

**An exploratory study into the impact of direct participation in
Corporate Social Responsibility on Organisational Commitment
of employees in Ireland**

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Abstract

Since the 2000s there has been huge growth in organisations adopting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices. This growth has also corresponded with a sharp rise in recent years of academic literature on the topic of CSR. Current research on the topic varies from its influence on employees, to the financial benefits of incorporating CSR into organisations, and also the impact CSR has on an organisation's public image and reputation. Much of the research that has focused the influence CSR plays on employees has shown us a positive correlation with employee satisfaction and Organisational Commitment (OC). Little, if any, of this recent research has focused on this relationship within an Irish context. Of the research that exists within other geographical locations, there are few studies that have investigated the influence that direct participation in CSR, as opposed to indirect corporate CSR programmes, has on employees' sense of OC. This study sets the scene of CSR & OC through a detailed literature review culminating in a qualitative study which uses in-depth interviews with professional in Ireland who have volunteered on an intensive external CSR programme supported by their organisations. The findings of this study corroborate with recent research on the positive impact CSR has on employees. The research adds further value by outlining the positive impact that direct participation in programmes can potentially have on employees and warns of the potential detriment of adopting symbolic CSR practices. This study has key implications to be considered by HR & CSR professionals that are designing CSR programmes that aim of benefiting their external stakeholders while also having a positive impact on employee OC.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Even with inflation on the rise, war on the borders of Europe and fear of an economic recession in the coming year, employee commitment and retention is still a critical topic in Human Resource and management discussions. A report published in May 2022 by CIPD Ireland, in conjunction with University of Limerick, highlighted the challenges faced by employers in Ireland with 85% of 341 respondents stating they are currently facing skills shortages and 62% of respondents expressing concern over a rise in resignations as employees come out of the Covid-19 pandemic having reflected on, and re-evaluated expectations from their careers and employers. This was recently reinforced by anecdotal research published by Deloitte Ireland in 2022, where over 23,000 of Gen Z and Millennial survey respondents from 46 countries indicated that 56% and 40%, respectively, are intending to leave their current employers. The same report noted that climate change and environmental issues are among the top two concerns of these generations who expect these societal problems to be reflected in the values and actions of their prospective employers. This indicates that the endeavour for Irish organisations aiming to hire and retain the right talent is to align their business strategies with activities that make a positive social impact in their communities and the wider world. These reports are not lost on employers, with the CIPD noting environmental, climate and sustainability concerns as a key priority for 30% of respondents.

The activities of organisations that endeavour to prioritise their social and community impacts alongside their business strategies typically fall under the umbrella of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR as a whole is a growing priority of organisations globally, for example CSR is now legally mandated In India. Companies are slowly moving away from being solely profit driven machines which is now a trait that is becoming criticised by society (Chatzopoulou and Kiewiet, 2020). It impacts their consumer base, investors and how they are perceived in the public domain. Company CSR practices also influence the decisions of potential candidates towards applying for jobs (Ng et al., 2017), this is backed by anecdotal

research performed by Deloitte in 2022 found that Climate change to be in the top two concerns of Gen Z & Millennials.

1.1 Research Background

The impact CSR has on an organisations' employees is an area that has been extensively growing in research within the past 10 years (Silva and Lokuwaduge, 2021). Recent literature suggests that there is a positive relationship between CSR practices and an organisations valued employee outcomes, such as retention. employee Organisational Commitment (Kowalczyk and Kucharska 2019; Zainee & Puteh 2020; Donia 2017). However, there are gaps in the research such as a lack of robust research based in an Irish context. Dung's (2020) research into the impact of internal CSR on employees' perceptions of Organisational Commitment notes limitations in is work in not having considered impact of external CSR practices on employee commitment and recommends further research in this area. This it furthered by the work of Bode et al. (2015) who highlight the lack of research on the employee participation in CSR initiatives which merits investigation.

1.2 Significance of Study

As CSR is known to play a part in the engagement and commitment of employees (Dung, 2020) it is important for HR professionals to be equipped with the tools to make informed decisions when addressing CSR practices. In terms of geographical location, there is little, if any, robust research carried out on the impact of CSR activities on the sense of organisational commitment in an Irish context. On a global scale there are strong contributions to the topic in countries including: Pakistan (Shah, et al., 2021); Ecuador (Loor-Zambrano et al., 2021); China (Li et al., 2021); Poland (Kowalczyk and Kucharska, 2019), Dung (2020) also notes studies undertaken in Germany, Belgium, UK, Norway and Sweden. These studies alone show the significance of applying research to an Irish context and filling this gap. This research will play an important part in guiding real world HR professional in their decision making with regards to CSR practices.

1.3 Aims & Objectives

The aim of the research is to explore the impact that participating in external CSR programmes has on the sense of Organisational Commitment among employees in an Irish context. To achieve this aim, the researcher will carry out a detailed literature review on the topics of CSR and OC allowing for a clear picture of where the recent studies place these topics in an organisational sense. Following this an primary research piece will take places with corporate professionals who have volunteered on a CSR programme which is far removed from their day-to -day work. And inductive and qualitative approach will be taken to the research to gather knowledge of the participants perceptions on objectives such as, the influence of CSR on: employee retention, affective Organisational Commitment and direct involvement in CSR versus indirect. These items will be explored through the niche of their direct involvement in external CSR activities.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

CIPD (2021) describes employee attrition or turnover as the number of employees that voluntarily or involuntarily leave an organisation and is typically expressed as a percentage of the total workforce numbers of an organisation. They describe employee retention as the amount of employees that remain working for an organisation, typically measured by a specific length of time, and expressed as a percentage of the overall workforce.

Employee attrition and retention has never been a more important topic for HR and management professionals within competitive strategy (Zainee and Puteh, 2020; Zhou et al., 2018). High labour demands and shortages of skilled employees is a critical issue as it slows down organisations from progressing and initiating development strategy (Bidwell & Keller, 2014; Chandrahaas & Narasimhan, 2022). Since the 'War for Talent' was coined by the consulting firm McKinsey & Co in 1998, retaining skilled and talented employees has become one the most broadly discussed and important Human Resource (HR) topics (Zainee and Puteh, 2020; Kontoghiorghes, 2016). The long-term commitment of employees to organisations is now a commodity which is sought after by organisations worldwide. Employers are developing new tactics with the aim of retaining employees and keeping them engaged, such as awarding employees company stocks, which gives them a tangible vested interest in the success of the company. This study will explore some of the potentially under-utilised pre-existing tools that boost employee retention. The literature review will aim to explore the relationship between organisational commitment (OC) and employee retention. Following this, the review will delve into existing theory on CSR and assess it through the mechanics of OC to shed light on the existing literature addressing the use of CSR as a tool in employee retention. Much recent research supports beliefs that positive correlations exist between CSR practices and the levels of OC and motivation in employees (Kowalczyk and Kucharska, 2019; Looor-Zambrano et al., 2021; Zainee and Puteh, 2020; Donia et al., 2017).

2.2 Organisational Commitment

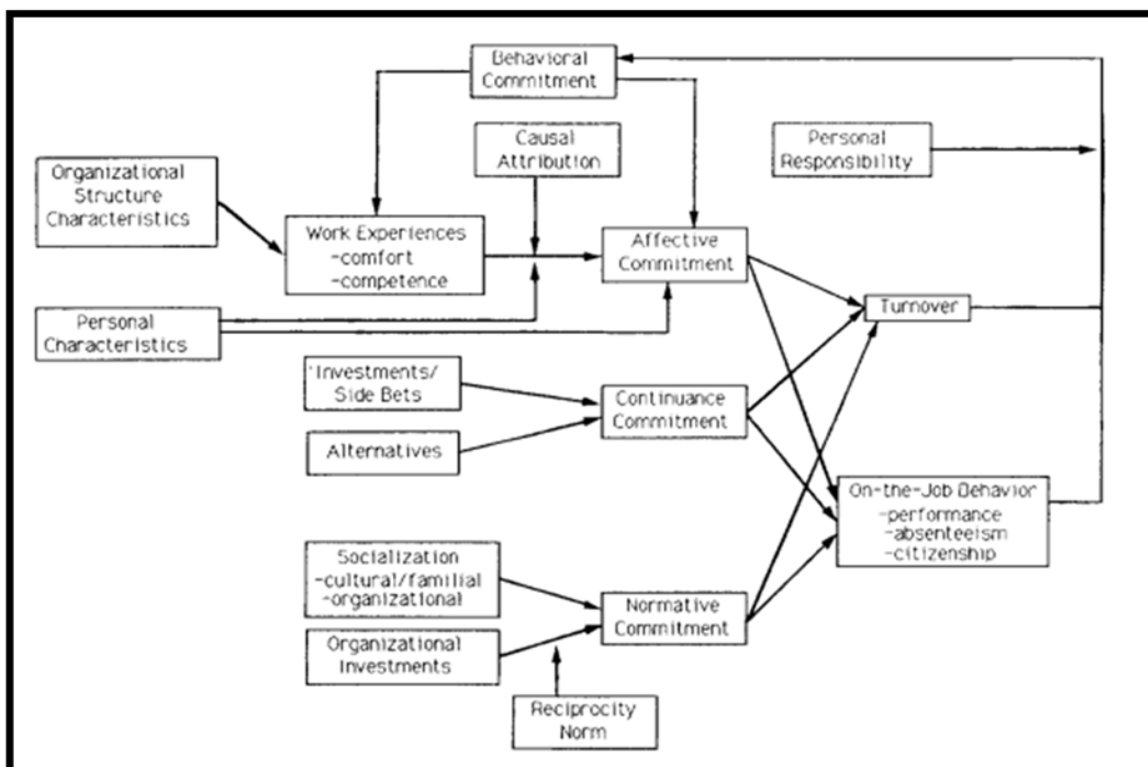
One of the key strategic HR resources used to review and influence employee retention is employee Organisational Commitment (OC) (Dung, 2020). OC is an employee trait that is highly desired by organisations worldwide (Chandhrahaas & Narasimhan, 2022). A fundamental knowledge of OC helps strategic HR professionals and management to better understand how and why and how employees identify with an organisation (Silva and Lokuwaduge, 2021), and also explores their turnover intention (Meyer and Allen, 1991). It is often defined as the psychology of employees' feelings towards their employment with an organisation and their level of attachment to this employment. A strong assessment of OC within an organisation is not only pivotal as a comprehensive evaluation in terms of employment retention, it also helps the organisation to better understand employee motivation, satisfaction and performance (Dung, 2020).

Presently, researchers widely use the Three-Component model of Organisational Commitment created by Meyer & Allen, (1991) to define and examine Organisational Commitment. The model defines OC as three components including:

1. **“Affective Commitment”**: describes the level of emotional attachment employees have towards their organisation and is defined by their personal commitment. When this is deemed high, it is understood that the chance of an employee leaving the organisation is low. It also indicates a high level of satisfaction in their work and employees that are motivated and engaged in workplace activities for the betterment of the organisation.
2. **“Continuance Commitment”**: is the idea that an employee feels that leaving the organisation would be too costly. They may have already committed a lot of time and energy into the employment and now feel attached to the organisation as leaving may negatively impact factors such as their seniority or pension. This can also be influenced by external factors such as the economic environment.

3. **“Normative Commitment”**: highlights an employee’s sense of obligation to remain in the organisation. It is a feeling of loyalty that reciprocates how they feel they have been treated by the organisation. This is arguably less relevant in the modern era with job and career changes being more common, however it is still an important psychological consideration for review as employees may feel loyal to managers that have supported their growth and career advancement.

