

Influence of corporate social responsibility on employee identification of the firm: role of employee commitment

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Abstract: Recently, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is considered as among the most important issue that have attracted a lot of attention of scholars and managers with a lot of research on this topic. But previous scholars still indicated the necessity of deeper examining CSR in the new context with new variables to know more about the roles of CSR both internal and external of the organization. The main aim of this research is to clarify the relationship between CSR on employee commitment and employee identification in the context of a developing country, Lao. To reach this end the current research applied both qualitative and quantitative research. To test the hypothesis, this research collect the data using the questionnaire survey with the scales that are adapted from previous research. This research finally collected 239 valid questionnaire and analyzed by applying structural equation modelling (SEM) with SmartPLS 3.0. The tested results showed that CSR has positive effect on both employee commitment and identification. Moreover employee commitment serves as the mediating variable in the relationship of CSR and employee identification. The author also discuss the theoretical and managerial contribution of this research.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility; employee commitment; employee identification; affective commitment; normative commitment; continuance commitment.

1. Introduction

We are living in a new era, revolutionary era 4.0 with many new tendencies. International trend direction is gradually taking up an important role. In the past, the most used strategies to compete is the quality, diversifying models, functions of products and services... but nowadays that is creating and developing brand of the firms in the market by focusing on the business culture. Business ethics is more and more important for the firms in terms of effectiveness. A new trend has been growing in the world, becoming a compulsory “soft” requirement for the firms in the integration process that is performance of corporate social responsibility^[1].

The concept of CSR has been researched for a long time in the world and has become one assessment criteria in many developed countries. The term CSR officially exported since HR Bowen (1953) with the research “Social responsibility of entrepreneurs”. HR Bowen (1953) undertakes research to “call upon the steward to not compromise rights and interests of others, call for charity to compensate for the damage done by businesses to society”. But until to the present, the concept of CSR is being defined in different ways by many researchers.

The reality shows that, the implementation of CSR by Lao businessmen during the integration period. At present and for many years to come, entrepreneurs are increasingly entering the international economy. Our country is deeply aware and that is also the contribution of businesses in term of promoting sustainable economic

development, through activities aimed at lifting high quality life for workers and their families, for both enterprises and the general development of the social community as well. In fact, the companies that perform well CSR get more and more benefits. The benefits that enterprises received in CSR implementation includes cost reduction, revenue increasing, value brand, reduce employee switching, increase productivity and opportunities in new markets ^[2].

Organizational commitment is the employee's psychological feeling towards the organization is an important factor affecting their work attitude ^[3]. Organizational commitment reflects the relationship of the person work with an organization and influence the decision to keep a job in the long term with the organization ^[4]. If an organization creates and gives opportunities for its employee then the organizational commitment may increase ^[5]. Organizational commitment problems are of utmost importance to the leaders of the organizations ^[5, 6]. One of the outstanding reasons is explained by the assertion of studies on organizational commitment that is a major factor in order to define employee work behavior ^[7-9].

Through the process of review the literature in the field, to assess the impact level of responsibility social and employee commitment to business performance, the author already collected and conducted many related research. However, there is very little research that has examined the effects of CSR and employee commitment to organizational identification. Moreover, little research examined CSR and employee commitment as the second order construct. So the research question in this thesis is identified as follows:

How are the scales of CSR, employee commitment and organizational identification?

To what extends does the CSR influence on employee commitment and employee identification? How does employee commitment affect employee identification?

What are the policy implications to increase CSR awareness and employee commitment?

