning that group membership (Ellemers *et al.*, 1999). Furthermore, individuals tend to favor members of their own group over those from other groups (Scheepers and Ellemers, 2019; Tajfel, 1970). This is because individuals describe themselves in terms of social groups (organization, political affiliations, clubs, etc.) to which they belong (Hogg and Abrams, 1988) and consider the success/failure of the group as their own personal success/failure. To distinguish themselves from others, individuals strive for a positive social identity and membership in a socially responsible group provides employees with that sense of identification. Thus, according to SIT, being a member of a socially

responsible organization can provide employees with psychological distinction in terms of values and organizational practices (Turker, 2009a).

Existing studies have applied the SIT to elucidate processes within the employee–organization relationship (Mahmood *et al.*, 2021). For example, some studies have sought to understand employees' behaviors (Jones *et al.*, 2019; Scheepers and Ellemers, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2017), examining mechanisms through which perceived CSR is linked to employees' sustainable behaviors (Cheema *et al.*, 2020). These studies have assumed that the effect of perceived CSR on employees' behavior was due to the mediation of organizational identification indicators (e.g. work engagement; Mahmood *et al.*, 2020a). For example, Story and Castanheira (2019) showed that CSR impacted employees' performance through job satisfaction. Similarly, Ali *et al.* (2020) evidenced a significant indirect effect of CSR on performance via employee engagement. Also, Abdullah *et al.* (2017) tested the positive impact of perceived CSR on employee performance through organizational identification, and Murray *et al.* (2015) highlighted that work engagement (a positive affective–motivational attitude divided into three dimensions: vigor, absorption and dedication; Bakker, 2010) was an indicator of organizational identification. Jones (2010) also demonstrated that pride in working for a socially responsible organization boosted employees' self-confidence, leading them to feel prouder about their work, and resulting in increased work engagement (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). In summary, SIT (Tajfel, 1972) is related to CSR, work engagement and performance because it predicts a strong relationship between employees' sense of organizational identity, organizational image and performance.

Although some studies have examined the impact of employees' perception of CSR on various outcomes, such as organizational performance (Ali *et al.*, 2020; Islam *et al.*, 2021), studies focused on individual differences, such as psychological capital, remain scarce. According to Luthans *et al.* (2007), psychological capital is a personal resource, consisting of four positive psychological characteristics: self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience. Psychological capital, as a personal resource, may positively shape how individuals react to CSR practices and, as such, strengthen the relationship between these practices and performance through work engagement. However, as argued by Zhao *et al.* (2022), it is necessary to understand which conditions can intensify or dampen the impact of CSR on employee behaviors, such as performance.

Therefore, this study aimed to expand the knowledge in this area and tested:

- the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between CSR practices and performance (both task and adaptive); and
- the moderating role of psychological capital in the relationship between CSR practices and performance through work engagement.

This study is relevant as it may contribute to expanding empirical knowledge about how and for whom CSR practices lead to increased levels of performance, thereby enabling a more nuanced application of these practices across different sectors and organizational cultures. By understanding how it occurs, and when is mostly needed, the findings may support managers in delineating effective interventions that can both improve employees' work engagement and performance. Furthermore, in an era in which sustainable issues are still not highly valued, it is crucial to discuss, research and intervene in the organizational context to find ways to reduce the global ecological footprint and preserve resources for future generations. Therefore, it is important to study CSR practices to contribute to expanding knowledge about them and better understand their effects. Finally, by expanding the investigation in these directions, the study can offer comprehensive insights into the

strategic implementation of CSR practices, providing valuable guidance for organizations seeking to leverage CSR for enhanced performance and employee engagement. This, in turn, could lead to more effective interventions that not only bolster the bottom line but also contribute to social and environmental well-being.

Theoretical background

Organizational sustainability and corporate social responsibility

Sustainable development is a comprehensive concept, often defined following the Brundtland Report (Powell *et al.*, 2013), which described it as “[...] development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, Chapter 2, Section 4). The realization of sustainability involves adopting actions and behaviors aimed at achieving sustainable development, which represents the goal of sustainability. Organizational sustainability aligns with these principles and is defined as the implementation of sustainability within organizational contexts (Baumgartner and Ebner, 2010; Dyllick and Muff, 2016). There is a consensus that the management and assessment of environmental, social and economic resources shape the practices of sustainability and often are referred to as CSR practices (Montiel and Delgado-Ceballos, 2014).

There are various definitions and competitive theories in the literature that have contributed to explaining CSR. For instance, Davis (1960, p. 70) defined it as “the decisions and actions of businessmen taken for reasons at least partially beyond the direct economic or technical interest of the company.” Later, in 1973, Davis refined the previous definition, separating economic, technical and legal obligations from the social responsibilities of businesses. Bells and Walton (1984, p. 274) stated that “in its broadest sense, CSR represents a concern for the needs and goals of society that goes beyond merely economic considerations”. Later, Carroll (1999) proposed a new conceptualization of CSR that emphasized a distinction between economic and noneconomic dimensions. He suggested that the economic dimension referred to what the business does for itself in terms of economic and financial gains, whereas the noneconomic dimension represents what CSR does for other stakeholders (i.e. indirect gains). Bowen (2013) defined CSR as the duty of managers to pursue policies, make decisions or guide actions that are desirable in terms of society’s objectives and values. Thus, CSR is a concept integrated into the social, political, economic and institutional context, creating a significant link between the organization and stakeholders.