The model created by Meyer & Allen (1991) in Figure 1 illustrates the positioning of these 3 components with regards to retention and employee engagement and highlights the factors that influence each. While further research by Meyer & Allen (2001) demonstrates that each of these components has a relationship to employee retention and turnover, they outline that affective commitment (AC) is typically the most important component to an organisation as it has the greatest potential to foster employee intrinsic motivation and commitment while reducing potential turnover (Kmieciak, 2022). It is arguably also the component that employers have the greatest influence over through leadership practices and driving company values (Chandrahaas & Niranjana, 2022).



(Figure 1)

This and similar models have been part of a driving tactic in modern HR to develop company cultures that nurture a stronger sense of OC within skilled employees and improve employee retention levels (Kontoghiorghes, 2016; Kwon and Jang, 2022). While there is consensus within the research on the use of the Three Component Model and the importance of AC as tools to predict and strategize in employee retention and turnover, the literature outlining effective practices to implement to create a strong sense of AC in a workforce is broad and varied. Research by Chandrahaas & Niranjana (2022) argues that it is “*authentic leadership*” which holds the key to building a strong sense of AC in employees. While Kmiecik (2021) highlights the positive influence that co-worker support has on AC and argues it is more important than leadership support. One of the interesting topics coming from recent research is the evidence of a positive correlation between CSR practices and the levers of organisational commitment and engagement in employees (Bapat and Upadhyay, 2021), (Shah, et al., 2021).

2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CSR is not easily defined, there is a broad scope of research on the topic with many academics having arrived at differing definitions which are still evolving to this day (Loo-Zambrano et al., 2020; Burke, 2015). Another reason for the lack of a specific definition, might be the broad scope of practices and stakeholders that fall under the term. The decisions an organisation makes in relation to CSR can intersect with its industry, market, and local governments. These decisions can have tangible consequences for local communities, the environment and climate. While also impacting the reputations of companies, sectors, and industries. CSR typically describes the actions organisations take with the goal of developing responsibility in how their core objectives affect the stakeholders in their environment. It often involves expanding their concerns from an inward focus, to include taking responsibility for their impact

on their local community and industry. Such as, companies developing strong internal practices on a vested interest in environmental, ethical, philanthropic, and economic, legal issues (Carroll, 1991; Weber and Wasieleski, 2018).

While CSR was established in the mid twentieth century, the practice of embedding it within organisations didn't become widespread until the 2000s onwards. It is during this time that CSR began to gain some significant recognition. The main driving force behind this change came from pressure from governments and the public on corporations to address not only profits but to focus on economic, social, and environmental performances. (Loor-Zambrano et al., 2021). Another driving force that can be considered in relation to this change is the millennial generation coming of age with a voice and values that prioritised environmental awareness, climate issues and transparency from corporations. This generation pushed this agenda in far bigger numbers than the generations before it (Chatzopoulou and Kiewiet, 2020). This first drove change in organisations in the form of consumer expectations and demands. A growing societal voice and consumer markets pushed change upon organisations that had practices that were considered negative towards society and the environment. Rising social and environmental consciousness has caused a consumer shift within markets towards ethically perceived brands and organisations, this shift in consumer consciousness is now a strong catalyst for change for organisations, who are now re-evaluating their practices.

Ethically poor practices and corporate objectives that were potentially damaging to communities were criticised and shamed publicly, citizens used the media and internet to put pressure on the organisations and also politicians (O'Donnell, 2011). This brought greater awareness to the activities and impacts of organisations and their decisions. Since then, it has evolved to include a wider variety of stakeholders that push this agenda such as legislators, government organisations, and now even employees and prospective employees.

From the 2000s onwards we see there is a huge growth in CSR. Criticism exists that corporate organisations use CSR practices as a 'rubber stamp' to be seen to be doing good in society

with the ulterior motive of building a better reputation with consumers and stakeholders in the aim of boosting profits (Chatzopoulou and Kiewiet, 2020; Donia et al., 2017). Ethical Corporate standards and social relationships have now become a baseline of consumer perception, which has led to new internal investment surrounding corporate perception. While many corporations have been lauded for this socially conscious approach, many have come under pressure for perceived whitewashing of their corporate image.

While criticism of CSR practices may still be the case in some respects, the Deloitte (2022) report shows us that Gen Z and Millennials are continuing to drive this pressure through high personal values placed in ethical practices from organisations. With Gen Z having as much if not more of a vested interest than the millennial generation in CSR practices that have a positive impact on the environment, climate and society, CSR continues to be a quickly growing focus for organisations worldwide as both the consumers and employees of the upcoming generations deem the topics that fall under CSR, high in their personal concerns. This impacts both an organisation's market and its employee and prospective employee base (Chatzopoulou and Kiewiet, 2020). In terms of academic research, its status as a growing trend across industries is evident with the majority of research on CSR having been published in the past 10 years (Silva and Lokuwaduge, 2021).

2.4 CSR Theory

CSR theory was first established in 1953 by Bowen (2013) who described it as an obligation of organisations to develop practices that support the benefit of wider society. Since then, there have been many contributions that expand on this work, however one of the most highly regarded models that helps us understand the different elements of CSR in an organisational context is Carroll's (1991) Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility. Carroll's definition and model gives us a hierarchy to better understand the elements of CSR and how it is applied in organisations. This model also gives us an insight to the part that an organisation's employees play in CSR practices. The concepts around the model were first established in the 1970s

(1979) and later expanded by Carroll (1991) to the widely used pyramid model with the four responsibilities of CSR.

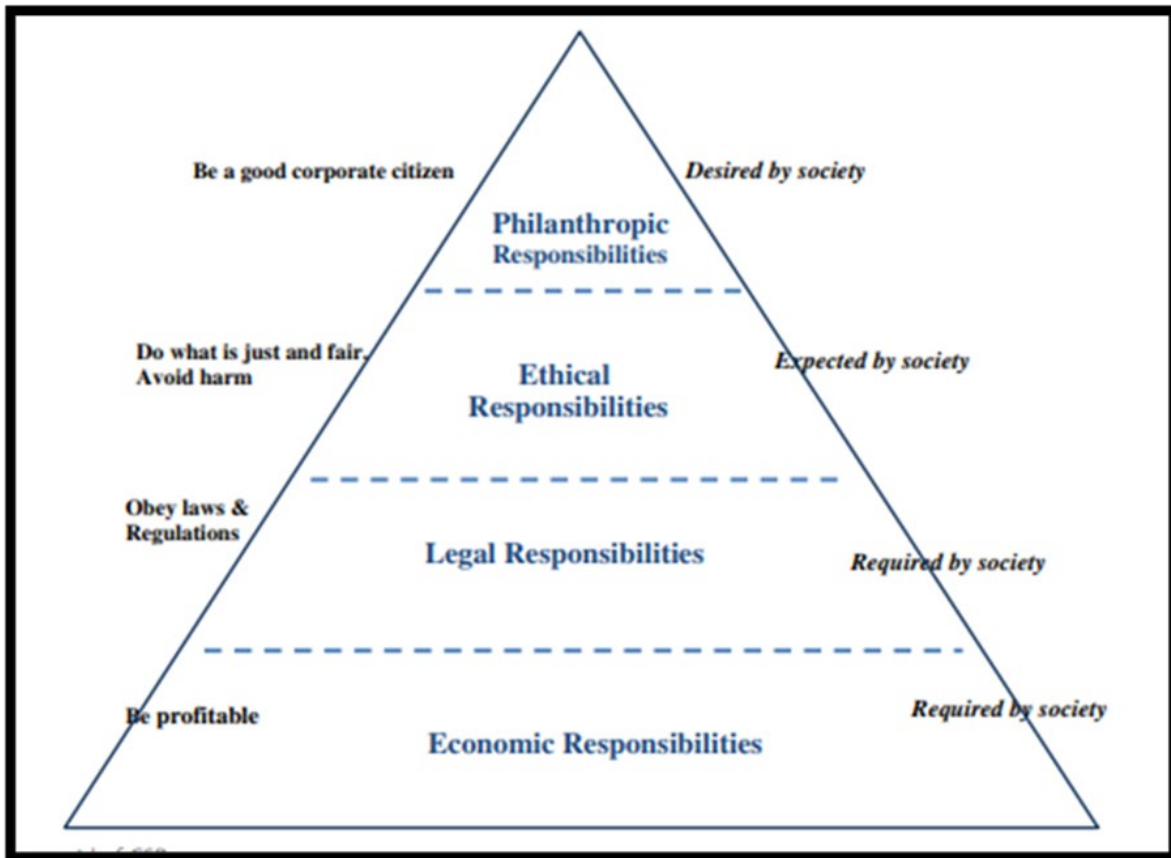


Figure 2: Carroll's Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility

Carroll outlined 4 key elements that should be the focus of organisations that want to embed CSR into their corporate strategy: economic, legal; ethical & philanthropic responsibilities. The pyramid model prioritises the elements from the most important at the bottom, upward to those that may be prioritised slightly less. The **economic** element of the model refers to an organisation's duty to establish competitive and profitable services for society. **Legal** is best understood as the compliance with legislation and rules that the business is bound to operate by. **Ethical** responsibilities are defined as practices that may not be written into law, however may be expected of a member or an entity in society, such as ethically sourcing ingredients or components for products. The final element is **philanthropic** responsibilities, these are the activities that an organisation can take to positively contribute to society and the human

welfare of their communities. The term philanthropic is often associated with the funding or monetary support to causes that are perceived as good, however it is important to note that it also encompasses the time or knowledge that people give to a cause that is deemed to positively impact society. This is an important differentiation as it relates to the direct involvement of employees in external CSR activities which this study intends to examine in more detail. The philanthropic section can be described as the CSR initiatives that the wider group of employees, outside of CSR specialists, HR, and management, have the opportunity to participate in which are not mandated and purely dedicated to the community (Brin and Nehme, 2019; Ng et al., 2020).

2.5 Stakeholder Theory

Freeman (1984) created stakeholder theory which defines the stakeholders of an organisation as any individuals or groups within or outside an organisation who can impact its objectives or are impacted by the outcome of its objectives. This theory helps us understand the broad scope of potential stakeholders to an organisation and allows leadership to plan strategic relationships that align with the objectives of the organisation. The theory suggests that an organisation is best equipped to achieve its objectives when it is aligned with the stakeholders in its environment. This theory is pivotal in identifying the connection between the CSR activities of an organisation and the stakeholders that these activities impact. Stakeholders may be any individuals or groups that are directly or indirectly impacted by the objectives of an organisation, for example: employees, investors, local governments, community and environmental groups or non-profits. It is also vital in identifying gaps in activities that may be missing or that may not be aligned with the objectives of the organisation's stakeholders, which Freeman argued is an essential aspect of successful CSR (Brin and Nehme, 2019; Chatzopoulou and Kiewiet, 2020). Brin and Nehme (2019) noted that a potential misuse of this theory comes in the form of companies using it to align with stakeholders that are solely interested in increasing profit to the detriment of other stakeholders.

2.6 Internal & External CSR

When Freeman's stakeholder theory is applied to Carroll's (1991) pyramid, HR & CSR practitioners can see the different elements of CSR and can better identify the stakeholders that have a part to play in each. On using this as an analysis tool, it will also be clearer whether these stakeholders are based within or outside the organisation. These tools used together are key in assessing the players within an organisation's environment that have an impact or that are impacted by its objectives. For the purpose of this study, it is important to further define these stakeholders between external and internal, as categorised by Brammer et al. (2007).