To reach the end, this research utilize both qualitative and quantitative research. The current study collect data via questionnaire survey. Survey questionnaires were distributed to 300 employees working in the enterprise in Lao with convenient sample. The collected data is analyzed using SPSS.22.0 and SmartPLS 3.0

2. Literature review and theoretical background

2.1. Literature review

2.1.1. The concept of social responsibility

There are many different definitions of CSR. According to Mohr et al. (2001), CSR is the minimization activities eliminating dangers that arise in society as well as maximizing efficiency results in the long run (Mohr, Webb, & Harris, 2001). As Ahen (2015) and Ali et al., (2010), CSR is what enterprises should carry out social activities to create welfare for the community ^[10, 11]. In 2020, Milton Friedman wrote: "There is one and only one responsibility of business, which is to use resources and participate in activities to increase its profit as long as it still obeys the rules of the game, such as joining the free and open competition, no deception or fraud" ^[12]. In this way, the definition of Friedman only consider CSR in a narrow scope, only see short – term benefits but ignoring long – term benefits that is fast and sustainable development". Or "An enterprise that has CSR is a want of society towards organizations in term of economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic aspects in a certain time" ^[13]. In the same vein,

Maignan I. Ferrell brought a concept of CSR as follows: “A business has CSR when deciding its operations to create and balance the different interests of individuals and related organizations”^[14].

And there are many different perspectives on CSR, but this research proposes that CSR is a commitment of enterprises that contribute to the economic sustainable development, through compliance with standards on environmental protection, gender equality, labor safety, and labor rights, fair pay, staff training and development, assuring product quality... in a way that benefits both the business and the general development of society.

2.1.2. Components of the CSR

Perez et al. (2018) suggested that CSR is represented by three components: economic responsibility, legal - ethical responsibility, philanthropy responsibility (improving the environment, social events, and contribute a portion of the budget to social security)^[15]. Mohr and Webb (2005) argued that CSR consists of two components: environmental responsibility^[16]. Besides, there are many more studies divided CSR into four components^[17]: (1) Economic responsibility; (2) Legal responsibility; (3) Ethical responsibility; (4) Philanthropic responsibility. The proposed research model of this thesis is adapted from the theory of Carrol (1991).

2.1.3. Benefits of corporate CSR implementation

There are many benefits of implementing CSR in the firms. That is to help improving production and business efficiency, labor relationship, reducing the rate of switching retention of excellent employees, improving employee loyalty, building credibility and improving competitive capabilities in an independent way, adding opportunities to access many new markets as well as dominating in calling for investment (especially investment in foreign capital) and sustainable business development. Besides, CSR also brings other advantages such as: improving the image and reputation of the business for the partners (investors, suppliers, customers...), expanding markets, especially markets requiring high code of conduct (Code of Ethics - CoE), retaining a good workforce, attracting talents... That mean CSR increase firms' competitiveness.

2.2. Background theories

2.2.1 Shareholder Theory

According to Friedman (2007) businesses only need to focus on developing and maximizing their profits and does not need to perform any social responsibility. They considered shareholders as the most important individual, businesses need to focus all their resources to increase property of shareholders^[18], but the goal of maximizing shareholder value is the unique item and appropriate for managers in modern companies^[19, 20]. This primacy is supported by not only social systems such as legal, financial and business education systems^[21], but also by the practicality of observation and measurement^[10, 22].

2.2.2. Trust – commitment theory

The commitment - trust theory questioned this central hypothesis in view of

relationship failures in strategic alliances ^[23]. According to the theory, trust and relationship commitment are central to successful firms, because they encourage employees to work harder and more efficient for the firms. Previous researchers also indicated that trust and commitment act as mediating roles between satisfaction and employee loyalty ^[24-26]. Previous research also showed the relationship between organizational identification and its outcomes such as employee trust and commitment such as ^[27, 28]. They also indicated the correlation between CSR and employee trust and commitment.

2.2.3. Social identification theory

Social identification theory is a social psychological theory of intergroup relations and group processes. This theory was initiated in the early 1970s, its central doctrine is that group behavior emerges from a shared sense of membership, an insight which has led to exciting theoretical advances in social psychology. This theory proposes that an important part of our self-concept (i.e., the way we see ourselves) stems from our memberships in social groups ^[29, 30]. Identification indicates a sense of an employee with the firm whereby s/he considers the firm's goals and success as her/his own ^[31, 32].

