

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF CSR, WORK ENGAGEMENT AND HUMAN VALUES

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Abstract:

In a business context, the reciprocal influence established between employees engaged in the performance of the organization and the effects of certain practices and policies adopted by the company in employees' attitudes and behaviours is clear. This research focuses on possible relationships between the employees' perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the work engagement and human values. The study is inspired by the European perspective of CSR and by the Cohen's approach (2010). The work engagement dimensions were identified following the perspective of Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). For the human values, the model of Schwartz (1999) was used. A questionnaire was applied to a sample of 257 employees. The main results suggest that work engagement dimensions are explained by the employees' perceptions of CSR in its dimensions of marketplace and workplace, being themselves mediator variables between age and seniority and the work engagement dimension of dedication/vigour.

Keywords: *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); employees' perceptions; work engagement; human values.*

LA RELACIÓN ENTRE LAS PERCEPCIONES DE LOS EMPLEADOS SOBRE LA RSC, EL COMPROMISO LABORAL Y LOS VALORES HUMANOS

Resumen:

En un contexto empresarial, la influencia recíproca entre empleados implicados con el desempeño de la organización y los efectos de ciertas prácticas y políticas adoptadas por la empresa en las actitudes y conductas de los empleados es clara. Esta investigación se centra en las posibles relaciones entre la percepción de la Responsabilidad Social Corporativa (RSC) por los trabajadores, el compromiso laboral y los valores humanos. El estudio se inspira en la perspectiva europea de la RSC y el enfoque de Cohen (2010). Las dimensiones del compromiso laboral se identificaron según el enfoque de Schaufeli y Bakker (2003). Para los valores humanos, se usó el modelo de Schwartz (1999). Se aplicó un cuestionario a una muestra de 257 empleados. Los principales resultados sugieren que las dimensiones del compromiso laboral se explican por las percepciones de la RSC por los empleados y sus dimensiones de mercado y lugar de trabajo, siendo ellas mismas variables mediadoras entre la edad y la antigüedad y la dimensión del compromiso laboral de dedicación /vigor.

Palabras clave: *Responsabilidad Social Corporativa (RSC); percepciones de los empleados; compromiso laboral; valores humanos*

1. Introduction

The subject of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has gained more importance over the last decades, being extensively investigated and one of the most prominent concepts in the literature (Turker 2008).

At academic level, there are several studies that have shown that CSR practices adopted by the company influence the attitudes and behaviours of their employees (Barnett 2007), demonstrating the existence of a positive relationship between the involvement of companies in social responsibility practices on attitudes and behaviours towards work, such as job satisfaction (Koh and Boo 2001; Valentine and Barnett 2002; Brammer et al. 2007), organizational commitment (Peterson 2004; Brammer et al. 2007; Turker 2008), organizational citizenship behaviours (Lin et al. 2010), suggesting that employees identify with the companies that are perceived as socially responsible.

Considering the predictive value of CSR on behaviours and attitudes, this study aims at exploring the impact of employees' perceptions of CSR on a new emerging concept of "work engagement" in order to evaluate whether the social responsibility practices can be an asset for companies by having any positive effects on employees. Following this stream of thought, the relationship between the perceptions of social responsibility and work engagement is a new research question addressed here.

From another perspective, Schwartz (2003) considers that human values guide and influence the actions, behaviours and how they are perceived in certain situations. In this study, Schwartz's proposal is analysed in the context of employees' perceptions regarding social responsibility and work engagement.

This study, contributes to the understanding of how the above mentioned variables are related on an organization-individual level. The problem of this research is the relationship between the employees' perceptions of corporate social responsibility, work engagement and human values.

This paper is organized as follows: the next section introduces the literature review relevant to the understanding of the relationship among human values, CSR and work engagement while identifying the hypotheses and the conceptual model. Afterwards, the methodology, measures, and procedures are presented. Next, data analysis and results are presented, the main results being highlighted. Finally, the closing section outlines the main conclusions, limitations and future research.

2. Theoretical framework

Although there are different perspectives of CSR, in the context of this study the European perspective proposed in the Green Paper of the Commission of the European Communities is adopted. It refers to CSR "as a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (European Commission 2001, p. 6).