External stakeholders is a well-researched topic in relation to CSR as these stakeholders are considered to potentially have a great impact on the organisation's objectives (Brin and Nehme, 2019; Loo-Zambrano et al., 2021). It refers to those that may impact or be impacted by the company's objectives and are positioned outside of the organisation, for example, they may include: consumers; investors; community members; environmental groups; non-profits that may receive pro bono services and governments that set local legislation. Up to recent years, external CSR has been prioritised by organisations. It has arguably been used by organisations as a tool of positive public relations, with the aim of building a strong positive public perception and thus strengthening their market base with the intention of boosting profits. In recent years organisations are becoming more transparent with their CSR activities (Chatzopoulou and Kiewiet, 2020), this has arguably been the result of negative consumer responses from insincere CSR practices (Ng et al., 2019) and the drive of the Millennials and Gen Z generations that have a growing voice and that call for more transparency from organisations (Zainee and Puteh, 2020; Deloitte, 2022). In relation to organisational commitment, research has been carried out on the relationship between employee perceived perception of external CSR of a company and employees' sense of commitment to the organisation. Ng et al. (2019) found that strong external CSR practices build a sense of pride and organisational embeddedness in employees which in turn lowers turnover rates. Shah, et al. (2021) found that external CSR activities increase employee commitment through a boost

in pride and confidence of the organisation. Lee and Chen (2017) similarly found that if employees had a low perception of consumer or environmental elements of CSR commitment and retention was also low, however they noted that it was not a one size fits all approach to CSR that will boost employee commitment as employee personal values and perceptions of CSR can impact what they relate too. This study recommended that employers apply a 'bottom up' approach to CSR activities to have the best potential for a positive impact with employees.

Internal CSR is less researched however is a growing topic of study (Silva and Lokuwaduge, 2021). Hameed et al. (2016) defines internal CSR as the internal practices an organisation has in place which are focused on the internal stakeholders, most notably the employees. These practices might include: health & safety; quality of work; opportunities for training and further development; employee wellbeing; policies addressing equal opportunity and social equity (Longo et al., 2005; Hameed et al., 2016). Of the research conducted to date, much of it has explored the relationship between internal CSR and employees' sense of organisational commitment. Dung (2020) highlights previous research that has shown a positive correlation in internal CSR and Organisational commitment from locations including: Germany; UK, Bangladesh, Belgium, South Asia, Norway & Sweden, Norway & Sweden, Tunisia & Jordan. Dung (2020) has also contributed to this area with robust study on the impact of internal CSR on the sense of affective organisational commitment of employees in the service sector in Vietnam. In a similar fashion to other geographical locations, the study found that internal CSR practices, such as: *“employment and employment relationships, conditions of work, social dialogue, health and safety at work, and human development and training in the workplace”*, play significant positive role in the relationship with affective commitment of employees. Internal CSR has been found to have a higher impact on employee commitment than external CSR (Gupta and Sharma, 2016). This noted difference is arguably the result of the direct effect that internal practices have on employees, such as on their wellbeing.

2.7 Considerations of CSR

Criticism of CSR dates back as far as the 60s when Friedman (1962) noted that an organisation only had the responsibility of making profits. With prelude there are some caveats in the literature worth discussing, including potential increases in employee turnover derived from an increase in employee skills brought on by participating in CSR initiatives or a disengagement that can grow in employees that have no interest in CSR (Carnahan et al., 2017). Brin & Nehme (2019) noted that a potential misuse of CSR theory comes in the form of companies using it to align with stakeholders that are solely interested in increasing profit to the detriment of other stakeholders. Hejjas et al. (2018) acutely discuss the broad spectrum of employee values and preferences and note that pushing certain types of CSR practices on employees that don't value them will cause disengagement. Further to this, Donia et al. (2017) highlights that companies which decide to engage in symbolic CSR for the purpose of image enhancement are unlikely to have the desired outcome with their employees who may see through their efforts and lose a sense of organisational pride.

2.8 Conclusion

While academics do note that research on the impact of CSR practices on employee commitments is lacking (Trivellas et al., 2019; Mitonga-Monga and Hoole, 2018), this literature review highlights studies from a wide variety of geographical locations that have come to similar conclusions on the positive relationship between CSR practices and Organisational Commitment. While there are many studies highlighting this positive relationship, two key gaps in the literature have been identified by this researcher.

Firstly, geographically, we have established that there is literature which focuses on a wide variety of countries around the world (Dung 2020). This researcher has not been able to identify a single peer reviewed academic journal that addresses this topic in relation to employees and organisations based in Ireland. This paper intends to explore this gap and add

valuable contributions to better understand the underlying mechanisms of CSR and employee OC in an Irish context.

Secondly, and critically, Lee & Chen (2017) who also came to the conclusion of a positive relationship between CSR and employee commitment, highlighted that a one size fits all approach to CSR practices will not be the most effective method in using it as a tool to nurture organisational commitment in employees. They emphasised that for CSR to be optimised for building organisational commitment in employees, practitioners should consider developing CSR activities that build personal connections with employees. It is this approach that allows employees to contribute to a real social impact which gives them a sense of meaningfulness in their work. Bode et al. (2015) takes this further to highlight that it is direct employee participation which drives improvements in individual affective organisational commitment through better identification with the company. In other words, while we have seen the positive relationship between internal & external CSR practices on OC, Bode et al. (2015) argue that it is direct employee participation that has the best chance of positively growing this relationship and they refine the term CSR to participation in corporate social initiatives (CSI). CSI can be best understood when we apply it to Carroll's theory and see that is best defined within the philanthropic element of the CSR pyramid, when further examined with Freeman's stakeholder theory we understand that CSI is focused on external stakeholders, however is driven by internal stakeholders, such as employees and management support. There is very little research in this specific area of the relationship between employee participation in external CSR activities and employee OC. Bode et al. (2015) concluded, from data accessed through a global consulting firm, that there was a positive relationship and set a benchmark study in this area. They however noted that in-depth qualitative research would be valuable in adding further insights to this under researched area. This study intends to address both these gaps in the current literature while contributing to the existing literature and guiding further research.

Chapter 3 - Research Question

3.1 Research Aims

The aim of this study is to contribute to the previously existing literature by exploring the relationship between employee participation in external Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives and the employee sense of organisational commitment to their employer.

Secondary research discussed in the literature review tells us that employee retention is currently a critical challenge for organisations worldwide (Zainee and Puteh, 2020). A tool that is often overlooked by HR professionals and leadership is the impact that CSR may have on levels of employee retention. While the topic is researched, there are some clear gaps in this research, such as the impact that direct employee participation in CSR activities has on the sense of organisational commitment of employees, as opposed to the overall perception of the organisation's support of external CSR activities. The second substantial gap that has been identified is the lack of research on this topic within an Irish context Ireland. This study aims to contribute to these gaps in the literature.

3.2 Research Objectives

1. To explore the impact of the direct participation in external CSR activities on employee perceptions retention intentions
2. To explore the employee perceptions of their direct participation in external CSR activities in relation to their sense of affective organisational commitment
3. To explore employee perceptions on the importance placed on direct involvement in CSR practices

3.3 Research Question

“An exploratory study into the impact of direct participation in Corporate Social Responsibility on Organisational Commitment of employees in Ireland”

In selecting this primary research statement, this study intends to contribute to the current research on the relationship between organisational CSR practices and OC in employees. Previous research collated by (Loor-Zambrano et al., 2021) suggests that there is a positive correlation between CSR and OC, however Bode et al. (2015) note that this positive correlation is more likely to occur if there is direct employee participation in CSR activities.

While there is research on the relationship CSR has with employee commitment, as discussed in the literature review, CSR is a multi-faceted topic that ranges from the internal side which impacts the internal stakeholders of an organisation (Lee and Chen, 2017) to the external side which impacts the range of external stakeholders that are typically aligned with the organisation's objectives (Silva and Lokuwaduge, 2021). As we delve deeper, we understand that a significant study within CSR is how the employee views on an organisation's CSR activities affects their sense of organisational commitment. Bode et al. (2015) highlighted that an interesting subsection of this which is an under researched topic, is the impact that direct participation has on a sense of OC in employees. This study will address this under researched area. As there is no clear hypothesis formed from the secondary research discussed in this study's literature review, this study will take a cross sectional, qualitative approach, with the use of in-depth interviews. An Interpretive method will be utilised to gather subjective data from the study's participants. The participants will be professionals who have participated in a specific social outreach programme introduced to them through their employers, who approved the employees to take time out of their working day to volunteer on the programme. The data will be analysed using a thematic approach to explore the perceptions between participation in the programme and the employees' professional relationship with their

employer through the lens of organisational commitment. This method will allow the researcher to use the data to form a hypothesis that may be a basis for further study.

As we have examined in the literature review, a key tool in leadership arsenal for assessing and strategizing for improving employee retention and reducing turnover is organisational commitment (OC) (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Dung, 2020). A strong sense of OC in employees is highly sought after by employers worldwide as it is known to result in higher levels of employee retention and a higher level of employee engagement (Chandrahaas & Narasimhan, 2022). The theories within OC can be used by leadership as a barometer to assess the employee retention and engagement rates. With this in mind the researcher is using the theories of OC as a medium to understand the participants perception of motivation and retention intentions having participant in the CSR programme.

3.4 Significance

This study plays a significant part in contributing to pre-existing literature. It intends to add further value to the CSR strategies that are implemented by organisations worldwide and act as a guide for leadership to not only add value to the stakeholders in their environment but to further understand how practices may be used as a tool in the strategic management of employees. This study will robustly analyse the data gathered and create a set of recommendations that can be adapted by HR professionals and leadership.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will outline the methodology approach that best suits this study. The section will highlight a framework of mythology and how this piece of research fits into it. The framework will be broken down to discuss the different elements and how they relate to this piece of research.

4.2 Framework

The framework which will be used to structure the research process for this study is 'The Research Onion' created by Saunders et al. (2019). The Research Onion is used as a strategy to develop an organised methodology for undertaking research. The diagram in figure 3 below illustrates this framework and describes six layers to designing a methodology: philosophy, approach to theory development, methodological choice, strategies, time horizon, and techniques & procedures. This section will explore these layers in more detail and outline how they relate to this study.