The stakeholder concept is crucial to CSR because, according to Hansen *et al.* (2011), research on CSR tends to focus on external stakeholders and outcomes rather than internal aspects that relate CSR to performance, such as employees. Internal CSR practices refer to practices directly related to the physical and psychological workplace environment (Turker, 2009a). It also manifests in concerns for employees’ health and well-being (Wojtaszczyk, 2008), their training and participation in the organization (Brammer and Millington, 2005), equal opportunities (Newman and Vries, 2011), as well as work–family boundaries (Marchese and Bassham, 2002). On the other hand, external CSR practices refer to actions directed at the local community, business partners and suppliers, customers, public authorities and non-governmental development organizations (Al-bdour *et al.*, 2010).

Relationship between corporate social responsibility and performance

According to the SIT (Tajfel, 1972), individuals describe themselves in terms of their membership in social groups (nation, organization and political affiliations) (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). The main assumptions of the theory are that individuals tend to favor

members of their own group over those from other groups (Tajfel, 1970) and that the success/failure of the group is their own personal success/failure. In other words, the characteristics of the social group to which they belong (in this case, the organization) should be congruent with the worker's personal values. When this happens, a strong social bond can be created between the worker and the organization (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). The theory also argues that an individual's identification with a specific social group influences their behavior concerning that group membership (Ellemers *et al.*, 1999). Plus, to distinguish themselves from other colleagues, individuals strive to obtain a positive social identity, which can be achieved when they perceive their organization as one that positively stands out from others, for example, through the practice of socially responsible actions. That is, belonging to a socially responsible organization can provide workers with a positive psychological distinction in terms of organizational values and practices (Turker, 2009b).

The literature considers this theory important for predicting employees' positive behavior (Bu *et al.*, 2022; Chattopahyay and George, 2001; Nason *et al.*, 2018). For instance, Jones *et al.* (2019) examined the mechanism through which perceived CSR was linked to employees' sustainable behaviors. Cheema *et al.* (2020) established the effect of perceived CSR in reducing negative employee behavior with the mediation of organizational identification. And Mahmood *et al.* (2020a) tested the positive impact of perceived CSR on employee performance. Indeed, workers' perceptions of the organization have been identified as a significant predictor of their attitudes, behavior and performance (Rupp *et al.*, 2013).

Performance (Jamal, 2011, p. 20) can be defined as "...the activity in which an employee can successfully fulfill the task, subject to the normal constraints of available resources". In other words, performance involves actions and behaviors essential for the organization's goals. Due to various changes in work dynamics over time, there was a need to develop performance categories: task performance and adaptive performance. Task performance is related to what workers perform in their daily routines; it is the contribution that they make to organizational goals and productivity, enabling organizations' effective functioning (Motowidlo and Van Scatter, 1994; Motowidlo *et al.*, 1997). Task performance encompasses a set of requirements formally described and established by organizations (Sonnentag *et al.*, 2008). Adaptive performance is defined as the set of essential skills for employees to be able to respond efficiently to organizational demands, changes and uncertainties they are exposed (Griffin *et al.*, 2007; Shoss *et al.*, 2012). Thus, adaptive behaviors are expressed through actions performed in the face of changing situations or their anticipation, demonstrating high levels of work adaptivity (Marques-Quinteiro *et al.*, 2018). Currently, there is great instability in work environments, increasing the need for organizations to integrate employees capable of adapting themselves to such situations (Pulakos *et al.*, 2000; Park and Park, 2019).

According to the SIT (Tajfel, 1972), when workers have a positive perception of the organization they belong to, they tend to develop a similarly positive identification with it. This identification tends to enhance their contributions to the organization, in the form of enhanced performance (Bu *et al.*, 2022; Cao and Lee, 2023; Murray *et al.*, 2015). According to Turker (2009a), being a member of a socially responsible organization can give employees psychological distinction in terms of organizational values and practices, contributing to increased organizational identification and improved performance (Zhao *et al.*, 2022). Thus, CSR by helping employees to satisfy their needs for distinction and belonging to distinctively valued social groups, contributes to a better employee-organization relationship, ultimately determining their engagement and performance (Gullifor *et al.*, 2023).

Empirically, CSR has been positively related to several positive behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors (Aguinis *et al.*, 2020), intention to stay (Dhar *et al.*, 2022), job-seeking intentions (Gully *et al.*, 2013) and job performance (Karim *et al.*, 2023). Thus, based on the SIT and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1. CSR practices have a positive relationship with task and adaptive performance.

Mediating role of work engagement

According to Selvarasu and Sastry (2014), performance is influenced by the level of work engagement; that is, a highly engaged employee tends to exert more effort to benefit the organization, enhancing performance (Ologbo and Sofian, 2013). On the other hand, Kahn (1990) stated that work engagement is related to what the organization does and promotes (e.g. CSR practices). From the social exchange perspective (Blau, 1964), if the organization promotes CSR practices consistent with workers' values, they are likely to feel obligated to reciprocate and contribute more to the organization, and as such tend to be more engaged in it.

Work engagement is defined as "[...] a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002, p. 74). It is a positive affective-cognitive state of well-being at work, promoting employees' involvement in their roles, increasing their absorption in their tasks and enhancing their energy and enthusiasm for work (Bakker, 2017). Work engagement comprises three dimensions: vigor, dedication and absorption. Vigor relates to energy, mental resilience, effort and persistence when facing challenges. Dedication is demonstrated by the high commitment, enthusiasm and the perceived identification between the worker and their job. Finally, absorption is reflected in the worker's focus and total immersion in performing tasks (Wood *et al.*, 2020; Yalabik *et al.*, 2013).