Under the Green Paper contributions, the CSR can be analysed according to two dimensions: internal and external. The internal dimension is viewed at the company level and covers mainly the workers. At this level, socially responsible practices are related to issues such as human resource management, health and safety at work, adaptation to change and the management of environmental impacts and natural resources. The external dimension of CSR is materialized in the network of relationships that include external stakeholders, particularly local communities, business partners, suppliers, customers, public authorities and NGOs. The internal dimension of CSR will be specifically the focus of this study.

Work engagement is addressed according to the perspective of Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), which define it as a positive work-related state of mind characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption.

The human values concept has been used in many areas and in several studies in the task of trying to explain human behaviour in relation to its drivers and effects, once human values are seen as guides to the ways in which social actors select actions and evaluate people and events (Schwartz 1999). In this study, human values are addressed based on the model developed by Schwartz, that define the values as desirable trans-situational goals, varying in importance and guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entities.

So, as engagement is a work attitude, a positive relationship between the employees' perceptions of CSR and work engagement, it is expected to take place. This study also seeks to understand to what extent the

human values' system is related to work engagement and to the employees' perceptions of CSR. Thus, the set of hypotheses in this study are the following:

H_1 : the employees' perceptions of CSR are positively related to work engagement perceptions.

H_2 : human values explain the employees' perceptions of CSR and work engagement.

H_3 : some personal and professional variables explain the employees' perceptions of CSR and work engagement.

H_4 : the dimensions of CSR perceptions are mediating variables between personal and/or behavioural variables and work engagement perceptions.

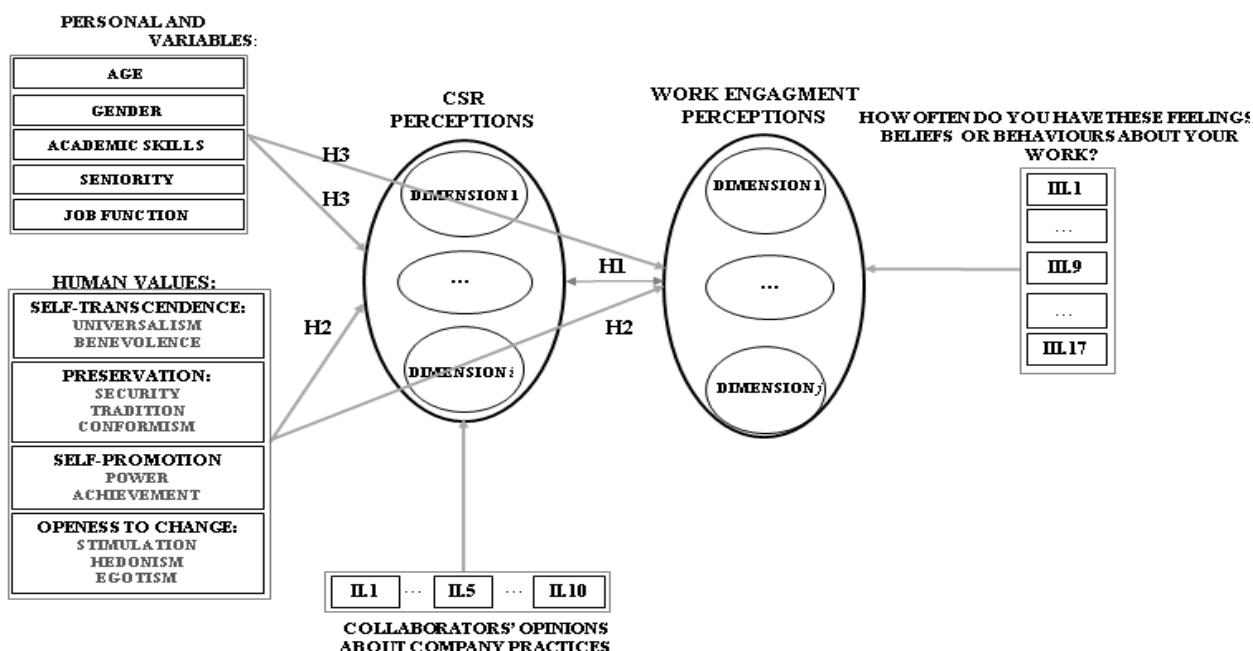
Building interrelations among the observed variables and latent variables follows the sequence shown in Figure 1. The observed variables ($II.1, \dots, II.10$) are the worker's perceptions about company practices ($III.1, \dots, III.17$), including the answer to the question "*how often do you have these feelings, beliefs or behaviours about your work?*", the personal and behavioural variables of *age*, *gender*, *academic skills*, *seniority*, and *job function*, and a set of *human values*. The potential relations conforming the subsequent suggested model are also shown in Figure 1.