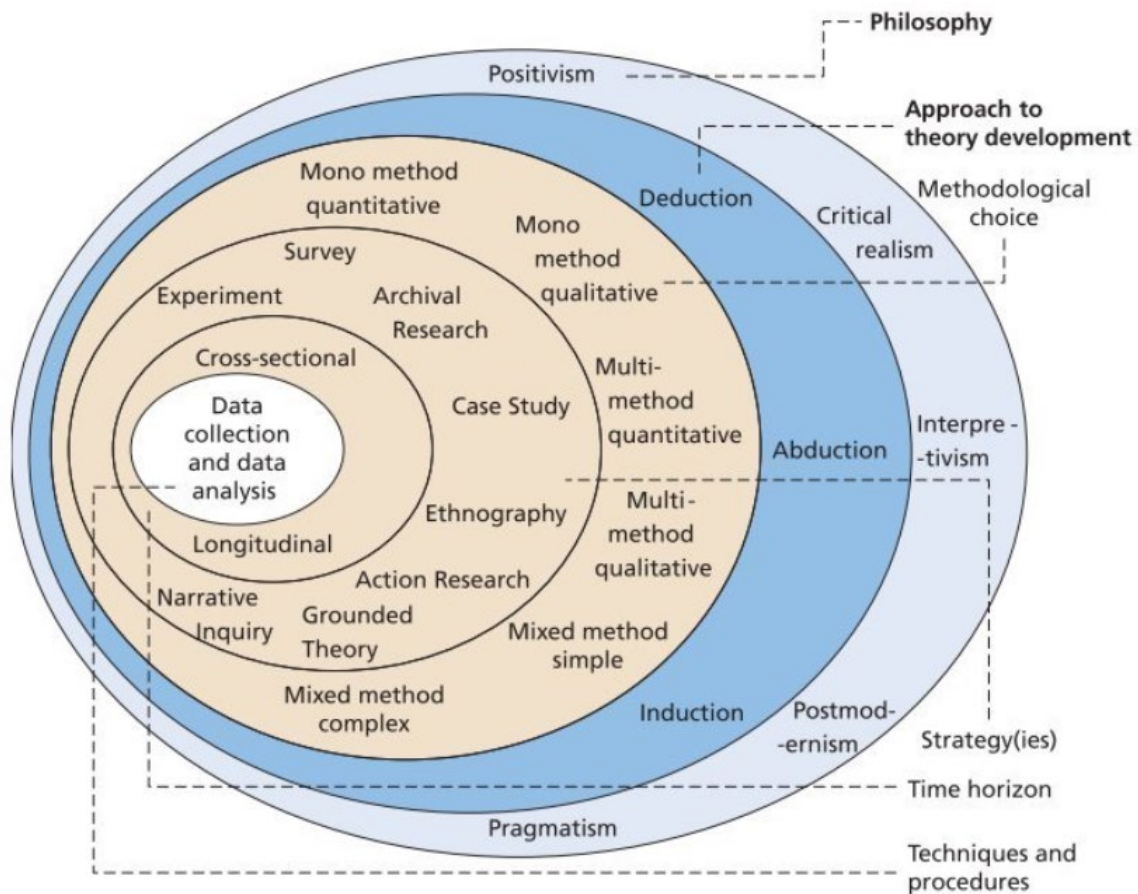


Figure 3: The Research Onion

4.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is used to describe the underlying beliefs and assumptions that define how knowledge is developed. The most common areas of philosophical study that a researcher can follow in to conduct their study are Ontology & Epistemology (Saunders et al., 2019). Ontology is the study of reality, it explores the nature of reality and existence. Epistemology is the study of knowledge, what we know and how we can know it. It defines what is acceptable knowledge based on the quality of the data collected and states that knowledge is gained by different methods due to different perspectives on the reliability and validity of the information gathered in the research process (Saunders et al., 2019). For the purpose of this study the researcher is following Epistemology, as the research intends to gather knowledge from participants that is social constructed by the meanings they place on events.

Within Epistemology research can be further categorised as subjectivism or objectivism. Objectivism typically uses facts and quantitative data to explore observable phenomena. This methodology is anchored in realism and states that understood phenomena are unchanging and exist independently of individuals' perceptions on them. In contrast, through subjectivism we understand that the opinions and perceptions of individuals are fundamental in developing knowledge (Saunders et al., 2019). This study will be conducted with the view of subjectivism as the research seeks to explore the perceptions of the participants in the study with the aim of developing a piece of knowledge from the outcomes.

The final item of the research philosophy is applying the Research Onion framework to this philosophy. In this framework we are firstly addressing the outer layer of the diagram to determine a road map for our approach. This study will use an Interpretivism approach, which embodies the previously discussed characteristics of subjectivism. This approach outlines that as humans create their own meanings studies involve participants may be best carried in a method that adds better understandings of the social worlds compared to studies of physical phenomena (Saunders et al., 2019). It is a particularly strong approach for research revolving around corporate organisations as it inspects perceptions on the everyday activities or politics in the organisation allowing leadership to plan strategically. The researcher will use this approach as he intends to explore the meanings that the participants place to their experiences of CSR in relation to OC.

4.3 Research Approach

The second layer of the research onion refers to the approach taken to theory development. As highlighted in figure 3, there are three approaches to consider: deduction, abduction, or induction. Deduction examines the relationships between variables and uses pre-existing theories to form a hypothesis which is then rigorously tested. Typically, however not necessarily, quantitative data is collected to test the hypothesis as it is required to be highly

structured and measurable. Deduction is often related to the study of natural sciences, however is not limited to this.

Induction has its foundations in the social sciences, where it is deemed important to understand human perceptions when investigating the relationships between variables. The use of inductive methods, which are not as highly structured as deductive, allows for the discovery of alternative reasons to the phenomena than may be hypothesised through deduction. The inductive approach is characterised by the theory coming before the data and investigates the context in which phenomena occur. This approach typically uses a qualitative collection of data to gather the perception of the subjects that may have an insight to this phenomenon through their involvement with CSR. Abduction effectively incorporates both induction and deduction by moving between the two approaches, it might involve collecting data to explore a phenomenon resulting in identifying themes and then integrate the outcomes into a conceptual framework. It is often associated with research undertaken by in a corporate setting.

This study will be undertaken with an inductive method as it best addresses the aims of the research. The researcher intends to gather data from participants which may not have a connection with the questions asked of the participants and the results are not intended to fit into an already existent coding frame. Induction follows a data to theory approach which is best outlined by Bryman (2006) through his six steps which he describes as '*up the hill*'. The outcomes of induction studies can often be described as being logically true, however not necessarily true as they haven't been through rigorous testing.

1. *State the question*
2. *Observations*
3. *Form Hypotheses*
4. *Test & Analyse*
5. *Draw Conclusion*
6. *Theory*

4.4 Research Strategy

The two most widely known research strategies used for collecting data are qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative involves the use of non-probability methods to allow researchers to freedom to observe participants without being restricted by an overly structured approach. This approach is used to gather thoughts and feelings of participants that will allow for a deeper understanding of the meaning that they put on events which later adds to the development of a theory. A qualitative approach is being used in this study as it is not following a pre-existing theory, the study is working off a phenomenon described in recent research of the impact that CSR plays on OC and in turn employee retention. The researcher intends to explore this topic to formulate theory which can be investigated by future researchers.

4.5 Population Sample & Size

The population sample chosen for this study was selected from professionals that had participated in a corporate social responsibility initiative which was introduced to them through their employers. The initiative was a social outreach programme run by Dublin's North East Inner City initiative in conjunction with National College of Ireland. The initiative was a mentoring programme that matched 160 professionals from corporate, public and civil service sector career backgrounds with young people in six secondary schools in Dublin's inner city that are designated as disadvantaged by the Irish government. The aim of the programme was to impart a positive influence on these young people, offer insights to career areas and how to access these career areas and exposure to professionals which they may not have in their day to day lives. This sample was selected due to the nature of the direct participation of the volunteers, the longevity of the programme which lasted for six months and involved the volunteers meeting students once every month, also the fact that the mentoring experience was far removed from the employees' career and day to day job. Volunteers came from a wide variety of career areas, including but not limited to: medical & nursing, finance, marketing, civil & public service, law, HR, recruitment, sales, technology, careers, teaching. Volunteers from

this specific programme were chosen as the researcher had direct involvement with the programme and a commitment for access to the volunteers for the purpose of this study.

4.6 Data Collection

There is a wide variety of data collection methods that can be used in qualitative research, including, and not limited to: interviews, focus groups, observation, case studies. For the purpose of this study the researcher has chosen to use face to face interviews to gather data. This method has been chosen as the aim of the research is exploratory, and the flexibility of interviews allows for in-depth knowledge gathering. It allows participants to share opinions and perceptions that are not as preconceived as a quantitative approach (Braun & Clarke, 2008). This approach allows for rapport to be built between the participant and researcher in a comfortable and confidential setting, which further adds to the exploratory setting. Within interviews there are three techniques that can be used: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Saunders et al., 2019). This study will use a semi-structured interview technique as it will be best suited to explore the employee perceptions on the relationship between participating in external CSR and their sense of OC by asking questions that address this aim while also leaving room for the researcher to delve further into any themes that arise.

The medium chosen to carry out the interview is Microsoft Teams Video call. This medium is effective for interviews as it allows convenience for the participant to join from any location. In terms of the researcher, the built-in transcribing tool makes it a convenient application. The interviews are recorded using the application and the transcripts downloaded directly to the researcher's device. The transcripts are then anonymised and identified as 'participant - 1, 2, 3' and so forth. The researcher chose a semi-structured approach to the interviews as it allowed the topics to be set for participants that may not have much previous knowledge or preconceived thoughts on the area. The flexibility allowed the researcher to explore potential themes that the participants reported.

4.7 Data Analysis

To effectively analyse the data gathered in this study the researcher is using a thematic analysis and will draw on the six-step framework created by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a core method of qualitative based studies (Saunders et al. 2019). The aim of the thematic analysis is to identify themes that arise that address the phenomena being studied (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). The researcher is tasked with using this method to interpret and make sense of the data. It allows the researcher to explore the topic and identify recurring themes in the data. This identification facilitates making connections with theories and literature which allows for hypotheses to be formed. Braun and Clarke (2006) outline the six-step framework as: transcription & familiarisation; generating initial codes; identifying themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; written report (Braun and Clarke 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) note that it is not necessarily a linear process, and a researcher may work back and forth through the steps. This is a particularly useful approach for this specific study as the researcher is gathering perceptions from professional volunteers that have participated in an external CSR programme. While there are indications of correlations that exist between CSR and OC this study is not utilising a pre-existing theory, the researcher aims to explore the perceptions of participants that have volunteered in external CSR activities in relation to their sense of organisational commitment. The aim of this will be to delve into their feelings towards their employer having taken part in the programme to investigate any themes that arise.

In the first step of Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, on completion of the interviews with participants, this researcher refines the transcripts to ensure the data was collected accurately and begins the process of familiarisation, which involves reading and rereading the data to gain a thorough understanding of what has been gathered. The second step is "*generating the initial codes*" from the analysis of the transcribed data. In this study the researcher will be searching for common themes that arise from the participants perceptions about their participation in external CSR activities and their relationship with OC. Through a systematic

approach, the codes build a road map for the researcher to later identify themes. The third step is “*searching for themes*”. Having coded the topics from the interviews the researcher will categorise the codes into potential themes. This will involve reviewing the codes and interpreting how they may form broader themes. The research intends to use a mind map to assist in the process of identifying these themes. The fourth step is “*reviewing the themes*”, this starts when the researcher has gathered potential themes and involves narrowing them down. The researcher is tasked with assessing the themes to determine if there is enough data to back them or if themes are too big and should be separated. Step five, “*defining and naming themes*”, involves further refining the themes once a clear thematic map has been finalised. In this step the researcher is also tasked with defining the themes to highlight their core meanings. The final step “*producing the report*”, involves the researcher showcasing the merit and validity of the analysis and telling the story of the data.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a key element of any piece of research. For the purpose of this study the researcher followed the ethical considerations outlined by Plummer (2001) as outlined by Lo Lacono et al. (2016). The researcher shared the consent form with the participants in good time for them to thoroughly review and raise any potential questions. Consent was requested for the interviews to be recorded and participants were again reminded of this at the start of the interview. The participants were informed that the recording could be stopped at any point during the interview. Participants were also advised that they could withdraw from the study at any point. In terms of confidentiality, only the transcripts of the recordings were downloaded, these were anonymised and saved on a password protected computer and the video recordings were deleted. The identification of the volunteers was verified by the researcher who had direct involvement in the CSR programme they participated in.

4.9 Limitations

The researcher acknowledges that there are limitations to this study that may impact the findings and are worth noting. Firstly, this study used a method of non-probability convenience sampling, allowing the researcher access to a reliable source of data through one CSR programme. The drawback of this method is that the participants, while they come from different employers and career backgrounds, are all employed in Dublin's inner city and are involved in the one CSR programme. This may lend to some degree of bias and a generalised outcome may not be achievable. Under different conditions this researcher may have chosen a mixed method of sampling across a wider population with a probability method and then utilised a qualitative interview approach to delve deeper into the feedback from a specific set of respondents. Secondly, the fact that the participants are already involved in a CSR programme shows their interest in the topic and may also have connotations of bias. In future study it may be recommendable to also incorporate employees that are not directly involved in CSR to add further depth to the study.