The SIT (Tajfel, 1972) helps to understand how CSR promotes work engagement. According to the theory, workers tend to seek positive social distinction through their sense of belonging to various social groups (in this case, the organization). When they feel they belong to an organization that allows them to socially distinguish themselves positively, their identification with the organization increases, and consequently, their work engagement (Chaudary and Ali, 2016). Thus, being a member of a socially responsible organization can give employees psychological distinction in terms of organizational values and practices and enhance their commitment and work engagement to the organization (Cao and Lee, 2023; Turker, 2009a).

Work engagement is an important personal resource that has been shown to influence performance, as advocated by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2009). Complementarily, according to the conservation of resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989), individuals are motivated to attain, retain, develop and protect resources. Therefore, workers with higher levels of resources are more likely to exhibit better performance (Delhey *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, based on this theoretical perspective and empirical evidence, CSR by promoting a strong identification between employees and the organization, not only enhances work engagement but also contributes to a better employee-organization relationship that ultimately determines how much employees bring their true selves to work and produce more (Scheepers and Ellemers, 2019).

Based on the SIT, we argue that work engagement will be a mechanism through which CSR may influence employees' performance:

H2. Work engagement mediates the positive relationship between CSR practices and task and adaptive performance.

Moderating role of psychological capital

The way CSR practices influence both work engagement and performance can vary from person to person and depending on their personal resources. From the perspective of the COR (Hobfoll, 1989), psychological capital is a crucial personal resource as it shapes how individuals react to what happens.

According to Luthans *et al.* (2007) and Luthans and Youssef-Morgan (2017), psychological capital is defined as an individual's state of psychological development. The psychological capacities include self-efficacy (the ability to organize and execute actions to achieve goals), optimism (a disposition to see the positive side of situations), hope (the belief in the possibility of achieving one's desires) and resilience (the ability to overcome and recover from adversities). Psychological capital is also characterized as a psychological factor of positivity because it encompasses these four positive psychological capacities (Rodrigues and Junça Silva, 2024).

The COR (Hobfoll, 1989) argues that personal resources are crucial to avoid stress and, consequently, improving positive attitudes and behaviors. The main assumption of the theory suggests that people tend to preserve, conserve and acquire more resources as these help in implementing active coping strategies to deal with work demands (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018) and daily negative micro-events (Junça-Silva and Caetano, 2023). For the theory, psychological capital and its sub-dimensions are a fundamental resource at work (Avey *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, for the JD-R model (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001), psychological capital is also a fundamental resource that acts as a moderator of the relationship between diverse organizational practices (e.g. CSR) and work engagement (Grover *et al.*, 2018). Hence, psychological capital may be a boundary condition that shapes how employees perceive CSR practices and how it influences their work engagement levels, and consequently, their performance.

Some studies have shown that psychological capital is a condition that can both intensify and buffer the impact of diverse organizational practices (e.g. CSR) or job characteristics on performance (Delhey *et al.*, 2023; Luthans *et al.*, 2005; Luthans and Youssef-Morgan, 2017). For instance, Tsaour *et al.* (2019) demonstrated that individuals in positive work environments with higher levels of psychological capital tend to react more favorably to the work environment and, therefore, exhibit more positive behaviors. Also, Karatepe and Karadas (2015) showed that employees with higher levels of psychological capital exhibit higher satisfaction with organizational practices and working conditions because they are more resilient, hopeful and optimistic about their workplace, leading them to perform their functions more efficiently. Employees with higher levels of psychological capital are not only more aware of negative factors that may arise in their daily work but also more capable of overcoming them (Avey *et al.*, 2010a, b; Xerri *et al.*, 2023). Other studies have shown that employees with higher levels of psychological capital can more effectively use and handle their work resources, maintain a more positive view of working conditions and have higher performance levels (Chaffin *et al.*, 2023). Thus, based on empirical evidence, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H3. Psychological capital moderates the relationship between CSR practices and work engagement in such a way that the relationship will be stronger for individuals with lower levels of psychological capital (versus higher).

Individuals with higher levels of psychological capital will need less contextual and external influences (i.e. CSR practices) to become more engaged with their work and contribute more to the organization's results (Junça-Silva *et al.*, 2023). Psychologically strong individuals, i.e. those with higher psychological capital, are less volatile to external influences, feel well and have more positive behaviors; this happens because these individuals can more effectively manage negative events and daily adversities and maintain high-performance levels, even on negative days (Mosteo *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, individuals with lower levels of psychological capital will be more vulnerable or will need to identify more with their organization (through CSR practices) to become engaged and achieve better performances.

Based on the above, the following hypothesis was defined:

- H4.* Psychological capital moderates the indirect relationship between CSR practices and task and adaptive performance, in such a way that the relationship becomes stronger for lower levels of psychological capital (versus higher) (Figure 1).