3. Research model and hypothesis

3.1. CSR components

As the research by Carroll, obeying the law is considered as an important definition supplement for the CSR of an organization. CSR for the government is the contribution full of the tax and obey all the regulations of the Laws. Besides, CSR for the stakeholders includes of CSR for the environment, future generations, and support for the activities of non-government organizations in terms of better life, increasing the prosperous of the society. CSR for the community include of philanthropy actions such as the support for the local events ^[33]. Other scholars indicated that CSR for the community means the investment for the local infrastructure where the organization operate such as the roads, hospitals, schools... These activities not only contribute to the society but also for the organization. Moreover, in the turbulent times such as Covid – 19 pandemic, CSR for the employees are more and more important. CSR for the employees is considered as the training and development activities, take care of the employees' health, security, equivalent between work and life, salary and bonus... Previous research showed the relationship between the employee engagements with the working environment ^[34]. In addition, CSR for the customers is considered as the method that the organization performs their commitment, their exposure in terms of product quality, service quality... As we all know, customers contribute to the success of all organization. So that creating and maintaining customer relationship is an important issue. In other words, CSR is a competitive advantage for the organization. So, this research hypothesis that:

Hypothesis H1: CSR is a second – order construct that include of four dimensions, namely CSR to stakeholders, CSR to government, CSR to employees, CSR to customers.

3.2. Employee commitment

Employee commitment can be defined as the psychological state that indicates the extent to which the relationship between employees with organization, which in turns contribute to the performance the objectives of organizations. Meyer and Allen (1991)

propose of 3 components of employee commitment, namely, affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. In which, affective commitment means the emotion, identification and sacrifice in to the organization. Continuance commitment is considered as the lost when they leave the organization. Normative commitment means the responsibility of continuance the work.

Commitment to the organization is the psychological perception of the employees with the organization, an important factor influencing the work attitude of employees. In other words, employee commitment reflexes the relationship of employees with an organization and influences to the retention in the long term. Normally employees join to an organization by some individual needs in terms of perfection their skills and expectation. They hope to work in an environment where they can utilize and apply their ability satisfying the needs of organization. Then if the opportunity is bigger, the commitment of employees will be higher.

Previous research showed the influence of CSR both inside and outside to the employee motivation and commitment. Other scholars confirmed the relationship between CSR and attitude, opinion and behavior of employees ^[35]. So, this thesis hypothesis that:

H2. CSR has positive effect on employee commitment.

3.3. CSR and employee identification

Previous research and practice showed that if the firm perform well CSR, the benefit is not decreasing but increasing also. The benefits that a firm receive when performing well CSR include: decreasing the costs, increasing the revenue, increasing brand value, decreasing the employee switching, increasing the productivity and increasing the opportunity to reach the new market. Besides, CSR help to stimulate organization reputation which in turns increasing the employee identification. CSR activities and other strategies stimulate the better image and reputation to the organization, and the higher evaluation of employees. We hypothesis that:

Hypothesis H3: CSR has a positive impact on employee identification.

3.4. Employee commitment and identification

Commitment is a kind of spiritual relationship between employees and organization that decrease the switching intention of employees. Identification reflexes the perception and engagement of employees with the norms, values, and objectives of organization. In addition, employee identification occurs when individuals determine themselves have the same characteristics with the organization. Moreover, when employees perceive the CSR practice of their organization, they normally form the commitment which in turns increase their identification. From these evidences, this thesis proposes that:

Hypothesis H4: Employee commitment has positively impact on the employee identification.

Hypothesis H5: Employee commitment mediates the relationship between CSR and employee identification.