Chapter 5 - Research Analysis

In this chapter the researcher will analyse and present the findings of the qualitative interviews. Having used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic framework to repeatedly analyse the findings to create codes from the data the codes are then refined into themes that were most prevalent. The researcher will link these themes back to the relevant literature and highlight any potential limitations. A semi-structured interview approach was used in the study which allowed the researcher to keep the data collected topical and also further explore interesting themes that came up. In keeping the interviews topical the researcher asked questions revolved around topics including: the participants perception of CSR; CSR in their companies; company culture & CSR; participation in external CSR activities; job fulfilment before and after participating in external CSR programmes; sense of motivation towards work before and after participation; perceived impact of participation on intentions to continue their employment.

5.1 Affective Organisational Commitment

The participants were asked about their perceived sense of motivation towards their work both before and after participation in the programme. The researcher believed that this was an important topic to explore as much of the literature on the impact of CSR ties outcomes of job attitudes and behaviour changes from CSR practices to turnover rates (Ng et al. 2019). It also gave an overall picture of their perceptions towards their work. Two of the respondents noted that they did feel more motivated towards their work after having participated, *"I felt that while I am still part of a very large corporate company, I do feel that that corporate company now has a face and it's a very human face. Absolutely...I feel that my corporate structure and the hierarchy above me is a lot more transparent"*, *"Yes...it definitely made me appreciate the company itself and in terms of what they're trying to do and if they're willing to do more positive outreach programmes"*. This is in line with literature where Shah et al. (2021) found that an organisation's involvement in philanthropic CSR, as outlined by Carroll (1991), adds fulfilment to employees by meeting needs such as self-esteem and social identity. The rise in motivation

reported by the participants links to Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three-Component model of Organisational Commitment where the desired outcome not only has the potential to decrease turnover levels, it also improves employee engagement. It is worth noting, that one of the participants reported no positive or negative change in motivation and attributed this to the company already having strong CSR practices that the participant has been directly involved in and considers the "top three" key aspects of his job.

5.2 Direct Participation In CSR

The core research question of this study was to explore the participants perceptions on directly participating in external CSR initiatives. This was posed to the participants through follow up questions in the interviews. The key theme that arose from this topic was the perceived higher beneficial impact that the participation in the programme had on employees in comparison to the hypothetical scenario of reading about the company's CSR practices in a company communication. *"I think you cannot be face to face and that's what this programme offered. It was very much a case of you rolled your sleeves up and you got stuck in and being part of a very large corporate organisation, you very rarely have that opportunity to have that hands-on experience and create lasting impact", "I have worked with companies in the past that talk about supporting various causes, but it doesn't feel real to me, i think it is far more important to actually have the chance to get stuck in and do some good myself. It definitely feels a lot better to be involved in a real result from the efforts"*. This is a critical finding in an Irish context as these themes align pre-existing literature in the area, Bode et al. (2015) highlighted a direct, positive, change in how the employees view themselves and their company as a result of the direct participation in CSR. This is further reflected by Lee and Chen (2017) who outlined a need for employees to have a personal connection to the CSR practice for it to be most impactful on their OC. This finding gives a strong indication that direct participation in external CSR has beneficial outcomes on the relationship between employer and employee, however it is worth noting that there are limitations to this study. The use of convenience sampling means the outcomes study may not yet be in a position to be generalised for a wider Irish

context. Also, the fact that most of the participants have a strong personal interest in CSR may not be reflective of the impacts on a wider employee base.

5.3 Employee Retention Intentions

One of the key objectives of this study was to explore the relationship between the employee participation in CSR activities and their sense of organisational commitment. As highlighted by Meyer & Allen (1991), all three components of OC are associated with labour turnover levels. To this end, the researcher posed specific questions to the participants that reflect perceptions on their employer and employment intentions. The data collected was in line with literature on similar studies involving the impact of CSR on OC (Silva and Lokuwaduge, 2021). When asked if the participation in an external CSR programme made them feel differently about their employer, all participants gave feedback that indicated a shift to believe that the experience made them view their employer in a more positive light, *“yes, in allowing me to see the human aspect of my company and where I felt it genuinely cared about not only its employees but the community around it as well, and that was willing to put in time and effort into nurturing both of those”*.

When asked if the opportunity to specifically participate in external CSR activities influenced any potential decisions to stay with their employer, the data was overwhelmingly positive, *“I would say if there were three things that would make me stay, it would definitely be one of them”*; *“It definitely did..I respected my management and the organisation more and that brought me a lot of buy in terms of the company aims and ethos”*. These results reflect work done by Bode et al. (2015), through their empirical study they highlighted that there is a subsection of employees that will benefit from not only having a traditional corporate career, which they value, but also having the opportunity to create a real social impact which offers them further fulfilment alongside their career.

5.4 Disingenuous CSR

One key and unforeseen theme that arose from the study was the topic of disingenuous CSR. Two of the participants brought up the terms “pinkwashing”, “whitewashing”, “greenwashing”

or “rainbow-washing”, without any prompt from the researcher, when referring to CSR practices in a wider spectrum of companies. These terms refer to companies that symbolically back causes which impact society such as gay rights or environmental causes however, don’t align their objectives or the companies act in a way that that is counter to these causes. The participants brought up these topics in a negative light, *“I can honestly say that [in my company] it’s not rainbow washing or greenwashing that you’re seeing in a lot of businesses nowadays, it is actually genuine”, “I would value organisations that actually do make a positive impact and I’d be very wary of outreach programs that are more based on the perception... You see a lot of pinkwashing, is what it’s called, where people are using these events and perceived social good to enhance their images and profits”*. The perceptions from these participants are reflected in literature with Donia et al. (2017) highlighting that companies that are tempted to adopt CSR practices with the aim of improving their image tend to be viewed as disingenuous by employees and can come at the expense of valued employee engagement. The flexible nature of the interviews allowed the researcher to probe these topics with follow up questions for more insights from the participants. The researcher asked participants if they would reconsider applying for a role in a company if they found it was known to have disingenuous practices or if their current hypothetically had disingenuous practices would they consider leaving. All participants highlighted that it would have a negative impact on how they view their employment, *“I have been in companies where I’ve known it’s been rainbow-washing and I know it’s been, because the next year the number one thing was OK what’s trendy, and then it was moving on to the environment...once I realised it was that, it was demotivating”*.

Chapter 6 - Discussion

Employee retention and attraction is at the forefront of human capital management in organisations in Ireland (CIPD, 2022). An organisation's ability to attract and retain talented employees is a key indicator of high-performance culture (Kontoghiorghes, 2016) and is often discussed as a competitive advantage in strategic management (Silva and Lokuwaduge, 2021; Zainee & Puteh, 2020). CSR is widely becoming recognised as an important tool, not only for how the company is perceived by external stakeholders and the public, but also for its reputation with internal stakeholders (Bode et al., 2015), its potential to shape culture (Shah et al., 2021), and the benefits it may have in employee attraction and retention (Ng et al., 2019). The findings of this study have a strong implication for how HR professionals, and CSR practitioners approach CSR planning in an Irish context. In terms of the research question, the study set out to explore the impact of direct employee participation in external CSR in relation to the sense of organisational commitment of employees in Ireland. The researcher addressed this question by enlisting research participants that were employed in professional organisations based in Ireland's capital city, Dublin. These participants were ideal candidates for the study as they had also been involved in a large-scale CSR initiative by acting as mentors to secondary school students from schools in Dublin's inner city that are designated disadvantaged by the Irish government. The interview feedback was rich, in that the participants gave very detailed perceptions on the topics, and they came from varied career areas including: Marketing Manager in a technology company; Executive Officer in the Civil Service; Business Manager in a recruitment company. While not part of the interviews or asked of by the researcher, the participants volunteered information about their own personal backgrounds, and it was noted that the participants all came from varied social backgrounds which added to the depth of perspectives in the data collected. The researcher acknowledges that there are limitations to the study. Firstly, a wider selection of participants would have potentially added more breadth to the data collected. Secondly, the use of convenience sampling meant that, while the participants didn't know each other, they were all based in the

same geographical location in Ireland, and had participated in the same CSR programme which makes it harder to generalise for an Irish context.

The researcher asked the participants a range of interview questions and follow up questions to gather data with the aim of addressing three key objectives. One of the main objectives was to explore the impact that direct participation in external CSR activities had on the employee perceptions of retention intentions. Having used a thematic analysis to identify the themes that came up in the data collection, it was clear to the researcher that one of the key themes was the positive impact that participation in the external CSR initiatives had on the participants' retention intentions. All participants reported feeling more connected to their employers, this finding aligns with work done by Ng et al. (2019) who noted an increased level of organisational pride in employees where their company has strong CSR practices. The participants also specifically highlighted that they felt more comfortable approaching senior managers who had backed the programme. This shows a higher level of perceived trust between the participants and their superiors after having taken part in the programme. This feedback is in line with Chandrahaas & Narasimhan (2022) who noted a positive relationship between authentic leadership and affective organisational commitment. This finding has important implications for HR and CSR practitioners that are designing CSR policies with the aim of improving the employee perceptions of the organisation and the relationships with their senior managers as well as supporting good causes.

The second main objective was to explore the employee perceptions of their direct participation in external CSR activities in relation to their sense of affective organisational commitment. This was another theme that had a strong presence in the analysis, participants noted more motivation in their day-to-day jobs, having seen that their company is willing to support and give employees the opportunity to participate in tangible CSR on company time. All participants were of the belief that CSR practices have an influence on company culture. This interestingly corresponds with (Shah et al., 2021) who highlights that company culture is tied to affective organisational commitment. The impact of this finding is that HR & CSR

practitioners who are planning on developing CSR practices and are aiming to link it to desired outcome of improving the employee's affective organisational commitment, should take heed that merely supporting a cause and highlighting it to employees through internal communications might not be impactful enough to gain improved employee affective organisational commitment. Practitioners should consider practices where employees have direct involvement in order to maximise the potential desired outcome.

The final objective was to investigate the participants' perceived importance placed on direct involvement in external CSR practices versus the company having a hands-off approach to supporting external CSR. The theme that came up in the analysis gave insights to participants' beliefs that direct involvement gave them a higher sense of organisational commitment. This was particularly evident when one of the participants highlighted the feeling of being involved in a "*real*" initiative, as opposed to reading about hands off approaches in company communications. This finding corresponds to a study by Bode et al (2015), who found that while high potential employees will have a strong level of intrinsic motivation towards their work outputs, many of these employees value more than just their careers. Their study involved 10,000 employees in a global consulting firm and found that a majority would be willing to take pay cuts for the opportunity to participate in CSR initiatives. The study also found that these employees were more likely to remain in the company for longer periods of time. Many employees desire the opportunity to give back to their communities, however, would not want to sacrifice their valued career to do so. This finding, in an Irish context, which is reflected in recent literature from other geographical locations has an important implication for practitioners designing CSR programmes in Ireland. Practitioners in Ireland equipped with this knowledge will be able to design not only effective community-based CSR programmes, they will also be able to use it as a tool in their arsenal to improve organisational commitment among their employees.