3. Methodological issues

An empirical study of quantitative character based on a questionnaire was conducted. This questionnaire was available online using the Google Docs-Forms of Google Inc. and the gathered data come from 257 participants. A pre-test was made in order to validate and review the content, form and clarity of the questions. Data collection for this study was based on a convenience sample.

A descriptive analysis shows that there is a predominance of females (66.1%) compared to males (33.9%) with ages varying between 18 and 74 years. The average age was 36 years and the standard deviation was 10 years. In terms of educational qualifications, the majority of respondents had a higher education level: 48.6% with bachelor's degree and 26.5% with masters. In terms of job occupation, 26.5% of the respondents were technicians and associate professionals, and 24.1% were intellectual and scientific professional experts. In terms of seniority, 33.5% of the respondents had less than 5 years in the company, with a seniority average of 9.5 years.

Figure 1. Suggested model on the influence of employees' perceptions of CSR on work engagement



Source: own elaboration

The empirical study was supported by the use of three questionnaires: i) the Scale of Social Responsibility by Vicente et al. (2011); ii) the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale in an adapted version for the Portuguese case; and iii) the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PQV-21) by Schwartz (2003), in the version used in the first round of the Supplementary Questionnaire in the European Social Survey (ESS).

Accordingly, the observed variables that seek to explain the latent variable CSR perceptions were measured in an ordinal scale of agreement in a range from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree") points.

The variables that intend to explain the latent variable work engagement perceptions were measured in an ordinal scale of frequency including six possibilities: 0 ("never"), 1 ("few times a year"), 2 ("up to once a month"), 3 ("few times a month"), 4 ("once a week"), 5 ("few times a week"), and 6 ("every day").

Finally, the set of observed variables related to human values were measured in an ordinal scale from 1 ("just like me") to 7 ("it has nothing to do with me") points.

The link to the questionnaire was sent by e-mail through the network contacts of the authors. This email also gave knowledge of the objectives of the study and requested that the link be disclosed to other contacts. Responses were being collected automatically on the online platform of Google Docs, after the deadline for the collection of information, then they were exported to excel and subsequently exported to the IBS SPSS, where statistical analyses were carried out.

In order to analyse the data, the first step was to reduce the complexity of the input data through an exploratory factor analysis in principal components, with varimax rotation, applied to both CSR input variables and work engagement variables. The adequacy of these procedures was verified by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient and the rejection of the null hypothesis in the Bartlett's test of sphericity. The multiple linear regression approach was adopted to validate the research hypotheses.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. The dimensions of CSR perceptions

In order to evaluate the internal structure of the input data of CSR, three components were identified explaining 64.3% of the total variance of the original items with communalities greater than 0.5 (variances of each item being explained by the retained components in the analysis of the main components).

From these components three dimensions were constructed after computing their Cronbach's α coefficients with the dominant items in each factor which should have values equal or greater to 0.7 (Nunnally 1978). The dimensions suggested by the factorial structure were named *environment*, *marketplace* and *workplace*. The obtained results are shown in Table 1.

4.2. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the human values of Schwartz

When applied to this research, the ESS version of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PQV-21) by Schwartz (2003) revealed that the computed Cronbach's α coefficients were slightly higher than the corresponding values when using the original scale. However, the internal consistency of the answers related to the human value of tradition was not acceptable ($=0.46$) and the one related to the human value of power could be acceptable however as it had a value lesser than 0.7 ($=0.63$).

4.3. The dimensions of work engagement

The same procedure was also used in the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale to assess their internal structure and check whether the structure would be similar to what was found by the authors in their original work (Schaufeli and Bakker 2003).