Method

Procedure and participants

The ethics committee of the first author's university approved the study before it started. Two waves of data were collected to minimize the potential common method variance problem. In the first stage (Time 1), 450 surveys were distributed to employees who worked in managerial occupations. These were part of the researchers' professional networks. This first contact was made by e-mail in which the research purpose and scope were clarified, and the anonymity and confidentiality of the data were warranted to ensure that participation was voluntary. Those who answered this e-mail received another one with the link for the Time 1 survey: this survey incorporated measures of CSR practices, work engagement and sociodemographic characteristics. In total, 388 responses were received, yielding a response rate of 86.2%. In the second stage (Time 2), one week later, questionnaires to measure psychological capital and performance were sent to the 388 participants who answered the first survey. At this stage, 331 completed surveys were gathered, generating a response rate of 73.5%. However, only 304 valid responses were considered after excluding invalid surveys (completed in less than 2 min or perfunctory answers), with an overall response rate of 67.5%. According to a power analysis (effect size of 0.2, error probability of 0.05), this sample size was considered sufficient.

Data was collected between February and April 2023. In addition to the two-wave data collection, other precautionary measures were used to minimize potential common method

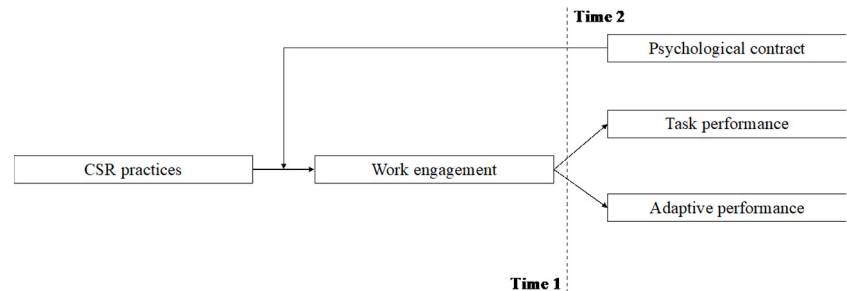


Figure 1.
Proposed moderated
mediation model

Source: Author's own work

bias (CMB) (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). All participants voluntarily and anonymously answered the online survey. Furthermore, the items were randomized and attention was set to screening questions in both surveys.

The participants included full-time working adults from managerial positions working in Portugal. Of the overall sample, 66.4% were female. The mean age was 38 years (SD = 11.14), and the mean organizational tenure was 17 years (SD = 11.53). Participants reported working on average 36 h per week (SD = 11.71). About 61.2% were permanent employees, 18.4% were temporary employees and 9.5% were self-employed. Finally, the majority worked in large organizations (with more than 50 employees; 38.9%), followed by those working in small organizations (up to nine employees; 22.7%), and finally, 18.4% indicated working in a medium-sized organization (between 10 and 49 employees) (see Table 1 for a synthesis).

Measures

All the scales used have shown high reliability and validity in previous research. All the variables were measured with a five-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Following Brislin’s (1986) cross-cultural translation procedure, two bilingual academic researchers conducted the back-translation process to translate the English items into Portuguese. Moreover, we invited two experts in performance studies to review the initial draft of the Portuguese surveys and to make some revisions to the item wording and instructions for respondents to increase the content validity (Wang *et al.*, 2021). A pilot study with 83 employees in Portuguese organizations (not part of the final sample) was initially conducted to assure content validity.

CSR practices (T1): To assess perceived CSR practices, the CSR scale (Turker, 2009a) was used. It included 18 items subdivided into the following dimensions: CSR for society (e.g. “Our organization contributes to campaigns and projects that promote the well-being of society.”); for employees (e.g. “Our organization’s management is primarily concerned with the needs and desires of workers.”); for customers (e.g. “Customer satisfaction is very important to our company.”); for governmental entities (e.g. “Our organization always pays its taxes on a regular and continuous basis.”); and general CSR (e.g. “Our organization participates in activities aimed at protecting and improving environmental quality.”). The Cronbach’s α in this study was 0.94 and the McDonald’s was 0.93.

Table 1.
Sample
characteristics

Sample characteristics	%	M (SD)
Female	66.4	–
Male	33.6	–
Permanent contract with the organization	61.2	–
Temporary employee	18.4	–
Self-employee	9.5	–
Large organizations (with more than 50 employees)	38.9	–
Small organizations (up to nine employees)	22.7	–
Medium organization (between 10 and 49 employees)	18.4	–
Age	–	38 (11.14)
Tenure	–	17 (11.53)
Weekly working hours	–	36 (11.71)

Source: Authors’ own work

Work engagement (T1). To measure work engagement, the three item-Ultra Short Scale for Work Engagement (Schaufeli, 2018) was used. An item example is “I have felt full of energy at my work”. The Cronbach’s α in this study was 0.94 and the McDonald’s was 0.93.

Psychological capital (T2). Psychological capital was measured using the shortened version of the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2007). It includes 12 items that assess four dimensions: self-efficacy (three items, e.g. “I feel confident representing my work area in meetings with management”), hope (four items, e.g. “if I feel stuck at work, I think of many ways to solve the problem”), resilience (three items, e.g. “I usually deal with stressful issues easily”) and optimism (two items, e.g. “I always see the bright side of things about my work”). The Cronbach’s α in this study was 0.94 and the McDonald’s was 0.95.

Performance (T2). To measure adaptive and task performance, six items from the job performance scale were used (Griffin et al., 2007). An item example of task performance is “I carried out the core parts of your job well” and an item example of adaptive performance is “I coped with changes to the way you have to do your core tasks”. The Cronbach’s α for task proficiency was 0.81 and the McDonald’s was 0.82. For task adaptivity, Cronbach’s α and the McDonald’s were 0.90.

Control variables. We controlled the gender and age as both measures could influence the mediator (work engagement) and the criterion variables (performance) (Griffin et al., 2007).