The research model is depicted in **Figure 1**:

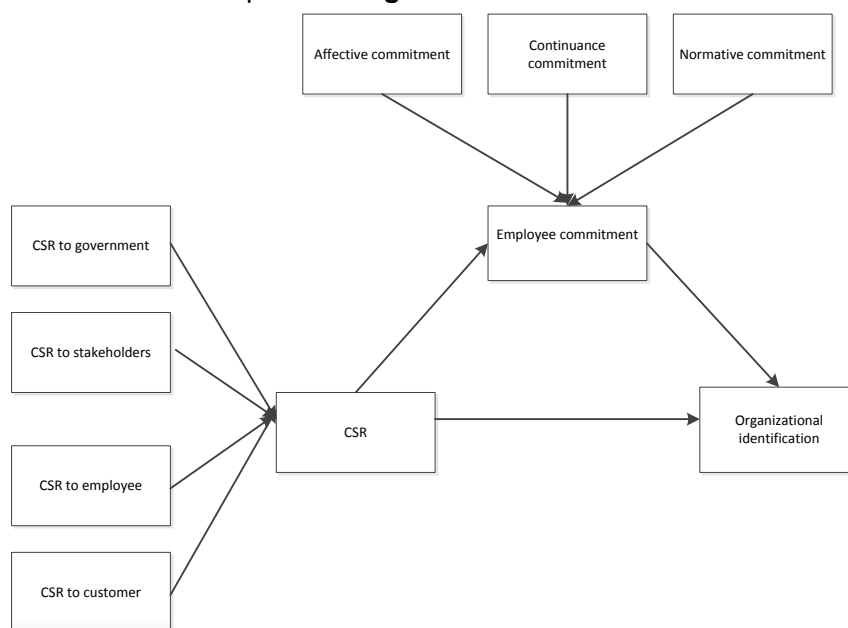


Figure 1. Research Model

4. Research methodology

4.1. Questionnaire design

To test the hypothesis, this research utilizes the questionnaire survey method to collect the data. Participants are employees who work in the firms in Lao. The authors selected them because of their understanding the CSR activities of the firms they work for. This research collected and adapted scales from previous studies and fit the new context of CSR in Lao. All scales are in the form of Likert-5 which range from 1 representing strongly disagree to 5 representing strongly agree.

Wherein, CSR to stakeholders includes of 6 items adopted from ^[36]. CSR to government composed of 4 items adapted from ^[37]. CSR to employees includes of 5 items adapted from ^[38]. CSR to customers is adapted from Mirvis (2012) which composes of 4 items. Affective commitment composed of 7 items adapted from Mercurio (2015). Continuance commitment composed of 5 items adapted from Shaw (2003). Normative commitment is adapted from which composes of 6 items Shaw (2003). Finally, organizational identification includes of 5 items adapted from Hong(2000). We also applied back – translation technique by specialists in English and management to increase the consistency of questionnaire. We also test the suitability of the questionnaire by doing a pilot test with 15 employees to determine the final version.

4.2. Data collection

This research applied the simple random sampling method using questionnaire survey with employees in Lao. The questionnaire consisted of 42 main questions, so according to Hair (1998) ^[39] the minimum sample size would be 210 questionnaires. The questionnaire was sent to the respondents in the form of direct survey of employees working in enterprises in Attapeu, Luang Prabang and Vientiane of Lao by paper questionnaire. This research endured in one month. Finally, the result has a total of 236

valid questionnaires. The demographics of the respondents is depicted as follows:

Table 1. Demographic information of respondents

Factors	Component	Amount	%
Gender	Male	108	45.8
	Female	128	54.2
Age	Under 25	46	19.5
	25 – 35	78	33.1
	35 - 45	81	34.3
	Over 45	31	13.1
Income (USD/month)	Under 150	23	9.7
	150 – 300	137	58.1
	300 - 500	58	24.6
	Over 500	18	7.6
Education	High school	134	56.8
	College	16	6.8
	University	78	33.1
	Other	8	3.4

5. Research results

This study applied the PLS-SEM to test hypotheses through Smart PLS 3.0^[40]. In comparison with another, the proposed research model is the most suitable for this method because it focuses on predicting and explaining the complex relationship between the variables in the model. Moreover, it can also explain a relationship of both reflective and formative construct.