With regard to the original scale, it can be said that most of the items in the questionnaire were indeed correlated with the first component, named as *dedication/vigour*. However, in this research, the number of components to be extracted should be more than one: extracting just one component, it only explains 55.9% of the total variance present in the input data; if three components are extracted, almost 69% of the total variance is retained and the extracted communalities are all greater than 0.5, which seems to be a better solution.

Analysing these items, it turns out that the extraction of three components results in three dimensions with Cronbach's α coefficients greater than 0.7 appears as the best option. These three dimensions suggested by the factorial structure were named as *dedication/vigour*, *resistance* and *immersion*, and the obtained results are shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Identified dimensions for CSR perceptions

	<i>Environment</i>	<i>Marketplace</i>	<i>Workplace</i>
The company where I work not only respect but also actively protects the environment (e.g., noise, light, pollution, emissions and transportation and disposal)	0.841		
The company is concerned with the preservation of the environment in all its spaces and actions (e.g., there are several collectors for recycling)	0.795		
The spaces of this company are nice and comfortable (e.g., there are spaces for leisure and entertainment, food and beverage machineries, clean and organized spaces, etc.)	0.690		
There are family support services (kindergarten, health benefits, etc.)	0.578		
Our products correspond to what we announced		0.807	
Our company has established a transparent relationship with the clients		0.802	
This company strives to contribute to the region development		0.609	
This company employs people with professional disabilities (e.g., long-term unemployed or disabled)			0.829
Employees are often required to give their opinion regarding the company's operation			0.602
In the case of job losses, the company supports employees in finding a new job			0.598
% Variance		43.6%	11.2%
Cronbach's α		0.786	0.715
0.670			

Table 2. Identified dimensions for work engagement

	<i>Dedication/vigour</i>	<i>Immersion</i>	<i>Resistance</i>
In my work I feel with strength and energy*	0.848		
In my work I feel full of energy*	0.841		
I am enthusiastic about my work*	0.839		
When I get up in the morning I feel like going to work*	0.830		
My work inspires me*	0.750		
I feel happy when I am working intensely*	0.717		
I think my work has a lot of meaning/usefulness	0.590		
When I'm working, I forget everything what is going on my wheel	0.573	0.514	
I'm proud of what I do in this work*	0.563		
My work is challenging for me*	0.546	0.497	
The time flies when I'm working*	0.533	0.505	
It is difficult for me to detach myself from my job		0.824	
I'm immersed in my work*		0.583	
"I let myself go" when I am working		0.569	
I am a person with a lot of mental strength in my work			0.841
In my work I am always persistent (do not quit), even when things are not going well			0.716
I can work very long periods of time			0.559
% Variance		55.902%	7.562%
Cronbach's α		0.953	0.887
0.708			

* Items from the reduced version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale-9 (UWES-9)

5. Results

4.1. The relationship between employees' perceptions of CSR and work engagement

To quantify not only the linear relationship between CSR's dimensions and work engagement dimensions, but also their intensities, the Pearson's coefficients between its dimensions were estimated. The results in Table 3 indicated that the linear relations among CSR dimensions and work engagement dimensions have an intensity that goes from weak to moderate and the signs of such relations are positive. Thus, H_1 was validated.

4.2. The relationship among human values and employees' perceptions of CSR and work engagement

To validate the second research hypothesis, statistical analyses using the extracted dimensions suggested by the factorial analyses were performed. An emphasis was given to the backward method to estimate the multiple linear regression models and the enter method to estimate the simple linear regression models. It was assumed that the assumptions of the models were validated. The assumption that the explanatory variables do not suffer from multicollinearity problem was validated by using the criterion of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) that should be less than 5, a reference value to indicate that there is not a multicollinearity problem.

Table 4 shows that some of the human values explained the perceptions of CSR dimensions and work engagement perceptions, although it explained them negatively. Starting by the CSR dimensions, the following statements are inferred:

- The value *conformism* explains negatively the three dimensions of CSR, the dimension *marketplace* being further explained negatively by the values of *benevolence* and *egotism*.
- The *environment* dimension is also explained by the value *achievement*. The other human values are not explanatory variables of CSR ($\text{Sig}'s > \alpha = 0.05$).