Data analyses

First, internal consistencies and descriptive analyses of the study variables, along with their correlations, were examined. Subsequently, to test *H1*, linear regression analyses were conducted. To assess *H2*, Model 4 of the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2018) was used. This macro is particularly relevant for estimating indirect effects as it uses the bootstrapping method (5,000 iterations), allowing for the calculation of confidence intervals (CIs). For *H3*, Model 1 was used, and to test *H4*, i.e. the moderated mediation, Model 7 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) was used. Product terms (moderations) were centered at their mean values, and the bootstrapping method (5,000 iterations) was applied to obtain CI.

Results

Reliability and validity issues

First, the validity of the measures was shown because more than 50% of the total variance in each latent variable (64%–94%) was explained by the indicators (Carmines and Zeller, 1979). Second, the construct reliability (0.81–0.94) of all variables provided the internal consistency of the measures (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). This together with the average variance extracted (AVE) (0.66–0.87) suggested acceptable convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Third, the results of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) revealed that the hypothesized five-factor model (CSR, work engagement, psychological capital task and adaptive performance) had better-fit indices ($\chi^2/\text{df} = 4.29$, $p < 0.01$, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.07, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.98, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.98, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.08) compared with alternative models, such as the four-factor model grouping both indicators of job performance ($\chi^2/\text{df} = 4.48$, $p < 0.01$, RMSEA = 0.11, CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.98, SRMR = 0.09), which initially supported the discriminant validity (Xu et al., 2020). The square roots of the AVE of variables were larger than the correlations between the focal variable and other

variables (Table 1), which also evidenced acceptable discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Common method bias examinations

Several statistical measures were taken to examine CMB. First, the unrotated factor results of Harman's one-factor test show that the first factor accounted for 35.65% of the total variance (<50%), revealing that there was no unique factor playing a major role in explaining the variance of the criterion variables (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, when conducting the CFA, the unmeasured latent method construct technique was adopted (Williams, 2003) by including an extra latent variable named "CMB" on which all items of the five variables were loaded. The results showed that the five-factor model with CMB ($\chi^2/df = 7.99$, $p < 0.01$, RMSEA = 0.15, CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.96, SRMR = 0.12) was significantly worse than the five-factor model. Hence, there were no severe biasing effects due to CMB (Williams, 2003).

Descriptive statistics and correlations

The descriptive statistics and correlations of all variables are shown in Table 2 – the relatively close correlations provided preliminary support for the hypotheses under study.

Hypotheses testing

H1. *H1* assumed that CSR practices would have a positive and significant relationship with task and adaptive performance. The results of two linear regressions showed a statistically significant direct relationship between CSR and task performance ($b = 0.20$, $t_{(1,302)} = 3.33$, $p < 0.001$; $F_{(1,302)} = 11.11$, $p < 0.001$ with $R^2 = 0.03$) and adaptive performance ($b = 0.33$, $t_{(1,302)} = 5.81$, $p < 0.001$; $F_{(1,302)} = 33.73$, $p < 0.001$ with $R^2 = 0.10$). This means that when organizations adopt CSR practices, employees tend to achieve higher task and adaptive performances. Therefore, *H1a* and *H1b* received support from the data.

H2. To test *H2*, two mediation analyses (Model 4) were conducted using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2018). *H2* predicted that the relationship between CSR and task and adaptive performance would be mediated by work engagement. According to the results, the indirect effect of CSR on task performance through work engagement was 0.11, with a 95% CI [0.03, 0.19] that did not include zero, indicating a statistically significant indirect effect. The model explained 4% ($R^2 = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$) of the variance in task performance. The relationships between CSR and work engagement (a; $B = 0.59$, $p < 0.001$) and between work engagement and task performance (b; $B = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$) were significant. The total effect (c; $B = 0.20$, $p < 0.01$) between CSR and task performance was also significant. After the introduction of work engagement, the effect of CSR on task performance became statistically nonsignificant (c'; $B = 0.09$, $p > 0.05$), revealing a full mediation. Therefore, when organizations adopt CSR practices, employees tend to become more engaged with their work, increasing their task performance levels. Thus, *H2a* was supported by the data.

For *H2b* (adaptive performance), the results showed a statistically significant indirect effect ($B = 0.23$, 95% CI [0.16, 0.31]). The model explained 11% ($R^2 = 0.11$, $p < 0.001$) of the variance in adaptive performance. The relationships between CSR and work engagement (a; $B = 0.59$, $p < 0.001$) and between work engagement and adaptive performance (b; $B = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$) were significant. The total effect (c; $B = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$) was also significant. After the introduction of work engagement into the equation, the effect of CSR on adaptive performance became statistically nonsignificant (c'; $B = 0.09$, $p > 0.05$), indicating a full mediation. In other words, when CSR practices tend to improve employees' levels of work

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics
and correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>MSV</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. CSR	3.51 ¹	0.82	0.85	0.66	0.25	(0.81)	[0.94]				
2. Work engagement	3.59 ¹	0.97	0.95	0.87	0.25	0.50**	(0.93)	[0.93]			
3. TP	3.85 ¹	0.88	0.88	0.72	0.49	0.19**	0.24**	(0.84)	[0.81]		
4. AP	3.84 ¹	0.84	0.94	0.85	0.50	0.32**	0.50**	0.70**	(0.92)	[0.90]	
5. PC	3.63 ¹	0.81	0.88	0.71	0.50	0.30**	0.47**	0.53**	0.71**	(0.84)	[0.94]
6. Age	38.76	11.14	—	—	—	0.02	0.14*	0.00	0.03	0.13*	—
7. Gender ²	—	—	—	—	—	−0.07	−0.05	−0.05	−0.10	−0.13*	−0.04