5.1. Scales measurement evaluation

To evaluate the scales, this research used Cronbach's alpha ($C\alpha$), composite reliability (CR) and average extracted variance (AVE). In which, the minimum loading factor is 0.61 and the highest is 0.88, satisfying the cut-off value 0.5. Besides, values of $C\alpha$ ranging from 0.76 to 0.84 and values of CR ranging from 0.82 to 0.89 are both greater than the level 0.7^[41]. These numbers proved the reliability of the scales satisfying the requirements. In addition, AVE values from 0.57 to 0.72 both satisfy cut – off value of 0.5^[42], indicating that the convergence value is satisfactory (see **Table 2**).

Table 2. Measurement model evaluation

Variables	AVE	CR	$C\alpha$
CSR towards Government	0.724	0.887	0.842
CSR towards Society	0.569	0.868	0.822
CSR towards Customers	0.585	0.849	0.764
CSR towards Employees	0.659	0.853	0.771
Affective commitment	0.607	0.86	0.831
Continuance commitment	0.693	0.871	0.788
Normative commitment	0.578	0.845	0.802
Employee identification	0.615	0.827	0.785

To test discriminant validity, this research first used the AVE value of each variable in the correlation to other variables (the Fornell - Larcker criteria). Then, the analytical results showed that the square root of AVE is greater than the correlation coefficient with other variables, demonstrating that the scales assure the discriminant validity (see **Table 3**).

Table 3. Construct AVE correlation

	CSR	CSR_C	CSR_E	CSR_G_	CSR_S	COM	ACOM	CCOM	NCOM	IDEN
CSR	0.779									
CSR_C	0.171	0.834								
CSR_E	0.366	0.518	0.709							
CSR_G_	0.438	0.354	0.419	0.729						
CSR_S	0.42	0.278	0.483	0.358	0.766					
COM	0.425	0.251	0.477	0.48	0.471	0.811				
ACOM	0.373	0.201	0.413	0.541	0.415	0.47	0.852			
CCOM	0.476	0.359	0.565	0.378	0.532	0.597	0.532	0.755		
NCOM	0.538	0.343	0.584	0.455	0.441	0.414	0.414	0.535	0.783	
IDEN	0.176	-0.036	0.453	0.233	0.182	0.185	0.168	0.204	0.142	0.800

4.2. Evaluation of structural model

After evaluating the scales by testing reliability, convergence and discriminant validity, the authors applied the PLS-SEM model to test the relationship of variables using SmartPLS software. The results of the relationships are shown in **Figure 2**