The *work engagement* dimensions are also explained by some of the *human values*, namely:

- The value *conformism* explains negatively the *dedication/immersion* dimension and this dimension is further explained negatively by the value of *benevolence*.
- The value *safety* explains negatively the *resistance* dimension.

In conclusion, H_2 was validated and it reinforces that this relationship is causal, meaning that the identified human values are independent variables explaining the dimensions of CSR and work engagement dimensions. However, it is partially validated since a negative relationship between these variables was not expected to exist.

4.3. The personal and professional variables explain the employees' perceptions of CSR and Work Engagement

In order to validate the third research hypothesis, the results in Table 5 suggests that only *age*, *seniority* and *job function* variables explained these dimensions. The dimensions *marketplace* and *workplace* of CSR were explained negatively by the *job function* and positively by the workers' *age*. The dimension *environment* of CSR was explained positively by *seniority* and negatively by *job function*.

Table 3. The relationship between CSR and work engagement dimensions

CSR dimensions	Work engagement dimensions		
	<i>Dedication</i>	<i>Immersion</i>	<i>Resistance</i>
<i>Environment</i>	0.226	0.195	0.118
<i>Marketplace</i>	0.533	0.479	0.373
<i>Workplace</i>	0.357	0.337	0.122

The dimensions *dedication/vigour* and *immersion* of work engagement were positively explained by *age* and the dimension *resistance* of work engagement was explained negatively by *job function*. In sum, H_3 was validated.

Table 4. Estimates of some human values to explain CSR and work engagement dimensions

	Dimensions	Variables	Estimates
CSR dimensions	Marketplace	Benevolence	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Benevolence}} = -0,143$; Sig = 0,032*
		Conformism	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Conformism}} = -0,096$; Sig = 0,037*
		Egotism	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Egotism}} = -0,156$; Sig = 0,008*
	Environment	Conformism	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Conformism}} = -0,170$; Sig = 0,004*
		Achievement	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Achievement}} = -0,135$; Sig = 0,031*
	Workplace	Conformism	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Conformism}} = -0,120$; Sig = 0,044*
Work engagement dimensions	Immersion	Benevolence	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Benevolence}} = -0,143$; Sig = 0,033*
		Conformism	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Conformism}} = -0,095$; Sig = 0,039*
	Dedication/Vigour	Conformism	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Conformism}} = -0,100$; Sig = 0,024*
	Resistance	Security	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Security}} = -0,097$; Sig = 0,046*

* Sig means *p*-value

Table 5. Estimates of some personal and professional variables to explain CSR and work engagement dimensions

	Dimensions	Variables	Estimates
CSR dimensions	Marketplace	Seniority	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Seniority}} = 0,020$; Sig = 0,005*
		Job function	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{JFunction}} = -0,079$; Sig = 0,001*
		Age	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Age}} = 0,089$; Sig = 0,000*
	Environment	Job function	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{JFunction}} = -0,070$; Sig = 0,021*
		Age	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Age}} = 0,018$; Sig = 0,034*
	Workplace	Seniority	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Seniority}} = 0,023$; Sig = 0,011*
Work engagement dimensions	Dedication/vigour	Job function	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{JFunction}} = -0,063$; Sig = 0,042*
		Age	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Age}} = 0,078$; Sig = 0,011*
		Seniority	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Seniority}} = 0,012$; Sig = 0,088*
	Immersion	Age	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Age}} = 0,018$; Sig = 0,010*
		Age	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{Age}} = 0,018$; Sig = 0,010*
	Resistance	Job function	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{JFunction}} = -0,048$; Sig = 0,045*
	Resistance	Job function	$\widehat{\beta}_{\text{JFunction}} = -0,055$; Sig = 0,010*

* Sig means *p*-value

4.4. The role of the dimensions of CSR perceptions as mediating variables between personal and/or professional variables and work engagement

The results shown in Table 6 allow us to conclude that the work engagement dimension of *dedication/vigour* was positively explained by two of the three dimensions of CSR: *marketplace* and *workplace*. In turn, *marketplace* and *workplace* were explained by *age* and *seniority*.