Notes: *n* = 304; **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.001 ¹Scale ranging from 1 to 5; ²Sex codes: 0 – male; 1 – female; The square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE) are in brackets. *M* = Mean; *SD* = standard deviation; *AVE* = average variance extracted; *MSV* = maximum shared variance; *CR* = composite reliability; *TP* = task performance; *AP* = adaptive performance; *PC* = psychological capital

Source: Authors' own work

Table 3.
Hypothesis testing:
indirect effect results

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Work engagement		Task performance		Adaptive performance	
	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>B</i>	SE
Intercept	1.09***	0.28	2.99***	0.29	2.33***	0.25
CSR	0.59***	0.06	0.09	0.07	0.09	0.06
Work engagement	—	—	0.18**	0.06	0.39***	0.05
Gender ^a	−0.01*	0.00	−0.07	0.10	−0.13	0.09
Age	0.01	0.10	−0.00	0.00	−0.00	0.00
<i>F</i>	35.89***		5.39***		26.15***	
<i>R</i> ²	0.26		0.07		0.26	
<i>Df</i>	3, 300		4, 299		4, 299	
Direct effect ^b	0.59***	0.06	0.09	0.07	0.09	0.06
Indirect effect ^c			0.11	0.04	0.23**	0.04
CI 95% indirect effect			0.03	0.19	0.16	0.31

Notes: CI = confidence interval; *n* = 304; Unstandardized regression coefficients; ^a0 = male; 2 = female
^bDirect effect of CSR on work engagement and task and adaptive performance ^c Indirect Effect of CSR on task and adaptive performance through work engagement; **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001
Source: Authors' own work

engagement that, in turn, enhance their adaptive performance. Thus, *H2b* also received support from the data (Table 3).

H3. *H3* assumed that psychological capital moderates the relationship between social responsibility practices and work engagement. To test the hypothesis, Model 1 from PROCESS (Hayes, 2018) was used. The results revealed a significant interaction effect between social responsibility practices and psychological capital [*B* = −0.21, *SE* = 0.06, $\Delta R^2 = 0.03$, *F* (1, 298) = 12.94, *p* > 0.001]. Therefore, *H3* received support from the data.

H4. *H4* expected that the indirect effect of social responsibility practices on task and adaptive performance through work engagement would be dependent on the moderation of psychological capital, such that this effect would be stronger for individuals with lower levels of psychological capital. To test this hypothesis, the moderation of the mediation model used Model 7 from PROCESS.

Regarding *H4a* (task performance), the results revealed that the index associated with the moderation of mediation was statistically significant (*B* = −0.04, 95% CI [−0.08, −0.01]) (Table 4).

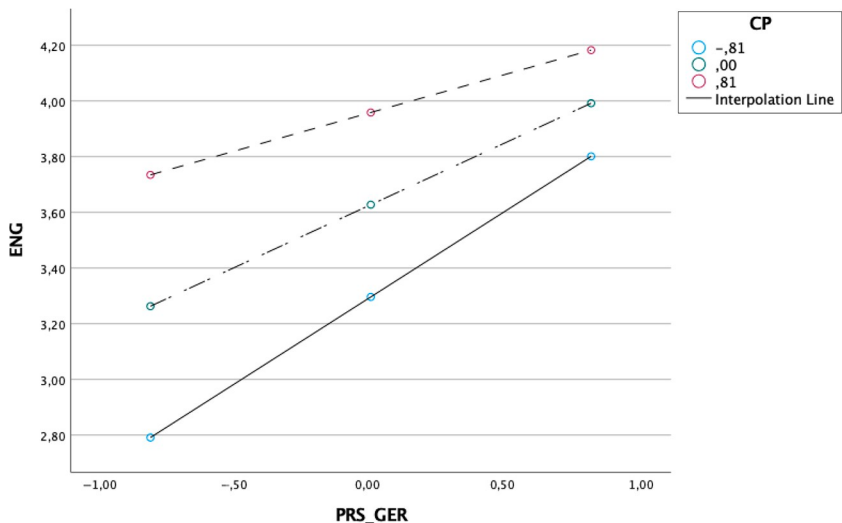
Table 4.
Hypothesis testing:
moderated mediation
results (task
performance)

	Work engagement	Task performance
CSR	0.45***, <i>R</i> ² = 0.39	0.09, <i>R</i> ² = 0.07
Work engagement	—	0.18***
Psychological capital	0.41***	—
CSR * psychological capital	−0.21***	—
Gender ^a	0.02	−0.07
Age	0.01	−0.00

*R*² = 0.39 *F* (5, 298) = 38.69, *p* < 0.001, $\Delta R^2 = 0.03$, *F* (1, 298) = 12.93, *p* < 0.001
Notes: *n* = 304; Unstandardized regression coefficients; ^a0 = male; 2 = female; **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001
Source: Authors' own work

The significant interaction indicated that the indirect effect varied according to different levels of the moderating variable, in this case, psychological capital. Analyzing the simple slopes, as suggested by Dawson and Richter (2006), it was concluded that the indirect effect was significant and stronger when psychological capital was at lower levels (-1 SD: $B = 0.11$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.20]) and gradually weakened as psychological capital increased (M: $B = 0.08$, $SE = 0.03$, $p > 0.01$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.14]; $+1$ SD: $B = 0.05$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < 0.01$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.10]) (Figure 2). This means that those who scored lower on psychological capital were more dependent on the indirect relationship between CSR and task performance through work engagement. Thus, $H4$ was supported by the data.