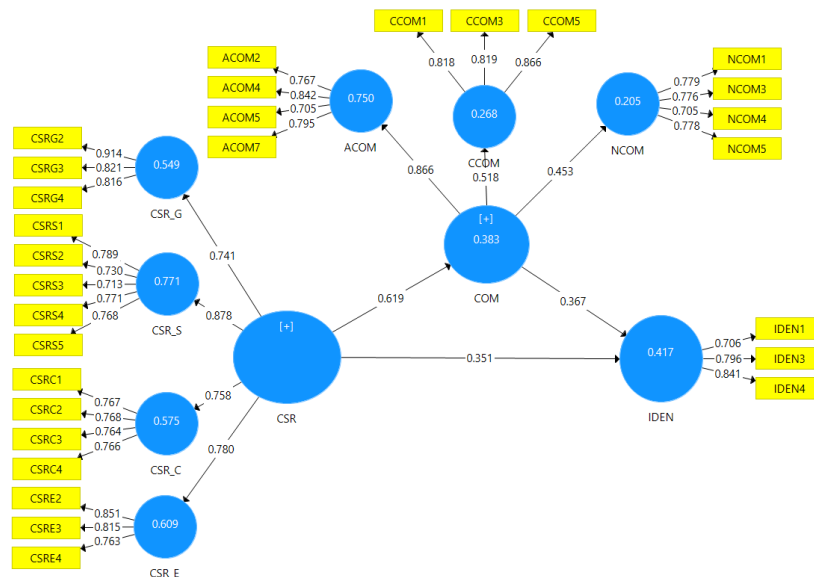


Figure 2. PLS testing results

The results of data analysis show that CSR is a second – order construct including of 4 components, namely, CSR towards government, CSR towards society, CSR towards customers, CSR towards employees with $\beta = 0.741$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.878$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.758$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.780$, $p < 0.05$ respectively. This evidence showed that hypothesis 1 is accepted. In the same vein, commitment is also a second – order construct including of 3 components, namely, affective commitment ($\beta = 0.866$, $p < 0.05$), continuance commitment ($\beta = 0.518$, $p < 0.05$) and normative commitment ($\beta = 0.453$, $p < 0.001$) respectively. CSR positively influence on employee commitment ($\beta = 0.619$; $p < 0.001$, t -value = 11.84). This evidence confirmed hypothesis 2. Moreover, CSR has a positive on employee identification ($\beta = 0.351$; $p < 0.001$, t -value = 4.55). That means hypothesis H3 is supported. In addition, employee commitment has a positive effect on employee identification ($\beta = 0.367$; $p < 0.001$, t -value = 4.73). That means hypothesis H4 is supported.

To test the mediating effect of employee in the relationship between CSR and employee identification, a mediation model was built ^[41]. The testing results are showed as follow. In Figure 3, CSR had a significant impact on employee identification in the direct model ($\beta = 0.603$; $p < 0.001$, $t\text{-value} = 18.00$). The influence of CSR on employee identification decreased in the indirect model ($\beta = 0.35$; $p < 0.001$, $t\text{-value} = 4.66$). This outcomes expressed that the influence of CSR on employee identification is partially mediated by the employee commitment. This evidence confirmed the hypothesis H5.

6. Research discussion and conclusion

The main aim of this research is to clarify the relationship between CSR and employee identification with the mediating effect of employee commitment. To reach this end this research focus on the context of a developing country (Lao) and test the proposed hypothesis. As noted above, this research showed that CSR is a second – order construct which composes of 4 components. In the same vein, this research reconfirmed employee commitment is also second – order construct which includes of 3 components. Moreover, CSR has both direct and indirect influence on employee identification via employee commitment. This research has both theoretical and practical implications.

In term of theoretical implication, this is among the first research that confirm CSR is a second – order construct including of 4 components, namely, CSR towards government, CSR towards employee, CSR towards society and CSR towards customers. In which, the results showed that CSR towards society is the most important components with ($\beta = 0.878$, $p < 0.05$). This is new contribution in comparison with other previous research as listed in the literature review part. This is because nowadays, our society is facing with a lot of problems. So that employees have more and more attention in the responsibility towards society with the aim of sustainable development in the future. Second, this research showed that commitment is a second order construct including affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. In which, affective commitment contributes the most important part to this construct with ($\beta = 0.866$, $p < 0.01$). This finding can be explain by the reason that the culture of Lao is bolds on the affection. This is also new contribution because previous studies normally examine these three components separately. Third, this research indicated that CSR has both direct and indirect effects on employee identification via commitment. This is a new contribution in the field in comparison with previous research such as Gupta (2017).

This study attempts to clarify the tourists' perceptions of homestay green practice performances, thereby assessing and examining its role in the correlation with their loyalty behavior. Research shows that tourists have a very strict requirement on green performance for homestays including 8 items related to all services in the homestay. This fact becomes a criterion that plays a crucial role in stimulating customers' loyal behavior to that homestay. As analytical results, the higher level of perception of green practice performance, the higher the tourists have tendency to loyalty ($\beta = 0.52$; $p < 0.001$, $t\text{-value} = 11.98$). The current research contributes the new knowledge to the literature in the hospitality and tourist industry. This research also confirms the relationship between green practices at homestays in promoting positive behavior of tourists (such as loyalty) ^[43, 44].