One important theme that unexpectedly arose in the analysis was the reported negative impact that disingenuous CSR practices had on the participants' view of their organisations. This

finding has a key implication for HR and CSR professionals that are adopting or reviewing their CSR practices. The participants of this study openly discussed feeling demotivated and disengaged when their companies were running CSR campaigns that the participants perceived to be disingenuous, such as supporting causes because that were “*trendy*”, without actually showing any tangible outcomes for those causes. This finding is also present in recent literature, Donia et al. (2017) found that organisations that participate in CSR initiatives with the aim of image enhancement had a high potential for disengaging employees. Their study had a strong argument for the prioritisation of “*substantive*” CSR over “*symbolic*” CSR. This is an important implication as CSR & HR professionals that are unaware of this finding risk running CSR campaigns that damage their image with internal stakeholders.

This study has produced some essential contributions to the pre-existing literature. However, there are limitations that the researcher acknowledges. Most notable was the researcher’s realisation of the like mindedness of the participants, while they all come from different career areas and social backgrounds their involvement in the CSR programme highlighted their strong personal interests in CSR activities. The study may potentially benefit from widening the participant pool to those that have participated in different programmes with the aim of adding depth to the quality and variety of the data collected. The researcher also recommends opening the study up to employees based in other areas of Ireland so a more generalised outcome can be discussed from the findings. A clear caveat of the use of CSR for improving organisational commitment among employees, is that other parameters within the employment relationship are met first, such as security needs, as highlighted by a participant in this study, “*feeding my family comes first*”. Future research can address this by applying Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs to the research (Maslow, 1943). There is an assumption in this study that elements of employment relationship are met, such as job security. Incorporating Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs can be used as a method to test the point at which CSR is an effective tool in improving organisational commitment in employees and determining the employment relationship needs that should be fulfilled first.

Given further scope, this researcher recommends that future studies on this topic expand on these findings with a mixed methodology study that incorporates quantitative and qualitative. The benefit of incorporating this methodology would allow for the gathering of a broader and more varied data set for analysis. The use of detailed quantitative surveys may be beneficial in telling a story of employees' interests in CSR, which can be narrowed to specific perceptions of participants through an in-depth qualitative piece leading to better understanding of the underlying mechanisms of the topic. The researcher would be able to adopt an abductive approach to the research which is common in management and business research. Based on the findings of this study, a very interesting avenue to explore in future research would be an investigation into the potential negative impact of or "symbolic" CSR on the internal stakeholders of an organisation.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion & Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to contribute to pre-existing literature on the relationship between CSR and OC by exploring the impact of direct participation in CSR initiatives on the perceived level of OC in employees from an Irish setting. The intended outcome of this explorative study was to formulate theory that future HR & CSR professionals in Ireland can use to aid them in designing effective CSR practices, which not only support good causes, they also have a positive impact on the employment retention rates of organisations. The study achieved this through a critical qualitative piece of research that accessed the perceptions of professionals that have volunteered on an intensive CSR programme which was far removed from their day-to-day work. In alignment with the secondary research in the literature review, this study found that employees, who are given the opportunity to directly participate in CSR initiatives, have a perceived higher sense of organisational commitment and a higher perceived retention intentions with their organisation. The researcher was also able to further the aims of the study with findings of the potential negative impact that organisations. This piece of work provides valuable theory for HR & CSR professionals and also sets a foundation for future researchers.

7.2 Recommendations

This section will provide recommendations to HR and CSR professionals in Irish organisations that are creating or revising their organisation's CSR practices. The first recommendation is that HR & CSR professionals run an employee engagement survey with the aim of discovering where employee interests lie in relation to CSR, their appetite for direct involvement in CSR activities and to gauge their motivations. Secondly, it is vital that practitioners run an external stakeholder analysis to have clear sight of their local environment with the aim of creating CSR programmes that align with their objectives. For example, a company that specialises in

finance may offer accounting or maths grinds to students in a local school as this could align with building a future pipeline of talent, or a technology company may run coding competitions in a local university with the same goal of promoting their employer brand and identifying future talent. Based on the findings in this study, the researcher recommends that HR and CSR practitioners incorporate a hands-on approach to their CSR practices, which allows for the direct participation of employees. In researching the cost of developing an in-house CSR initiative programme, the researcher consulted with the programme manager of the NEIC Mentoring Programme run by National College of Ireland, which the participants of this study were volunteering on. The programme had one full time staff member dedicated to managing and coordinating almost 200 volunteers, who were mentoring over 200 students, across 6 schools in Dublin city's inner city. The responsibilities of the programme involved managing the stakeholders, external marketing and the creation of programme reports to meet the funding requirements. The NEIC programme ran for approximately 8 months. Through the session with the programme manager, the researcher was able to create a formula for the potential cost of running such a programme, outlined below. This formula can be used as an example of the cost of running an in-house programme that can be applied to any other similar initiatives. The main cost of running a programme to this scale is the human capital required to deliver it. Based on a full-time staff member running a programme of 200 volunteers for a period of 6 months, the researcher believes that it would require a staffing commitment one day a week per every 40 volunteers involved. At an estimated salary of €40,000 per annum, that would equate to €4,000 of staffing resources over a 6-month period, less employer's PRSI. This might come in the form of dedicating a full-time member of the HR team to running a CSR programme on a one day a week basis. If the programme was larger in design, such as up to 200 volunteers or a smaller number spread across multiple initiatives, it is recommendable that the organisation has a full-time staff member dedicated to the running of the programme or programmes. On a 6-month basis, the estimated cost would be €20,000.

Chapter 8 - Personal Learning Statement

Being Dyslexic, a project of this size has been an extremely daunting undertaking for me which has caused some anxiety, however having come out the other side of it I'm grateful for the opportunity it has given me to push my comfort zone academically. I was the first of my immediate family to go to third level education and I never really believed that a master education was within my capability. A large part of the drive for me to take on this course was the monkey on my back around education, and more so than seeking the qualification in HR my intention, however oblivious it was to me at the time, was the desire to prove to myself that I had the ability to achieve this. While some of my initial reasoning for taking on the course were more personal than career focused, I highly appreciate the depth of knowledge on a specific topic that the completion of this project has given me. I was previously unaware of how extensive CSR is. Similar to the participants in my study, I also viewed CSR as an external practice that HR professionals were often tasked with managing. I now have a far greater understanding of CSR and just how much it impacts organisations and their employees, particularly in the sense of internal organisation which I now see and being a complete part of the HR function.

Reflecting on the past few years, I do believe that this experience has improved my confidence. During this year I also made a career move and took on my first role in HR which has been a challenge to balance with part time learning. I believe that completing this qualification has reduced the level of imposter syndrome I feel in progressing and taking on more responsibility. I chose CSR as a topic because while it is a continually growing topic, there is disconnect between organisations in Dublin's inner city and its local communities. I personally believe that organisations guided the right way with the relevant information can genuinely impact their local communities and inspire their employees. I hoped that exploring this could contribute to some of the real-world problems in our communities. Overall, I feel this project has provided me with critical skills and knowledge that will help me in my career and my journey towards HR leadership.

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Appendix

Interview Transcripts

1) Interview 1 - Recruitment Business Manager

Q1 Are you familiar with the term corporate social responsibility and if so, could you give me a little bit of understanding to your insights of it?

Yeah, I am aware of it. It's something that's getting much more prevalent in especially Ireland and companies in general, corporate social responsibility to me is using your platform to be able to give back to society doesn't necessarily need to be anything advantageous for the business and it can be both. You know, it can be someone's just passionate in general, but ultimately is just using whatever kind of assets or value add that you have to actually improve the lives of various different people. It doesn't necessarily need to be, you know, underutilized it can be anyone. It's just giving back is the overall kind of understanding that I have of it.

Q2 Are you familiar with your current companies CSR practice?

Yes, 100%. So that's one of the biggest reasons why actually joined the organization. It was what they were actually doing. Recruitment can be very fickle. I would have been in an organization that was all about return, you know, ROI. Whereas this business, where it just seemed a little bit more credible in what they were involved in CSR. So, it's actually probably one of the biggest bases of our business model is that we can use our job as a platform. So, we do a lot of events around diversity and diversity isn't just across gender or ethnicity. We do work with veterans, mental health, LGBTQ, lower-socioeconomic, and that's what I'm passionate about, but it's. It's front and foremost and everything we do as a business. Yeah. So it put like, ultimately there's always a kickback somewhere along the line. But like being here 2 years, I can honestly say that it's not, not rainbow washing or green washing that you're seeing in a lot of businesses nowadays, it is actually genuine. And I think that that kind of authenticity or genuine kind of you know amount of behind the comes across with businesses that we work with.

Q2 – You mentioned the different programmes you get the opportunity to participate in. Do you think direct involvement is important to you as opposed to maybe the company supporting a wider cause and you learn about it form an internal communication

Yes. Absolutely. It makes a huge difference to be involved. I have worked with companies in the past that seem to be involved supporting causes, but it doesn't feel real to me, i think it is far more important to actually have the chance to get stuck in and do some good myself. It definitely feels a lot better to participate and see a real result from the efforts. Plus, in terms of this program for the schools we worked with you just can't be to face to face for them and for their learning. Otherwise you're just another number or a donation to these places it's the relationships that really challenge them. And show them that there is more going on in the world outside of their bubble

Q2 -And you think the kind of the green washing or the rainbow washing you mentioned there would disincentivize or demotivate you towards applying for a company or if you were working in a company and you kind of saw that those practices going on would you feel demotivated?

It would be very hard to understand when going for a job. If they're green washing or rainbow washing, it's only when you're living and breathing the environments that you can actually see it happening and can understand that they don't really give two beeps about this. You're using this at certain time of the year, whereas the support towards genuine CSR that I've seen with our business is all year round. It's not just for that week where mental Health Week is or it's not pride week or you know it's not. You know, if there's a Black Lives Matter protest or something like that, it's all year round. But I have been in companies where I've known it's been rainbow washing and I know it's been because the next year the number one thing was OK what's trendy. And then it was moving on to the environment. So if you want the honest answer, once I realized it was that it was demotivating.

For example, I'm on LinkedIn all the time, and it's probably the fakest platform you will ever see. You know, people are all just putting up. I often think, just be honest, you know? But like it is probably that like you can, you can almost nearly sense if it's fake or not.

Q3 - That leads me to my next question do you feel company culture is important to you?

Yeah. OK. So, like culture to me, so I've been around the block with jobs. You know, I would rank culture higher than what I'm being paid. We spend so much time in work with people that were surrounded by. If it's not in good environments and there's no point being there, like, just you're selling your soul to the devil day in, day out. So, I've been in bad environments, which is almost a good thing because it teaches you when you're in a good environment, you've kind of gone through that. But I would rank that higher. Thinking about people that I work with, I've seen a big shift towards who's the people I'm working with, what's the culture, what's their vision? So like we've done events on like, what's the purpose behind what we're building. So it's more I think as the generations evolve, we are moving more towards being happy in a job rather than what might being paid and it's no longer a trade off in my opinion.

Q4 - On that point, do you think CSR plays and what kind of role it plays in creating company culture?

And in terms of CSR, I would say it plays an element in the culture. I wouldn't say that it's like, you know, top two. There are other elements in culture, but I think you will attract certain type of people that are kind of like minded to myself in terms of actually giving back in the charity work. There will always be people that don't really care about any of that sort of stuff. There's other stuff, but it definitely does play a part.

Q5 - What it that attracted you to participate in the program in the first place?