Regarding $H4b$ (adaptive performance), the results revealed that the index associated with the moderation of mediation was statistically significant ($B = -0.08$, 95% CI $[-0.14, -0.04]$) (Table 5).



Source: Author's own work

Figure 2.
Interaction effect
between CSR and
psychological capital
regarding task
performance

	Work engagement	Adaptative performance
CSR	0.45***, $R^2 = 0.39$	0.09, $R^2 = 0.26^{**}$
Work engagement	—	0.39***
Psychological capital	0.41***	—
CSR * psychological capital	-0.21***	—
Gender ^a	0.02	-0.13
Age	0.01	-0.00
$R^2 = 0.39F_{(5, 298)} = 38.69$, $p < 0.001$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.03$, $F_{(1, 298)} = 12.93$, $p < 0.001$		

Notes: $n = 304$; Unstandardized regression coefficients; ^a0 = male, 2 = female; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Authors' own work

Table 5.
Hypothesis testing:
moderated mediation
results (adaptive
performance)

Analyzing the simple slopes, it was concluded that the indirect effect was significant and stronger when psychological capital was at lower levels (-1 SD : $B = 0.24$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$, 95% CI [0.17, 0.33]) and gradually weakened as psychological capital increased (M: $B = 0.18$, $SE = 0.03$, $p > 0.01$, 95% CI [0.12, 0.24]; $+1\text{ SD}$: $B = 0.11$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < 0.01$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.17]) (Figure 3). Hence, those with lower levels of psychological capital depended more on the indirect relationship between CSR and adaptive performance through work engagement. Thus, *H4b* was also supported by the data.

Discussion

This research is based on the SIT to analyze the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between CSR practices and task and adaptive performance. Furthermore, it relies on the resources perspective to test the moderating role of psychological capital in this relationship.

The results show a positive relationship between CSR and task and adaptive performance. In other words, when CSR practices are positively perceived, employees become more adaptable (Motowidlo and Van Scatter, 1994; Motowidlo *et al.*, 1997) and efficient (Griffin *et al.*, 2007; Shoss *et al.*, 2012). Thus, CSR practices not only enhance the organization’s attractiveness to external stakeholders but also contribute to better internal functioning (Zhao *et al.*, 2022). The findings also highlight that work engagement is a mechanism through which employees’ perceptions of CSR practices positively contribute to higher performance levels, but this indirect path is moderated by employees’ psychological capital. Specifically, the lower the employee’s psychological capital, the stronger the path between CSR practices and performance through work engagement. Thus, there appears to be an affective mechanism linking CSR practices to improved performance and a personal resource that acts as a boundary condition shaping this relationship.

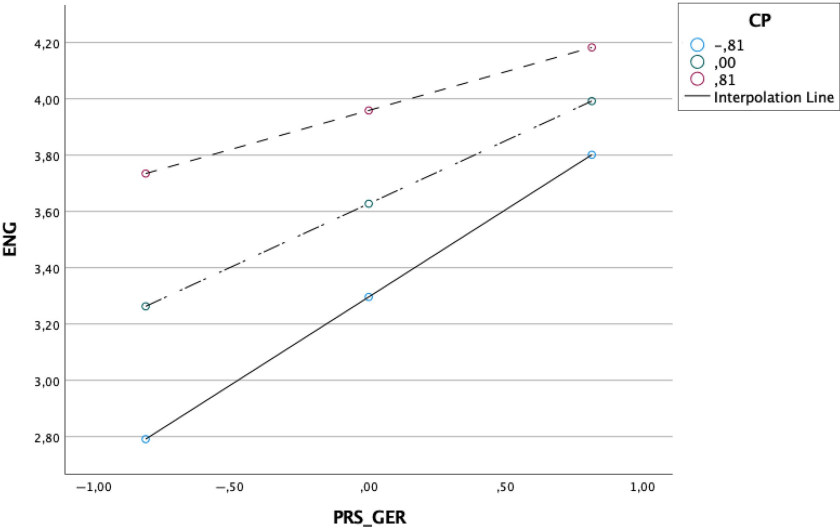


Figure 3.
Interaction effect
between CSR and
psychological capital
regarding adaptive
performance

Source: Author’s own work

Theoretical implications

This study has some theoretical implications for the literature that focuses on the consequences of CSR practices. Although some studies have sought to advance knowledge on the mechanisms through which CSR practices lead to higher performance levels (Ali *et al.*, 2020), fewer studies have explored the conditions that may buffer or attenuate such relationships. Hence, this study is relevant as it opens the venue for new research issues, namely, the role of personal resources as boundary conditions, under the umbrella of CSR and performance-related outcomes.

First, work engagement appears to mediate the positive indirect relationship between CSR practices and both performance indicators – task and adaptive performance. These findings demonstrate that CSR practices contribute to making employees more focused and enthusiastic at work, with more energy for their tasks (higher work engagement), and, in turn, this improves their task and adaptive performance. The SIT (Tajfel, 1972) explains the results; that is, CSR practices contribute to employees building a positive identity, increasing their identification with the organization and consequently, their work engagement, which, in turn, translates into positive outcomes (higher performance; Karim *et al.*, 2023). Empirically, some studies have shown similar results. For instance, Story and Castanheira (2019) showed that perceptions of both internal and external CSR improved employees' performance through increased levels of job satisfaction. Similarly, Ali *et al.* (2020) demonstrated that perceived CSR practices increased employee engagement that, in turn, led to higher performance levels. Hence, CSR practices appear to influence positive behaviors (translated into higher performance levels) due to a positive social identification created between employees and the organization that enhances work engagement.