In addition, the current research also clarifies the relationship between customer

perceptions of homestay green practices and the tourist – homestay relationship quality. In this study, tourist – homestay relationship quality includes three components: tourist trust, tourist satisfaction and tourist commitment. In which, customer trust plays the most important role in this construct. This evidence confirms that trust is the first factor which is very important in the social relationship [45, 46]. Tourist commitment and satisfaction are in second and third place in this construct. Therefore, in order to create positive tourist behavior, homestay needs to build tourist trust, tourist commitment as well as tourist satisfaction. This research also indicates that green practices performances contribute as a basement to help hotel building and maintaining relationship quality with customer. In particular, data analysis results show that the green performance has a strong effect on the relationship quality p ($\beta = 0.73$; $p < 0.001$, t -value = 14.64). This finding contributes greatly to the literature in the hospitality and tourist industry. This is among the first research focusing on the tourists - homestays relationship quality in the relation with the green practice. Furthermore, the current research shows that through the quality of the relationship between tourists and homestays, tourists tend to be more loyal to the homestay ($\beta = 0.25$; $p < 0.01$, t -value = 2.37). This evidence contributes to the literature in the hospitality industry and give a more comprehensive understanding in comparison with previous studies focusing on the correlation between relationship quality in promoting customer loyalty behavior [44, 47, 48]. Finally, this research confirmed the moderating effect of employee commitment in the relationship between CSR and employee identification. This is new contribution that is contrast with previous research such as Merli (2019), Robinot (2010), Han (2018) in which they indicated that employee identification is the mediating effect between CSR and employee commitment.

Beside theoretical contribution, this research also has some managerial contribution to managers and policy makers. Firstly, this research suggests that managers in firms need to understand the importance of CSR in terms of stimulating employees working in the firms. Moreover, employees in Laos are really interested in the societal aspect because the results showed that CSR towards society has the most contribution to the overall CSR. This result can be explain by the attention of all the world about the societal problems such as environment pollution. Secondly, this research also showed that employees in Lao are really focusing on the affective aspect. This is coming from the culture of Lao, people are really interested in the emotion and affection. Finally, this research propose that managers of the firms need to perform well CSR because CSR contributes an important role in terms of stimulating employee commitment, which in turns promoting employee identification. Moreover, previous research confirmed the importance of employee identification in terms of increasing employee productivity and effectiveness.

Although there are a lot of theoretical and practical contributions, but this research still has some limitations. First, this research only collected the data from a small sample, which may lead to incomplete and unrepresentative Lao's employees. Future research could expand the investigated area to have a more comprehensive sample that can represent better of the total employees in Lao. Second, this research did not mention moderating variables in these relationships, such as gender, income, age, and education level. This proposes future research could give a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between CSR and employee identification. Moreover, future studies could also suggest new variables to enrich the understanding on this issue.

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企业社会责任对公司员工认同的影响研究：员工承诺的作用

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摘要: 最近, 企业社会责任 (CSR) 被认为是最重要的问题之一, 引起了很多学者和管理者的关注, 对此主题进行了大量研究。但以往的学者仍然表示有必要在新的背景下、新的变量下更深入地研究企业社会责任, 以更多地了解企业社会责任在组织内部和外部的作用。本研究的主要目的是在发展中国家老挝的背景下阐明企业社会责任与员工承诺和员工认同之间的关系。为了达到这个目的, 目前的研究同时应用了定性和定量研究。为了验证假设, 本研究使用问卷调查收集数据, 其量表改编自先前的研究。本研究最终收集到 239 份有效问卷, 并通过 SmartPLS 3.0 应用结构方程模型 (SEM) 进行分析。测试结果表明, 企业社会责任对员工的承诺和认同都有积极的影响。此外, 员工承诺是企业社会责任与员工认同关系的中介变量。作者还讨论了这项研究的理论和管理贡献。

关键词: 企业社会责任; 员工承诺; 员工身份证明; 情感承诺; 规范承诺; 持续承诺

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