Life experience. So I'm from technically disadvantaged area. I don't see it as a disadvantage and like most of the most of my group of mates are all in serious jobs now, but you can be labelled. It was funny enough, I was only chatting to a person this morning and he said that he had to tone down his north Dublin accent in his current employer. And I've gone through similar situations like that where, you know, I say 'going' and then someone wrote in front of me GOING like, where's the G. I think it's called accentism, I've been there. And so the reason why I got involved in it is I'd love if someone had to come in to my school when I was 15 and 16 and was talking about, you know, the likes of a LinkedIn or my business or some of the other big tech companies and being like, you're exactly what we want. You know, there's like an inferiority complex, I think with some people from socially or economically disadvantaged backgrounds where they think, oh, it's people from the other side of Dublin that get those jobs.

It's just being a goal of mine to go back into, to schools and colleges and actually just say, look, I've come from this background, I've been quite successful. There's no reason why you

can't be. So, it was more a kind of personal basis. But you know, there has been, you know, professional, you know, advantages to it as well. But as I said, I'm more about kind of what's the genuine basis behind the.

That's really interesting point. I've never heard of accetism either.

Yes. Look, look at what we found that we found the kind of joke. And I seen it one day and it was like those, your accent affect your job, but it's it. It can actually be a big issue. Like in terms of interviewing obviously I'm in HR. So you know you might get people from Asia or you might get people from Africa or South America and obviously there is different accents and there's unconscious bias towards certain individuals. We all have biases. That's the nature of human beings. But it is interesting but when you're on the when you're on the opposite end of it it doesn't feel too good you know.

Q6 - Before your involvement with the program, how fulfilled did you feel with the specific culture in your company?

Right. I would say I did that from a professional standpoint in my previous business. You know it was just something that you know I was interested in anyway. I would say there was a lot more value given to what I've done with this business as being involved in it. You know I would say NEIC was maybe you know a solid kind of project whereas in the current business it was very much supported and backed to improve the culture. So even getting other people involved in it like we're giving a lot more time. Whereas in maybe in the previous business it's, you know, do it, but make sure it doesn't impact anything you do now.

Q7 - Generally, what do you feel keeps you motivated and fulfilled in your day-to-day?

Yeah, there's multiple motivations. First and foremost, I have a family that I need to feed. So if you want to go like a Maslow's hierarchy, obviously that's the that's the first one. I like making money. I like making as much money as I can. Might sound fickle, but it's the truth. And second thing, I've always liked leading and developing people, so I'm a business manager. I hire trainees, I hire senior people and I get a kick out of developed, developing them and CSR is a big aspect of that. You know first and foremost when I meet someone, I hire people from different backgrounds. Yeah, I try and give them a chance where maybe other businesses wouldn't. And I've been like, what are you passionate about? They could be passionate about mental health. It could be passionate about hiking, whatever it is, running, I'd say, right, we'll back that.

That gets me up in the morning and being extremely ambitious, so that that motivates me as well, you know, probably had three promotions in the last year and you know, and I'm always looking like as soon as I get a promotion, I'm like what, what do I have to do to get the next one? So it's kind of like tunnel vision. And I've always like counselling like my dream job is actually to be a counsellor, you know. And well recruitment is a bit like that. So I actually like helping people, that that kind of gets me going as well as just helping people getting to meet randomers that you'd never meet, you know meet people from South America, Africa, Asia they've all come over. They know everything about my life. I know everything about theirs so that's the motivation I actually love recruitment so.

Recruitment is more like sales than HR. People don't realize is that it is the sales environment but you're adding in people. Ultimately, you're meeting and helping people, but that is ultimately what the end goal is, is to help the client or help a candidate. So I've met some so many people that have done HR down years that just struggled in, you know, recruitment. I've met some people that have done well. But yeah, people don't necessarily separate the two.

Q7b - You had some great points there in your last answer and even around progression in your job and what motivates you, a lot of that actually has to do with

CSR. There's external CSR and then there's internal CSR and internal CSR can be looked at like how employees, the stakeholders within a company are treated. And that's a lot of that is to do opportunity progress, to train, a good internal culture.

Now, funny enough, I like if you asked me about CSR, all I think about is external. So it's good that you even clarified that I'm not even thinking from an internal perspective with our own employees because that's kind of just a given that we look after them.

Like we've ready to go benefits packages. Uh career progression is like, you know it it's structured if you do it, you get promoted. You're not a kind of way so.

Now where is my last employer now? You had to jump through hoops, you know, to. But like everyone here, like on my team, if they're not promoted within three or four months then I'm doing something wrong in my job as a business manager.

Q8 - Has the opportunity to participate in this voluntary program made you feel differently about your employer?

Yeah, it would. And in a positive light in that, I went to them with the idea and it was just back straight away. So I'm all about, respect and trust and you know, are they supporting me and they backed me today. Like to be honest with you. It my participation in CSR programmes in my previous employer went into a presentation that helped land me this job. And I was in front of directors, you know, talking about like what I've done outside of just pure recruitment, like with charity events and my yeah, you know, relationships with NCI and other colleges. So, them backing this made me think highly of them

Q9 - After completing a session or completing the program, did you feel there was a change in motivation towards your date today work?

I wouldn't say my motivation changed because I've always been motivated to help. So if I get off a call with the NEIC, I just hop on a call with another person and I'm trying to help them. So that's my kind of motivation behind it. It's just trying to help people so you can help people in all different ways. And it didn't negatively impact me or it didn't motivate me more, it's probably the honest way I can answer it. I would have felt marginally more motivated from the sessions, but ultimately it is just something I take part it. Like I never seen as a chore or that it added more workload to my day. because obviously you know I don't have enough hours in the day as it is, but like I wanted to do it. So that's why I did it. So that's why I always come away positive because like if I spent the half an hour with someone in Larkin College and like I've turned their opinion, I never gave them advice that their career guidance counsellors would give. I was giving them real advice from a recruitment manager, you know, and some of them didn't want to go to college, is just thought they had to go to college, but no one was telling me that there's other avenues to go down like PLC's or I remember one of the girls was playing for Shelbourne and I was like, you know FAS can send you on a scholarship programmes, they don't know about these. You know, so like that if I can change someone's life in 1/2 an hour, that's kind of my motivation.

Q10 - Has participating in the program made you reflect on your sense of fulfilment with your job or your organization?

I would say similar to the motivations. It positively going to impacted me and if I'm reflecting the only thing, I'd be reflecting on is that, yeah, I made the right decision to join this business because they backed me with it. Did I enjoy the program 100%? Did the company really value the fact that I did it? Yes, you know, do like we do a shout out at the end of the week. Like for people that are doing stuff that they're passionate about or maybe that is innovative like that's our three pillars as a business. It's passion, collaboration and innovation like you're being innovative by helping these, you know programs. You're also showing your passion.

So, it kind of hits two of our core kind of pillars by being involved with CSR so if I reflect back on it, loved it. Did it positively impact me? Yes

Q11 - How do you feel the opportunity to participate in CSR initiatives such as the NEIC program influences your decision to stay with your employer to stay longer or to?

Yeah, I would say if there was three things that make me stay, it would definitely be one of them.

You know, obviously career progression is one and job fulfilment is another, but I may be different to other recruiters I don't know, but if I don't use this job that I have to internally or externally, positively impact CSR I won't get up out about in the morning. So that's how highly I rate it

2) Interview 2 – Marketing Manager

Q1 - are you familiar with the term corporate social responsibility? If so, could you give me a little bit of an insight into your understanding of it?

My understanding wouldn't be, I suppose, textbook understanding. I in my undergrad, I think I covered some CSR items as well, but my understanding of it is the kind of the efforts and the activities that a company takes externally in order to create a sense of charity or responsibility about the company itself. They just want to be looked at favourably and they can do that through these activities.

Q2 - are you familiar with the CSR practices in your own company?

And that's a good question, to be honest. No, I wasn't aware of it previous to taking part in this program and I first became aware of it when my director got wind of the program that you were running and had communicated that down through the chain to myself and that this is something that they thought would be very beneficial for us to get involved in. And so before then, I actually wasn't entirely aware of what our CSR was. I knew we did kind of large or corporate events like we did charity runs and whatnot, but I was never aware that there was such a thing like this where we could really have face to face involvement. And so yeah, I this is my first proper introduction to it.

Q-3 what would have attracted you personally to this to this initiative, this mentoring program?

Umm, that's a really good question. I think it's a 2 fold question and initially I suppose when I was in secondary school we had a very small mentorship program where we paired junior years with senior years and that always kind of resonated me as being a fascinating and areally helpful practice and in terms of like you know we were very shy and 1st and 2nd year and stuff like that and being able to be partnered with someone. So that's when I was introduced to the concept of mentoring and how impactful and how important can be and from such a young age and this is all done internally within her own school. It wasn't with any other schools, it was just internally within our own school. So that's where I became familiar with mentoring, mentorship and then in terms of kind of more charitable stuff or kind of volunteering and whatnot.

And what made me want to do it, I do try once or twice a year to do something quite charitable, whether that be, raising funds for a charity or something, that kind of resonates with me personally as well. So, for example, I did an Iron Man few years ago for charity because it was something that was really important to me and to do and to raise funds for a good cause. And I also volunteered in inner city projects as well. I did worked with Saint Paul's Kitchen to feed the homeless in the evenings. So it was really, really important to me

and I suppose. Being able to do it through work was huge because unfortunately as life has gotten busier, I don't have the time or the resources to put into, you know, giving up, uh, four or five hours once a week to do a super runner or something like that. And it's really unfortunate. So I was really, really keen to get on board and jump on board because it was done internally, so it was fantastic that I didn't have to sacrifice any outside of work time. And in order to kind of feel charitable.

Q4 – Generally do you feel that company culture is an important aspect of your employment?

Yeah, absolutely. And I suppose in my early 20s, it was very important to be part of a really trendy, cool company and that was making waves. But as I've gotten a little bit older, I have different requirements for the culture. I need a culture that's very collaborative, very involved, very transparent. So, it is massively important to me and to how I work day-to-day and also how I live outside of work as well, like how quickly I can let go of work once I leave the door and we won't say exit the building that you know it's not a case that there's a toxic culture that then follows you home and kind of. And sits in your personal life, so it's massively important to me.

Q5 - Does CSR play any role in creating that culture or is it more kind of on a leadership basis?

Yeah, that's a really good question. So I suppose for me the two were mutually exclusive up until I did this program. And then having seen the level of involvement that's CSO has in my organization, it did tie the two of them together really closely for me, whereas previously it didn't at all. They were two separate things or I saw them as being two separate things, culture and CSOR.

Q 6 - Before your involvement with the program, did you feel fulfilled with your company culture?

That's the \$1,000,000 question really. I am happy with my current company culture. Is there room for improvement? And yes, I believe that there is room for improvement, and I definitely think that sometimes working in tech things move so quickly that often in terms of creating revenue or creating growth, culture can sometimes be overlooked. And so I think when you're going through the hyper growth phase, having a really sturdy strong culture isn't often the top priority for that time. I feel like it is improving and our culture is improving and one of these projects kind of reaffirmed that for me, this program reaffirmed that for me that the company is willing to put people first, not only within its company but outside its company as well. And it's giving me a lot of hope that our company is flexible and it's open to listening to people and what's important to them.

Q6 - Would you have described an overall high level of fondness towards your organization.

Yes, and it was a bit of a bumpy road initially, as I mentioned before. We were so focused on growth and revenue and for those first couple of years that I really do feel that, you know, certain cultural aspects were overlooked quite a bit. And Bush, I suppose maybe in the last year and a half, I felt that there has been a bit of a shift and change and you know we've done things and.