Second, the indirect relationship between CSR practices and performance through work engagement is moderated by psychological capital, in such a way that the relationship becomes stronger for employees with lower levels of psychological capital (as opposed to high levels). In other words, employees with lower psychological capital are more dependent on contextual factors, such as CSR practices, to feel more engaged with their work and, consequently, demonstrate more adaptive and task performance behaviors (Mosteo *et al.*, 2023). This finding suggests that the impact of CSR initiatives on performance is not uniform across all employees but varies according to their psychological resources. Psychological capital, which encompasses hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism, serves as a critical lens through which the effects of CSR on engagement and performance can be better understood. Furthermore, for employees with lower levels of psychological capital, CSR practices may serve a compensatory role. These practices could provide external support and a positive work environment that bolsters employees' engagement levels. This external validation and support become crucial for those who might not inherently possess high levels of hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism. In addition, CSR practices can enhance an employee's identification with the organization by aligning personal values with corporate values. This alignment is particularly impactful for employees with lower psychological capital, as it provides a sense of purpose and belonging that they might not derive from internal resources alone.

On the other hand, employees with higher levels do not need contextual factors to exert effort and achieve a higher level of performance because, as observed, performance levels are always higher, whether the organization has more or fewer CSR practices. In summary, the more positively CSR practices are perceived, the higher employees' work engagement and performance (Grover *et al.*, 2018). However, individuals with lower psychological capital

need to see and perceive these practices in their organization even more to feel connected to it and, at the same time, ensure their performance.

Practical implications

The data obtained in this research may have implications for organizations. It should be noted that this work demonstrates the importance of CSR practices in performance through work engagement, with psychological capital being a crucial condition in this relationship. Despite the limitations described earlier, this study contributes to the growing literature on organizational social responsibility, providing support for improved performance in organizations.

The practical implications of this study could assist organizations in creating and implementing CSR practices to act in favor of the environment and society, thereby improving their outcomes. Implementing CSR practices leads to an increase in work engagement and the performance of each employee.

This study also highlights that human resource managers should consider a candidate's psychological capital during the recruitment and selection process (Rehman *et al.*, 2017). This is because those with higher psychological capital do not need as many contextual factors (i.e. CSR) to exert effort and exhibit high levels of performance. Employees with high levels of psychological capital are more confident in their abilities and handle situations more effectively and efficiently. In contrast, individuals with low levels of psychological capital need concrete and well-structured actions to be more engaged and perform better in their work. In this sense, it becomes relevant to invest in this resource (psychological capital) as a source of competitive advantage for companies, increasing positive capabilities such as optimism, resilience, self-efficacy and hope, resulting in better organizational performance and engagement (Luthans, 2002), as well as expected and autonomous attitudes from workers (Avey *et al.*, 2011).

In summary, organizations must act proactively and sustainably, fostering and implementing good CSR practices within their organization, such as recycling processes, reducing energy consumption, banning the use of plastic cups, bottles and straws, reducing and monitoring printouts and organizing workshops and lectures to raise awareness and strengthen environmental consciousness and behavior.

From the perspective of building a more sustainable future, the environment is an indispensable issue. Environmental policies, although recently proposed, are one of the most regulated aspects of contemporary societies. Environmental policies are a set of actions and practices taken by governments to preserve the environment and promote the sustainable development of the planet. Organizations and citizens/consumers must adhere to environmental policies to minimize the environmental impacts created by economic and urban growth. These actions are of great importance to ensure sustainability and prevent various existing ecosystems, addressing global warming, climate change and various types of pollution to preserve and safeguard a suitable and sustainable quality of life.

Limitations and future directions

The present research has some limitations. First, the use of self-report measures and the two-wave design may have introduced CMB (MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012). However, factor analyses indicate that CMB was not a significant issue in this study. It is also important to note that data collection was conducted without any inclusion or exclusion criteria for participants; however, it would be interesting to replicate the study, distinguishing organizations by industry sectors. Second, psychological capital is considered to potentially fluctuate over time. This implies that increases or decreases in

respondents' levels of psychological capital based on conditions and context at the time of assessment may bias the results. To address this limitation, it is suggested that future studies should collect individuals' levels of psychological capital at different time points, for example, through a daily study.

It is considered that creating a digital application to implement and raise awareness of CSR practices in organizations would be a valuable tool to gain insight into what is being done in organizations. With this application, it would be possible to observe various CSR practices, allowing for an increase in employees' commitment to their own professional goals and consequently, organizational success. Therefore, the development and promotion of this application would be of great value, fostering empowerment not only at the organizational level but also involving society, leading to the enhancement of practices and measures to achieve sustainable goals.

Conclusion

It is concluded that CSR has an impact on work engagement, which, in turn, influences performance. However, the aforementioned relationship depends on the levels of psychological capital, as lower levels made the relationship stronger. It is also observed that individuals with high levels of psychological capital tend not to be as dependent on contextual factors (i.e. CSR), whereas individuals with lower levels of psychological capital are more susceptible to the influence of CSR practices on performance through work engagement.

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Corresponding author

Ana Junça Silva can be contacted at: analjsilva@gmail.com

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