Thus, the dimensions *marketplace* and *workplace* exerted a mediating effect between *age/seniority* and the work engagement dimensions of *dedication/vigour*, and *immersion*, so that it can be said that these mediating variables “bear” the effect of *age* and *seniority* on the dependent variables of work engagement dimensions of *dedication/vigour* and *immersion*. Therefore, H_4 was validated.

6. Conclusions

The dimensions of CSR that emerged from this study fit three out of four dimensions suggested by Cohen (2010), who considered the social responsibility dimensions of *environment*, *marketplace*, *workplace* and *communities*. The first three of these four dimensions are identified in this study.

The dominant items of *dedication/vigour* dimension of work engagement perceptions corroborate various studies conducted by the authors of the scale (Shaufeli and Bakker 2003) that present a reduced version of the scale (UWES-9), demonstrating that the work engagement can be considered as a one-dimensional factor. This study confirms the three-dimensional factors as being a better solution than the possibility of one-dimensional factor.

Table 6. Estimates associate with the CSR dimensions while mediating variables between personal variables and/or human values and work engagement

$\widehat{Dedication}^* = 0.008 Age^* + 0.499 Marketplace^*$	$VIF = 1.035$
(0.168) (0.000)	
$Marketplace^* = 0.184 Age^*$	$\alpha_{Age^*} \beta_{Marketplace^*} \neq 0. (Sig = 0.01)$
(0.003)	
$\widehat{Dedication}^* = 0.011 Age^* + 0.251 Workplace^*$	$VIF = 1.043$
(0.087) (0.000)	
$Workplace^* = 0.029 Age^*$	$\alpha_{Age^*} \beta_{Workplace^*} \neq 0. (Sig = 0.01)$
(0.003)	
$\widehat{Immersion}^* = 0.008 Age^* + 0.463 Marketplace^*$	$VIF = 1.035$
(0.188) (0.000)	
$Marketplace^* = 0.020 Age^*$	$\alpha_{Age^*} \beta_{Marketplace^*} \neq 0. (Sig = 0.01)$
(0.003)	
$\widehat{Immersion}^* = 0.008 Age^* + 0.246 Workplace^*$	$VIF = 1.043$
(0.114) (0.000)	
$Workplace^* = 0.029 Age^*$	$\alpha_{Age^*} \beta_{Workplace^*} \neq 0. (Sig = 0.01)$
(0.001)	
$\widehat{Dedication}^* = 0.015 Seniority^* + 0.531 Marketplace^*$	$VIF = 1.031$
(0.789) (0.000)	
$Marketplace^* = 0.173 Seniority^*$	$\alpha_{Seniority^*} \beta_{Marketplace^*} \neq 0. (Sig = 0.008)$
(0.005)	
$\widehat{Dedication}^* = 0.051 Seniority^* + 0.349 Workplace^*$	$VIF = 1.026$
(0.390) (0.000)	
$Workplace^* = 0.173 Seniority^*$	$\alpha_{Seniority^*} \beta_{Workplace^*} \neq 0. (Sig = 0.020)$
(0.005)	

Finally, there is another important result from this study that must be emphasized, as the CSR dimensions of *marketplace* and *workplace* appeared as mediating variables between *age* and *seniority* and the dimensions *dedication/vigour* and *immersion* of work engagement perceptions.

Taking into account the results of this study and the importance of CSR for the productivity and competitiveness of the companies as well as the importance of work engagement for the performance of the organizations (Soria and Schaufeli 2004), the relationship between these variables should be of interest to the area of Human Resource Management. Also the identification of other dimensions in work engagement perceptions is an important contribution, allowing to emergence of new analyses.

However, this study highlights some limitations which are related with: i) possible distortions of the objective reality; ii) shortage of literature relating the perceptions of CSR and work engagement that makes impossible to compare results; and iii) the fact that multidimensional analysis of CSR in the European perspective is still a developing field in the literature.

So, the results suggest a replication of this study: i) using a random sample; ii) to a specific organizational context, relating to other variables, in particular, business results, performance, etc.; and iii) to identify "which" and "how" human resource practices are enhancers to generate work engagement.

Finally, more studies are needed to analyse the hypothesis that some CSR dimensions can be mediating variables between human values and work engagement perceptions.

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