We've done things like this program, which is incredible, but we've also done other things where the company seems a lot more open to listening to what's going on with its employees. And I myself personally feel quite confident to go to senior leadership if I do have a suggestion or feedback about how the culture could be improved and they really do feel that that comes down a lot to the program that I did, the mentoring program that I did, it

gave me a real insight into how transparent our company could be and how willing we were to change and improve.

Q7 - In your day-to-day work, what do you feel keeps you motivated?

That's a good one. I suppose for me I do get caught up in the monotony of my nine to five a little bit. I work in marketing, so it is in essence quite exciting and in terms of that, it always changes, that's always growing and stuff like that. So the variety within my role does keep me motivated. I do find sometimes that there are certain limitations within my department, because we will have greenfield big idea thinking that can sometimes be limited by the direction the company wants to go in. And so it doesn't align with their strategy and that can sometimes be demotivating. But that's just part and parcel of being a marketer. You have to pick your battles in terms of what you want to push over the line and what you want to win with. So what kind of keeps you motivated is the variety. What else keeps me motivated is I do find sometimes that I can get lost in monotony a slight bit as well of the kind of the 9:00 to 5:00 and the five-day week and whatnot. So, I suppose what it does keep me motivated is the variety that it was in my role and I think sometimes that can be reflected in culture and the company activities as well that you know, sometimes I think companies can use a very cookie cutter approach to their culture and how they want to create a sense of culture within the organization. An example of that would be, you know happy Friday once a month where you know you'd rent out a bar and you know have a few drinks after a Friday or work nights or something like that. And as I was saying before, I think my 20s, that was really important to me. But now that I'm in my 30s, you just realize that, you know, it's a little bit kind of a non-imaginative approach. So I think again, that's why this program really sparks joy within me and that our company was willing to do something so impactful to the community around us.

Q8 - Did the opportunity to participate in the program make you feel differently about your employer?

100% I think as I mentioned before, my company was very focused on profit and growth, and I suppose it's very easy to kind of consider it as just another corporate structure and that's very focused on kind of its own gain and what it can achieve and keeping its shareholders happy and its investors happy. I would think, like every other company, essentially it's all about the bottom line and what number is being churned out and how profitable they are. So this really I suppose allowing me to see the human aspect of my company and where it's generally I felt it genuinely cared about not only its employees but the community around it as well, and that was willing to put in time and effort into nurturing both of those. In such a wonderful way that they did with this program, and I've never been part of anything like this before, nor have I heard of anyone taking a part in anything like this before. And I really think if we were able to scale it and to make it repeatable, it would be such.

A great way to boost our internal culture, but also how to promote our own company as well to prospective employees that want a company that does a little bit more. And it's not just about what the company makes or how much profit they make. Like I think people really want a round of sense of fulfilment when they come to work. And part of that is programs like this where you feel that you're impacting not only the company's bottom line but you're impacting communities around you and charitable organizations around you just by showing up to work and taking part in these programs.

You mentioned there about not having heard of program like this before. Do you think the actual participation in it has a bigger impact for you than maybe reading an internal newsletter from the company about all the different initiatives they're supporting externally where there is no direct employee participation?

Absolutely I am. I think you cannot be face to face and that's what this programmed offered. It was very much a case of you rolled your sleeves up and you got stuck in and being part of a very large corporate organization, you very rarely have that opportunity to have that hands on experience and create lasting impact. I sometimes feel that you know, we can all sometimes get caught up in being very small cogs in a very large wheel, but to see that the organization was willing to invest resources such as employees seeing that the organization was willing to do this was incredible because it created a more rounded sense of fulfilment for myself.

Q9 - After the mentoring sessions did you feel there was any change in your motivation to your day-to-day work?

Absolutely. I felt that while I am still part of a very large corporate company, I do feel that that corporate company now has a face and it's a very human face. I feel that my corporate structure and the hierarchy above me is a lot more transparent. I feel more confident in my ability to suggest other ways that we could support programmes. I definitely feel different about my company, about my position as well. I feel much more confident in my ability to talk to senior leadership as they are the ones that suggested that we take part in this program and they are very keen to hear feedback as to how it went and I think that's kind of had a trickle effect into other ways that if I have a suggestion about how culture could be improved or how perhaps marketing could be improved, I feel a lot more confident in being able to approach my senior leadership.

Q10 - Do you feel the opportunity to participate in corporate social responsibility initiatives, such as the mentoring program influences your decision to stay with your employer?

Absolutely. Previous to this I suppose just clocking in, clocking out and like everybody else that's hyper connected on LinkedIn and stuff like that, there are opportunities that were coming up. I wasn't considering them, but they were definitely on my radar and I wasn't quite sure what I was looking for. And if that makes sense, I was happy my role, but I was wondering maybe if there's another there, if there's a slice of the pie missing perhaps. And I feel that having partaken in this program, it's made me very aware that that part that was missing was the CSO and how I could have impacted that. So, it was really important for me to kind of see that and get that sense of fulfilment was for me the missing piece. And while my role isn't perfect and my company is imperfect, I feel a lot closer to the company in a way I feel a lot like I've come with a bit more loyal to the company if that makes sense. Whereas, previously if I got, if I had gotten a really good offer, I probably would have left. Now I'd really have to consider it.

3) Interview 3 – Executive Officer

Q1 - Are you familiar with corporate social responsibility? If so, could you explain your kind of understanding of it?

Yes. So in my organization, we can participate in a program that works with local schools. So yeah, I'm from that. I realized that and corporations still have a social responsibility and that outreach is important for local community. So I was very happy to take part.

Q2 - what attracted you to participate in the program and kind of what was your understanding of the beforehand?

I didn't know a lot about it, but there was a meeting in work online that explained exactly what it meant and how the company that I work for were trying to have a positive impact in the Community. And I felt, yeah, it's a great cause and it was something different to try out,

but I definitely feel and I felt the responsibility, that would be a good thing to do for myself and for the organization as well to get involved in and actually help young people. It's great that they have those relationships built up with those external programs.

Q3 - Do you believe company culture is important to you?

I would have definitely seen my job as a means just to get money, a transactional thing between the employer and me, but definitely from this outreach program and a few other things I got involved in, I do realize that your part of something more because you're a place in society are definitely feel taking part in the project did enhance my view on that that then. If the business hasn't responsibility, I don't feel very connected to it because I've seen I've seen its place in society rather than just making money at the organization.

Q4 - Generally speaking, do you think Corporate social responsibility plays a role in developing a company's culture?

Is see it form two ends, I'd say personally as an employee it's nice to do something away from your own work with your colleagues and with your organization. So, it's a good for your mind and the daily routine of workplace to get away from that and do something different and varied work and actually get a chance to give back as well. It's great, but also I'd say as well and from the society point of view and it opens your mind more to what's going on in society. I definitely felt that outreach, makes me look at the company I work for in a more positive light. It's more beneficial for me coming in every day to work.

Q5 - How would you describe your sense of fulfilment from your employment?

Yeah. So definitely it's shifted my mind from a place of just come and to work and make money in terms of organizations that just solely has its eyes on building profit. The more of a kind of, I wouldn't go as far as saying family, but definitely more of a personal kind of interaction between management and the staff. So quite also my fellow colleagues, by meeting up in a different environment and doing something different like that, you feel bridge the gap between us and management. Yeah, more positive relationships within the organization and my relationship with the management and organization is definitely improved from the volunteering experience.

Q6 - Would you have felt that there was any positive or negative change in your motivation towards your day-to-day work after participating in the programme?

Yeah, no, it definitely made me appreciate the company itself and in terms of what they're trying to do and if they're willing to do more positive outreach programs. The company's success would do more of that kind of work as well. So I definitely felt, that I would be more motivated to work for people. Again, they gave me more of a buy in in terms of the company's goals as well. Whereas before I just saw there's something that's said. So yeah, I definitely found my motivation was increased after. Yeah.

Q7 - Has participating in these programs made you feel differently about your employer?

Yes, it definitely made me evaluate what I want to do, my own career. And obviously, yeah, it did make me reevaluate my role in society and in the in the job itself. Yeah, I would definitely have forced myself to, not only as an employee, but as a consumer also moved towards companies that actually do have a positive impact in the Community. And then one thing I realized from doing the outreach as well, is that I would value organizations that actually do make a positive impact and I'd be very wary of outreach programs that are more based on the perception. I'm very image rather than actually having people, so once I got involved in the program where i listened to people involved in the project and they try to analyse and broke down what areas people corporate responsibility can enhance and help with, and it also it also highlights the areas that people like corporations that often gravitate towards that

don't help as much as they could. So yeah, it gave me insight into the world of social responsibility. So it's definitely a more critical employee now a more of a critical and consumer from having taken part and at least like this definitely gave me more of a social consciousness around issues in society and our place as a as a thriving business.

Q7b - You made a really, really good point there. To elaborate on that, do you think in some regards CSR can be described as a rubber stamp used by companies just be seen to be doing good in local community, but maybe there isn't actually an impact.

Definitely, I find from the media now as well, there's more of a process around issues being used to just push profits to see it basically, with the World Cup in Qatar and football teams, there is a lot of them sports washing through money and image. Also then with the with pride and different things too. You see a lot of pink washing is what it's called, where people are using these events and perceived social good to enhance their images and profits being you. So I think where corporate responsibility is the big interest now, the social conscious around your image and I think, yeah, we all have to be very careful. We also have burden of responsibility to consider, is it being used to whitewash companies images or can we find the companies that are actually doing good.

And then on the consumer, there is definitely more awareness. Are these actions actually doing good? Or is it just, whitewashing the room and for image and profits. Yeah, it can be just tokenism when an organization, such as companies running campaigns for pride thing and then going and sponsoring the World Cup in Russia.

Q7c - If your organization was hypothetically involved in maybe disingenuous CSR, would you be likely to stay with them, or would it influence your decision to look for different employment?

It's highly likely it would make me reconsider my position, but I think a good point to make on it actually, would be that a rising tide lifts all boats. So whatever their motivation is, if everyone is putting out good practices such as addressing gender balances, even if their motivation is to increase their image, or they're being pressured into doing something by society, it's actually a good thing they're doing. The main disingenuous thing would be if they were doing negative things. as I said, the cult advertising events so often that lobbying that pressure can be a good thing. It's not exactly an negative thing if they're not disingenuous trying to though. They're all out to make money. The big point would be, yeah, this lobby and this pressure, if this person to do good and becomes the cool in thing to support and it's actually the rising tide is lifting all boats and making them wildly positive changes. It's great. The issues that would force me to reevaluate would be. If they were basically in two phases, on one hand, they were committing tax evasion or doing things that are negative for society at the same time don't been toxic waste or supporting companies that are tearing down the Amazon or building a hotels beside schools that I was working on that would be my issue. In terms of whitewashing their image, if they just pushing it forward, their image is not a bad thing the negative would be if they were doing something wrong at the same time.

The good thing would be that it's just the lobby makes everyone feel good and it forces them to drive things.

Q8 - How do you feel the opportunity to participate in CSR initiatives such as this program influences your actual decision to stay with your company or stay with your organization for longer than you might?

It definitely did, number one on a personal level the volunteering had a benefit on my own mental health and how I feel about myself. I thought better after volunteering and that made me happier. Number two is that it has gotten me closer to my colleagues. It's a great way for colleagues to get away from the workplace and the stress for a busy work environment and

#3 that I respected my management and the organization they're dealing with and that brought me a lot of buy in and mentally a lot of buy in in terms of the company aims and ethos now I'm yeah, I'm a firm follower and believer in the company. Yeah, I want to be proud of where I work and going in every day and there, having the company badge on. I don't want to work for someone who's making the world a bad place. So definitely feel after doing it like that. Yeah. That's where my time going to trust.